

A close-up portrait of an elderly man with a long, white beard and a white turban. He has his eyes closed and a serene expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Philosophy of the Masters
(Gurmat Sidhant)

by

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BOOK 1

The Philosophy of The Masters

Gurmat Sidhant is a book written by me--through my hands I would say, not by me, but by the God-Master within me. I used to write it down and take it to Master to read it to Him so that He may give the final yes. (Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj)

Sant Kirpal Singh & Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj

BOOK 1

Introduction

In 1939 Sant Kirpal Singh began writing Gurmat Sidhant - Philosophy of the Masters, a comprehensive treatise on the science of spirituality, which on the request of Master Kirpal Singh was published under the name of His Master Hazur Maharaj Sawan Singh. The books comprise a complete encyclopedia of basic information on Sant Mat, the Teachings of the Saints.

Gurmat Sidhant is a book written by me--through my hands I would say, not by me, but by the God-Master within me. I used to write it down and take it to Master to read it to Him so that He may give the final yes.

When I was writing that book Gurumat Sidhant, one writer came to visit and was sitting by me at night. I started at nine o'clock, went on writing, writing as fast as possible. He was sitting watching me. It was ten, it was eleven o'clock, it was twelve midnight, one o'clock. 'From where are you writing?' he said. 'There's nothing before you to copy.' I told him, 'My Master dictates to me. I'm writing so fast because I cannot keep up to Him.' (chuckles) Whatever thoughts come up without thinking are always perfect.

Sant Kirpal Singh – 1930's

CHAPTER 1. THE TIME OF ELIXIR

The Hindu Shastras have described the early morning hours as auspicious and as God's own time. The last three hours of night are known as the Time of Elixir, for this pure and serene time was utilized for meditation by the ancient true Yogis and Saints. Even in the Adi Granth Sahib the value of this part of the morning has been highly extolled. Guru Nanak, in particular, has eulogized the uniqueness and efficacy of the Time of Elixir for meditation and devotion to Naam. (Adi Granth, Japji 2-6)

It is the practice of Saints to keep awake at night. Men of the world spend this time in sensual and worldly pleasures. Men of God spend their nights in remembering Him. Both are awake, but the blessed are those who utilize it in Hari-Kirtan, that is, in the remembrance of the Lord. (Adi Granth, Maru 5, 1018-11)

Shams-i-Tabriz says:

Night is the time when the Beloved Lord appears. Those who are asleep at this time are depriving themselves of a great boon. Day is for work, but night is for love and devotion to the Lord. Therefore, the whole night should be spent in communion with the Lord. The whole world sleeps, but the devotees spend the night in meditation at the Feet of the Lord.

All times are good for meditation, and one should

utilize whatever time suits him. But the morning time just before daybreak, and evening time immediately after sunset – are particularly beneficial, because these times unite night and day (dusk and dawn), and spiritual currents are particularly strong and powerful at such a time. During the day, we are engaged in the affairs of the world. Therefore only night remains for devotion to the Lord.

A man who works during the day naturally feels tired in the evening. For him sleep is essential and it comes automatically to remove the fatigue of the day. Thus, only the latter part of the night remains during which a person can do meditation in complete alertness. The Time of Elixir begins from three in the morning. The body and mind are refreshed and calm, and fit for meditation. Therefore, the latter part of the night is considered more beneficial for this purpose.

The fruit of meditation done in the first part of the night is just like the budding of the trees, but meditation during the latter part of the night is like the tree bearing the ripe fruit. At this time, one gets the Grace of God.

*When the night is young, it yieldeth flower. When old, the fruit;
Yea, they who keep awake in God, alone are blest. (Farid)*

During sleep the soul-consciousness comes down to the throat or the navel center, and when a person is awake, the consciousness is at the eye center. Therefore, if one makes an effort to withdraw his consciousness from the body, which is a practice for separating spirit from matter, the soul will easily leave the body in the early morning, because at that time the soul has just entered the pores of the body and can be easily withdrawn from them. Besides, in the early morning hour there are usually no worries of the world to occupy our minds, and such a time is there-

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fore better for concentration, which is not possible at other times because of worldly duties, etc. At the Time of Elixir the mind is quite fresh and the day's turmoils have not spread their tentacles over it. With the rising of the sun and the falling of its rays, our thoughts begin to scatter. In the early morning hours a person is very near God. Concentration attained and meditation done at this time leave their impression on the day's work. And whatever such a person does, he does with a concentrated mind.

No spiritual practice should be undertaken immediately after a heavy meal or on a full stomach, because then the body energies are engaged in the digestive process. It is better to meditate on an empty stomach. In the early morning hours the stomach is empty, as the food taken the evening before is normally digested completely by that time.

Guru Ram Das says:

During the Time of Elixir one should attach oneself to devotion of the Lord, because at this time such efforts blossom and bear fruit without fail, which never diminish and lead to honor both here and beyond. Sowing the Lord's Name when the morning is young, the devotee reaps an inexhaustible harvest. Both now and hereafter, the devotees are blest with the glory of the Lord's riches. (Adi Granth)

The world sleeps while men of God are awake in His remembrance and are dyed in the hues of His love. Lord Krishna says:

While ordinary people waste the Time of Elixir in deep sleep, regarding it as night, the devotees of the Lord keep awake. But during the day when ordinary people are awake, the devotees of the Lord consider it to be night. (Gita,2-69)

John S. Hayland in his book *The Life of Christ* has given the under noted description:

There is an hour of the Indian night, a little before the first glimmer of the dawn, when the stars are unbelievably clear and closer, shining with radiance beyond our belief in this foggy land. The trees stand silent around one with a friendly presence. As yet there is no sound from awakening birds, but the whole world seems to be intent, alive, listening, eager. At such a moment the veil between the things that are seen and the things that are unseen becomes so thin as to interpose scarcely any barrier at all between the eternal beauty and truth and the soul which would comprehend them.

A person who does not get up and remain awake at dawn is not alive. He is virtually dead. And the head which does not bow in devotion to the Lord at such a time has no worth! (Farid, 1383-14)

Maulana Rum says:

O seeker! Cease your sleep at night and walk into the street of those who keep a vigil. You will behold them happy and blissful in the Lord's refulgence within, like lovers deep in contemplation of their beloveds, and in the same manner as a moth is enraptured by the light of a lamp.

Another Saint, Kutubdin, says:

O my son, forsaking your sleep at midnight, lie awaiting your Beloved's glance.

He further says:

O my heart, if you wish to bathe in the light of your Beloved's face, awake at early dawn, leave the comforts of your bed, sit in meditation in a corner, and you will behold Him.

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Shams-i-Tabriz similarly states:

O thou beautiful moon-like seeker, if you do not sleep at night you will gain the treasure of immortality. Your night will become resplendent with that hidden Sun. Your eyes will open and you will behold His splendor.

He then adds:

You have spent thousands of nights in endeavoring to fulfill your desires and cravings, but if you do not sleep for the sake of your Beloved, then what harm can befall you? Do you not know that whatever the spiritual kings possess, was obtained by them at night?

You should remain awake for the sake of that Giver of all gifts, and you should have no fear that sleeplessness will result in mental fatigue, because during that time flows the Foundation of Life, the Nectar of which will make you refreshed and heighten your consciousness. Therefore, do not sleep. Every morning the Voice of the Lord calls you. By listening to it, all your worries and troubles will vanish, and the stains of previous evil impressions on your mind will also be washed away. Do not sleep throughout the night, because at that time thousands of lives receive the sustaining life-force. Like the full moon, the Supreme Lord descends from the highest heavens to bless His disciples with the gifts of Grace and Mercy.

Farid also says:

God distributes musk at night. Those who remain asleep do not receive their share. And indeed what right have they to get it when they have a greater love for their sleep?

Again, Shams-i-Tabriz says:

Only at night the soul meets its Lord and has all its desires fulfilled. The hearts of those who realize the value of night become as

brilliant as the noonday sun.

Laying emphasis on keeping a vigil at night, Shams-i-Tabriz further says:

There is seclusion at night. Our Beloved is within us, and what a gracious time it is! The Sound Currents of Naam are reverberating on all sides and are easily audible in the silence of the night. If you have an intense longing to meet your Lord, you should know the darkness of the night is like the long black tresses of the Beloved, spread everywhere. And if you continue to sleep at night, then you should be ashamed.

The solitude of night is like a river which has innumerable pure gems in it. If you are keen to acquire them, you dive deep into the ocean of the night. Do not be asleep. Behold the stars at night! How they keep awake and travel unimaginable distances! And learn the lesson that by keeping awake at night you also have to reach a Goal.

Hafiz also has similarly stressed that the key to the Treasure of God lies in meditation during the early morning hours and pining for the Lord the whole night. In other words, you should tread this Path so that you may meet your Beloved. The lovers of God keep awake in meditation at night, particularly in the early morning hours. They repeat His Name, and are rid of all their sufferings and cares, anxieties and dissensions.

CHAPTER 2. REMEMBRANCE OR REPETITION (SIMRAN)

The whole world is engaged in thinking of its own work, or in remembering or thinking about something: the shopkeeper about his shop, the farmer about his land or crops, a person in service about his work, a mother about her child, a friend about his companion, and an enemy about his foe.

It is a well-known fact that when we think of something, its mental picture appears before our eyes. This is only natural. Everybody contemplates the forms which he thinks about.

No one is free from repetition or remembrance of some kind. It is through this process that the worldly objects enter into every pore of our body, mind and intellect, and man is virtually dyed in the hue of the world. It is because of this that the soul has to be born again and again. As we think so we become. If we give up remembrance of the world and instead think of the Lord, we can easily gain the means of Salvation.

What is Simran?

In order to understand it properly, one has to pay attention to its true significance. Simran is a Sanskrit word derived from the root 'Smar'. It has several meanings:

to protect, to make a mental picture of one's deity in the heart, and to contemplate on this form, to remember a certain person or thing to such an extent as to think about it with every breath, to make it a part and parcel of one's life, and ultimately to awaken into and to live in it. Muslims call it Zikar, that is, to remember someone.

Simran confers all the benefits of the eight aspects of Yoga. Simran is an essential part of Yoga. There is a reference to it in the Gita: "It is the highest form of spiritual practice". Simran bestows happiness, peace and bliss, and leads us to a state of super-consciousness.

The repetition of any name or names of God is called Simran. Through it an extraordinary current of consciousness enters the body. It is stated in Scriptures that whoever considers the Holy Names as mere words or regards Guru as a mere man and not as God incarnate, goes straight to hell.

Repetition should be done with one-pointed attention, and in due course a stage is reached when Repetition ceases and the form contemplated upon manifests itself. This is the culmination point of Repetition. Repetition and Contemplation can be done both separately or simultaneously.

Guru Arjan has eulogized the state of Simran thus:

Within our hearts we contemplate the Master, on our tongue is His Holy Name, in our eyes resides His Form, in our ears resounds the Divine Melody. We remain completely engrossed in His remembrance. We become merged in the state of ceaselessly dwelling upon Him. Our mind and intellect – their very fabric – are completely colored with the dye of His constant remembrance. It is such persons who gain honor and glory in the Court of the Lord

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and thus fulfill the great destiny of human life.

A person should pine for his Master as does the rain bird for a drop of rain. He should repeat His Name with every breath and should think of His Form day and night. In short, he should not forget Him even for a second. The truly great in the world are those who have in their hearts naught else save the recollection of the Lord.

Method of Withdrawing Within Oneself

From times immemorial, man has been extroverted, observing outside objects through the sense organs. Three sense organs are chiefly responsible for drawing our attention, namely, the tongue, the eyes, and the ears.

With our tongue we talk to the people of the world. With it we repeat our thoughts and ideas about the world, and communicate with the world. In this manner the impressions of the world enter our mind and intellect.

With our eyes we see the objects of the world, and their forms get imprinted on our mind. With our ears we listen to the voices of the world. And by listening to them constantly we become one with them. Our eyes are responsible for 83 per cent of the impressions imprinted on our mind, our ears for 14 per cent, and the remaining 3 per cent are formed by the other sense organs of the body put together. If our attention ceases to go out and we thus stop the entry of impressions from outside, we can, with an inward gaze, realize the Truth. It is for this reason that Saints always impress upon us to shut our eyes and our ears while doing Repetition or listening to the Shabd.

The power of speech of the tongue should be utilized in Simran; the power of the sight of the eyes should be used in contemplating the form of the Master; and the power

of hearing of the ears should be spent in listening to the Sound Current. These three practices are absolutely essential. We are now dealing with the first, namely, Simran. The other two, viz., Contemplation (Dhyan) and Shabd or Sound Current will be taken up in subsequent chapters.

Whenever we wish to withdraw our consciousness inwards, the thoughts of the world invade us. These are the impressions that have continually entered through the sense organs. Thus, the affairs of household, office, shops and other places, also the forms of relatives, friends and foes that we have been seeing, project themselves on the mind's screen and obstruct concentration. The first step for spiritual uplift, therefore, is to eliminate them.

The removal of the impressions that are formed in our subconscious mind and which come before us involuntarily is the second step. It is only after the devotee has ascended the two steps that he can become introverted or turned inward.

It is also necessary that repetition should be replaced by Repetition, just as a water-stricken crop is revived with water. The Simran of the objects of the world should be replaced by the Simran of God, and thoughts of the world by Contemplation of the Master, who is God incarnate. Thus is imprinted on our subconscious mind the impression of God in the form of our Satguru. Where the waves of the world once dominated the scene, there will now be remembrance of the Lord and Contemplation of the Master. The devotee begins to forget the world and its shadow shapes. The mind loses much of its fickleness and a certain amount of concentration is achieved.

Any left-over rambling tendencies are ended by listening to the Sound Current, which resounds in all human

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beings. Then only comes complete concentration. This Sound Current is the heritage of all. We do not hear it, because our attention is extroverted. This Divine Melody resounds at the headquarters of the soul in the body and can be heard at the eye focus by going within.

The Sound Current has the force of a magnet, which attracts the soul and makes it still. Then the soul passes through the Sound Current to the place from which it emanates. This place is the origin of the whole world. When a person listens attentively to the Heavenly Sound, he begins to be enraptured by its bliss and automatically turns his back upon the world.

The display of name and fame, and learning and intellect in the world is responsible for the scattering of our soul currents and is an impediment in the way of our achieving concentration. Because of such a display, we find it difficult to collect our attention within. It is easy to become educated and intellectually advanced, but it is difficult to subdue the mind, collect the soul current, and ascend to higher regions.

We cannot see our Lord with the eyes or our intellect. It is only the eye of the soul (nirat) which can perceive God. So long as our mind's currents are spread out, it is impossible to behold Him. If therefore we control the mind and the sense, we behold within the refulgence of the Lord.

When through Simran we complete the course of concentration, we reach the second stage, namely, Contemplation. And through Contemplation we are able to listen to the Sound Current.

For self-realization Saints advocate these three steps – Simran (Repetition), Dhyan (Contemplation), and Bhajan (listening to the Shabd or Sound Current).

Rhythmical control of the breath, known as Pranayam, which is performed by some persons for attaining concentration, is an artificial method. The methods taught by the Saints, as described above, are natural and easy. They can be performed by a child, a young or an old person. In practicing these methods no difficulties are encountered. Moreover, they do not adversely affect our health. The Ashtang Yoga practices are difficult, and householders cannot perform them.

The Saints' methods are complete in themselves. By following them, we realize the Truth without fail.

Maulana Rumi says:

Close your eyes, your ears and your mouth, and if then you do not perceive the beauty of God, you may laugh at me.

Method of Simran

People perform Simran (Repetition) in a variety of ways and these are:

Some do it with the help of beads. This divides the attention, because a part of it is engaged in counting the beads, and the other in reversing the process on reaching the head bead. By this means complete concentration does not come. So long as the attention accompanies the process, some benefit accrues. Otherwise, while the fingers rotate the beads, the mind roams about.

Kabir says:

The true rosary is the rosary of the mind. The rosaries of the world are false. If it were possible to have communion with the Lord by

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rotating outside beads, then the Persian wheel, round whose neck rotate water-holders, should have been the one to realize God.

The Chinese have designed a machine in which one rotation of the crankshaft makes a container revolve a thousand times. A piece of paper on which a prayer is written is put into this container. People then go to the temple and turn the wheel twice and are pleased with the feeling that they have repeated the prayer two thousand times. But how can one find peace by such means?

Some people repeat their prayers with the tongue. This has a certain value as long as the attention is concentrated on the repetition. But like the rotating of the beads, when the repetition with the tongue becomes automatic, the mind involuntarily wanders. Kabir says:

The practice where the rosary rotates in the hand, the tongue moves in the mouth, and the mind runs in all the ten directions, is not called Simran (Repetition).

By rotating the rosary, the mind feels elated but no real benefit results. If the hands are busy in rotating the rosary, how can the soul current collect within? If the soul currents concentrate, the hands cannot rotate the beads. If the soul currents have not withdrawn to the soul's headquarters, nothing can be gained. Therefore, we make a rosary of the mind. There is no need for one of wood.

Many people use their fingertips instead of a rosary for doing their repetition. Kabir says:

If you say the rosary of the mind, you can have communion with the Master. When the soul has not become motionless, of what use is counting on the fingers? You are counting on your fingers with the hand, but your mind is strutting about. This is all futile.

If the rosary of the mind is repeated, then the inner consciousness is awakened and Light appears within. For ages people have rotated beads, but their minds have not changed. Therefore, giving up the counting of beads with the hand, rotate only the bead of the mind.

By so doing our hands and feet will become numb, so much so that the entire consciousness of the body will collect at the eye center, and the soul will enter the inner realms and will behold radiance within.

Some people do repetition with their throat. This is beneficial so long as the attention is properly directed; otherwise the mind wanders aimlessly, as it does in the first two methods.

Some carry out repetition in their heart. This suffers from the same shortcomings as the other methods mentioned above.

There is yet another method of Simran in which the Yogis produce a sound by raising their breath at the navel center. This practice leads to a temporary control of the mind. Therefore, this method is also not without its defects.

Repetition by the tongue is better than that with a rosary, and that in the throat is superior to one by the tongue. Similarly, that in the heart is more beneficial than the one in the throat. The fifth, that in the navel center is attempted by the yogis alone. Simran by means of a rosary or by the tongue is considered to be the lowest form of repetition, that in the throat and with the heart being distinctly superior. However, all types of repetition, when accompanied by one-pointed attention, yield good results. They cleanse the mind and bring some measure of peace. But

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the soul currents do not collect at the eye center, so there is little gain in spiritual development.

It is for this reason that the Saints start from the very root of the thing. They advocate repetition by the tongue of the soul. This way we gain the means of making the mind still. Saints call this the Simran of the soul.

By following this method, the mind does not roam about. Here it is not a case that repetition continues and the mind strays out, as happens in the methods described earlier. The Simran of the soul awakens the inner consciousness and enables one to hear Shabd or the Sound Current (the Word), which brings real peace and bliss.

Sheikh Farid-udin Attar has divided the various methods of Simran into three parts. He says:

We do not understand their significance due to our ignorance. We are aware only of Simran by the tongue. There are only a few people who do Simran with the attention at their heart. A selected few, a very special type of devotees, do it by a secret method. Unless the Simran is done by this last method, the efforts are in vain. The reading of Holy Scriptures is the Simran by tongue. Those who do not even do this much are indeed extremely indolent. This secret method of Simran, the place where attention is to be focused while doing it, and the manner of its conduct can be learnt only from a perfect Adept.

The Muslim Fakirs tell of five different methods of Simran or Repetition:

Lasani, that is by tongue. It is also known as Kalma-i-Shariat or Nasoot.

Kalbi, which is done through the heart, by putting pressure on the heart by means of breathing. This is also called

Kalma-i-Tariakat or Malkoot.

Ruhi, repetition by the soul with attention at the Third Eye. This is known as Kalma-i-Marfat or Javroot.

Siri, which is obtained by means of inner revelation. This is also known as Kalma-i-Hakikat or Lahoot. In this, the practitioner becomes one with the Simran.

Sufi, by which one merges in the Lord. This is also called Hahoot. The practitioner loses his own identity and imbibes that of the Lord. This is the permanent and everlasting stage.

Another Saint says:

Repetition by the tongue gives temporary results; Simran at the heart is of an ordinary type; the spiritual Repetition is superior and is practiced only by highly advanced souls.

Maulana Rumi says:

Do the Repetition so that you may manifest God, but not the repetition by tongue, the results of which are not lasting.

The Spiritual Repetition at the eye center is the monopoly of Saints.

In the Hindu Upanishads we find:

According to the Vedas there are various advantages of repetition by tongue. Repetition done slowly and faintly is a thousand times better than that which is done quickly, and that by mind is ten million times more fruitful than that by tongue.

Repetition by tongue, without understanding the significance of the words, or parrot-like repeating of a name without much thought, is a mere show. The ordinary people who do this type of Simran remain bereft of any good.

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Purpose of Repetition (Simran)

Simran is the first step of the spiritual ladder. Guru Arjan says in Sukhmani:

By Simran alone you get to the real Shabd or Sound Current which leads you to God.

Place of Simran

How can we reach the place where we can contact the Sound Current? Because this Sound Current is not the subject of intellect, eyes, or ears, what method then can we adopt by which we may become so fine as to catch and enjoy the Sound?

To do this we have to concentrate our attention at the Third Eye by means of Simran. This point has been referred to as “Shiv Netr” by the Hindus and “Nuqta-i-Swaida” by the Muslims. This is the gate of the Astral and Causal regions. In the waking state it is the headquarters of the soul, and it lies above the six physical centers of the body. Next, we have to go beyond Anda and Brahmanda.

The yogis first awaken the six centers of the body and then ascend higher. However, if we concentrate at the headquarters of the soul (during waking hours), our progress can be both easy and quick. It is for this reason that in the Hindu Scriptures as well as in the Adi Granth Sahib, great emphasis has been placed on Simran being carried out at the Third Eye, the headquarters of the soul in the body.

In order to concentrate at this center, we have to carry out one-pointedly the Simran of some name or names of

the Lord. Other methods are unnecessary. Guru Arjan says:

The real mode of doing Simran is mentally keeping the attention at the Third Eye. When it is not thus done, it aggravates body ailments, devoid as it is of the Grace of the Lord.

What are the names which one should repeat, and what is their connection with God? For Simran there are two kinds of names:

Personal or subjective names. Attributive or qualitative names

Generally, people repeat the names describing the Lord by one attribute or another. Such repetition is beneficial only up to a limit, for it fails to open the inner vision and enable one to witness inner phenomena. Saints, therefore, reveal to us the names of the presiding deities of the regions within. Therefore, the names that a Master imparts are the only ones to be repeated; for they alone can lead the way. These names are also energy-charged and help the transference of spiritual energy to the disciple, with the result that rapid progress follows.

The negative Power has placed a number of impediments in these regions, with which the soul traversing the Astral and the Causal planes has to contend. These can be overcome by repeating the Holy Names given to us by a True Master (Satguru). They also save the devotee from other difficulties and pitfalls. Simran of such Holy Names is beneficial both here and beyond. It is for this reason that Scriptures lay emphasis on repeating only such names.

The names that are revealed to us by a True Master carry His power, and this comes to the aid of the disciple,

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enabling him to transcend both death and the Negative Power. The words of the Master are eternal, and through them we are freed from the cycle of births and deaths.

Therefore, whatever Names are bestowed upon us by a Master are conducive to our greatest good. Each Name carries its own influence.

If you think of a mango or some other fruit known to you, you remember the taste and its flavor in your mouth. You also see it with your mind's eye. Similarly, other objects appear before our mind's eye when we name them. When we talk of a friend we get a mental picture of him, for the name and the person named are inseparable. To live by His name is to live near Him.

Vyas Rishi, while translating one of the verses of Patanjali Rishi says:

This name (Om) is closely connected with God.

Muin du din Chishti says:

The name and the person named are one. Between them there is no difference. In the greatness of names, discern the glory of God.

It is true that by repeating the Name of God, whether it is personal or qualitative, one's mind is deeply influenced, because Repetition and Contemplation go hand in hand.

By Simran of Holy Names, we get rid of the thoughts of the world. One feels the presence of God. Ultimately, Simran leads us to the Unstruck Music which is the means of taking the soul to upper realms. By repeating the Vairan-Atmak names, we gain access to the Dhun-Atmak Name.

Muin du din Chishti clarifies:

If you have the Name of God fully ingrained within you, rest assured that God Himself is your companion. It behooves you, therefore, to fly to the pure upper regions. The only requirement is that you fly on the wings of God's Names. When I listen to His Name, the Word or the Divine Melody, I am ready to sacrifice a hundred lives.

How Should One Do Simran?

By maintaining a convenient posture and by concentrating our attention at the eye center, slightly towards the right, we should repeat the Names with the attention of the mind. In other words, we should fix our attention at the center of the eyebrows but slightly towards the right. One should fix the attention of the mind on the eye center and start Simran as well as Contemplation.

While doing this, care should be taken not to put any pressure on the forehead or the eyes. Start with a short period, but gradually increase the duration to two or three hours.

Gita has prescribed the following procedure in Chapter 5, Verse 27:

An ascetic is ever free – who withdraws his attention from outward senses – contacts and fixes it between the two eyebrows. This practice is also done by fixing the attention at the tip of the nose.

By practicing this, all the difficulties of the world are removed, the wavering mind is stilled and one achieves concentration of very high order. Some people close their eyes while doing Repetition, and others do so with open eyes. In the first case, there is a possibility of falling asleep;

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and in the second, there is the danger of the mind running after the objects of the world. The former is a much better method, but one should start the practice after getting over drowsiness. It is also essential that the practice be done regularly as well as punctually, at the appointed time.

Hafiz says:

Your daily duty is to pray before the Lord. This is your real work. Never ponder whether or not your prayer has been heard in the Court of the Lord. That is His prerogative.

By carrying out Simran daily and punctually, the practitioner gains undoubted success.

A person takes two meals a day. Besides, he also takes morning breakfast and afternoon tea. This is all to feed the body, but the food for the soul is Simran and Contemplation of His Form. This food we must tender to the soul. Just as you take food daily to maintain your body, similarly, whether you are at home or traveling, you must provide food for the soul. Never be remiss in this respect.

Repetition of God's Name is an unfailing remedy for all ills. This is a spiritual food for the soul. Christ says:

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (St. Matthew 4:4, Moses in Deuteronomy 8:3)

Simran and Contemplation bestow showers of the Elixir of Life.

One can practice selfless Simran at any time and in any place. Do not forget even while answering the call of na-

ture. If one feels drowsy during Simran, he should stand up and do the Repetition for about half an hour. Cold water may also be sprinkled on the face. Eat less at night and use light food consisting of milk and fruit. If celibacy can be maintained along with this diet, the practice leads to quicker and better results.

But for a married person, the marital obligations should be performed with restraint and in accordance with certain set principles. The devotee should live up to the Sant Mat principles in all his dealings, his food, sleep, speech, etc., and he should try to perform his daily spiritual exercises in the same place and in the same posture, which should not be changed frequently or at short intervals.

Simran should not be done in haste. It should be done slowly and with love and devotion, the Names being repeated clearly and correctly. To do it in haste or to regard it as an unwanted task, or to go through it merely as a routine leads nowhere. If the mind becomes lazy while doing Simran, or the attention turns towards sense pleasures, one should repeat the Names audibly for ten or fifteen minutes, so that the mind's attention reverts to the proper place.

The results of Repetition will be in direct proportion to the love and faith brought to bear upon it. Carry out the Simran of the Lord with love and faith. His Names have a great power. When done with faith one feels intoxicated with joy, with the result that he forgets his body and himself and is aware of the Presence of the Lord. How potent and blissful is the Name of God, for it creates in the devotee a fast-flowing current of bliss, peace and soul force, and he gets truly blessed.

To do Simran, it is not necessary to give up the world

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and its tasks. Carry on your duties and still keep your attention fixed in Simran.

If you wish to be filled with the Grace of God, then you should banish all else from your mind. Leave everything else aside and cherish the Name of the Lord alone in your heart. As soon as you empty your mind of all thoughts by means of Simran, you will find the way to the Lord's mansion.

Simran should be practiced with full attention. Kabir says:

During Simran the longing for God in one's mind should be as intense as that of a lover for the beloved, so that sitting, standing, awake or asleep, the form of the beloved is always in the mind of the lover. He does not forget it even for a second.

Again, Kabir says:

Simran should be like the thoughts of a passionate lover, who does not forget his beloved even for a moment. Simran should have the same attention as that of a woman carrying a pitcher of water on her head. She talks, she walks on the uneven ground, but her attention is focused on the pitcher. Simran should be like a cow which is grazing, but has her attention fixed on her calf. Simran should be like a miser who has a coin in his pocket, and keeps his attention on it all the time.

Only by practicing in this manner is one able to achieve results.

A hunter plays a drum in the jungle to attract the deer, and they are so much intoxicated by that music that they place their heads against the instrument and are caught by the hunter. The deer knows that it will be caught, but it is so intensely attracted and influenced by the sound

of a drum that it becomes powerless to resist and rushes towards it to die. It does not turn back. A snake listens to the sound of a veena and, without caring for the dire consequences, comes and dances to its tune.

Similarly, a devotee, no matter in what circumstances he may be – poor or rich, ill or well, awake or asleep, standing or sitting – should remember Him and become so absorbed in Simran that he becomes utterly oblivious of his body. By doing so the soul ascends to higher spiritual regions.

Kabir Sahib describes the prerequisites for Simran:

Mind should be still, body should be motionless, tongue should be quiet, and surat (the hearing power), and nirat (the seeing power) should act in unison and attain equanimity. Such a state, even for a moment, is infinitely superior to a million years of outer worship.

Guru Gobind Singh says in Akal Stuti (Praise of the Lord):

Real Simran for a second cuts asunder the bondage of birth and rebirth.

Inner Ascent and Realization Through Simran

If the Repetition of the Holy Names is carried out in accordance with the directions of the Master and in a proper way, the devotee achieves wondrous results within. The soul currents that permeate every pore of the body withdraw from the nine apertures and collect at the Tenth Gate, which lies between the eyes. The body then becomes completely numb. Owing to centripetal tendencies, the disciple begins to behold scenes in the spiritual regions and sees stars and the sun and the moon.

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Guru Nanak says:

In the sky has arisen a meteor; only the blessed one with the Grace of the Master can behold its splendor. Through the Word, Guru shows the way and the seeker attains fulfillment.

Hazrat Ibrahim attests to having seen the meteor. The Vedas likewise mention this brightness. Maulana Rumi says:

You should cross the region of the moon and the sun within yourself, and lay your soul at the feet of the Master.

A reference in one of the Upanishads says that a seeker in his spiritual transport witnesses mist, smoke, sun, fire, air, fire-flies, flashes of lightning and the moon within.

After the devotee crosses these phenomena, he beholds the Radiant Form of the Master, who after that, is ever by the side of the disciple and who guides the soul to the higher regions, ultimately taking it to the Court of the Lord. It is by focusing our attention on this resplendent Form that we make it stay with us.

Maulana Rumi says:

Only that method of Repetition of the Holy Names is correct by which the inner way (for spiritual transport) is opened. Only that Path is correct which leads to the Radiant Form of the Master, the King of Kings. Such a King as does not have to depend upon treasures of gems and diamonds, but who is sovereign within Himself.

Regarding Simran, the Yog Shastra of Patanjali says:

Simran leads to manifestation of the deity.

Vyas Rishi states:

Gods, sages and seers pay homage to a person who repeats the Holy Names.

Such statements as these show that all that Simran promises is realizable.

In the early stages considerable effort has to be made to carry out Simran, but as practice is gained Simran goes on automatically. The varied phenomena of the spiritual planes come into view, and also the Radiant Form of the Master and the rulers of the inner realms. Even God's presence is felt to be very close. Yogis and Sufis have all crossed the lower centers by means of Simran. This practice is both natural and easy.

Tulsi Das mentions the potency of Simran in his Ram-chritar:

The Mantra or Repetition appears to be insignificant; but Brahma (Creator), Vishnu (Sustainer) and Shiva (Destroyer) are under its control in the same way as the mad elephant is under the control of a small goad held by the driver.

Guru Nanak mentions in Jap Ji:

Ceaseless Simran is the ladder by which to reach the Mansion of the Lord. Were the tongue to multiply into many tongues, and each were to repeat His Name, it would still be inadequate.

This is the only method by which the soul meets its Lord and becomes one with Him. But this state is realized only with the Grace of the Lord. Our own efforts are utterly futile. But by constant Simran one awakens super-con-

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sciousness and attains the state of everlasting tranquility and peace.

Tennyson, the Poet Laureate of England, in his memoirs furnishes some hints about the super-conscious state that results from Simran:

A kind of waking trance I have frequently had, from boyhood onwards, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself silently till all at once, as it were, out of the intensity of consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this is not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the wisest of the wisest, utterly beyond words, where death was a laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were), seemingly but the only true life. I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words?

Tennyson would rise to this state of super-consciousness simply by repeating his own name.

Soul is of the essence of the Lord. You acquire the form you think about and have to return to it. As ye think, so ye become. If the essence thinks of its own source, which is all Consciousness, it will merge in the source and attain the eternal and everlasting state.

A Muslim Saint has very aptly described the greatness of Simran:

The soul is the essence and the Lord is the source. When it remembers the Lord one-pointedly, it becomes the Lord.

The bhringhi (a kind of wasp) has the capacity of turning another insect into its own kind by giving it attention. Kabir says:

You should also carry out God's Simran in such a way as to merge in Him and to become Him.

One who by merging in the Light of the Lord has become that Light, no longer remains a mere human being. Whomsoever we contemplate, Him we become.

Once Hazrat Bayazeed Bustami became so engrossed in the remembrance of God that he became oblivious to his own separate existence, and when he peered within, he beheld nothing but God. In this state of ecstasy he started saying that he was God. His disciples, who were greatly surprised, asked him later, when they got an opportunity of talking to him:

Oh Master, according to you, God never takes the form of a man, and yet a short while ago you said you were God. Are you not a body?

Hazrat Bustami denied having said so and told them that someone else might have done so. He further said:

If you hear me say such a thing again, punish me according to Muslim law.

After a few days, the Master again was seized in the same way and began repeating that he was God. The disciples sprang up, drew their swords, and tried to kill him. It is noted in Maulana Rumi's Masnavi, that whoever directed his sword at the Master's head had his own head cut off; whoever tried to cut his hands, has his own hands severed. Whatever part of the Master's body they tried to cut, they lost the corresponding part of their own body. Meanwhile, the Master continued exclaiming that he was God.

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When Hazrat Bustami was asked to explain the reason for this, he smilingly said:

One who remembers the Lord becomes Him. He is beyond the reach of a sword or of swordsmen.

When Tulsi Sahib came to Hathras, he said:

I live without a body, although I am seen in it.

The people tried to catch hold of him but they could not do so.

The remembrance of God is so amazingly intoxicating that those who attain it do not wish to be separated from the Lord even for a moment, like the swan who cannot do without a pool of water.

Kabir says:

Remember the Name of the Lord with the same intensity of love as the fish has for water. It does not stand separation from water, and dies.

If we were to be divested of His Name, our life would not be worth living. If a person were to remember God constantly, he would awaken into super-consciousness. But this is a state which can be achieved only with the Grace and blessing of the Lord. One who gains this state even for a moment, gets life everlasting.

Precepts of Simran

The Saints tell us that we are all accustomed to repeat certain names. How good it would be if we were to turn our attention to the Name of God! Simran gives pleasure

and removes pain. By doing the Simran of the Lord, one merges in Him.

Many people perform their worldly tasks with their hands and feet. Their minds remain free. Employ your hands and feet in work, and your mind in the remembrance of the Lord. If one is to succeed in this practice, he should carry out Simran at all times whether awake or asleep, just as the hands of a clock move ceaselessly.

Everybody thinks of God in adversity, but if one were to think of Him with love at all times, then no pain would ever visit him. Pain is the result of sin. By forgetting God, one moves away from Him. In this way, he falls victim to the endless cycle of births and deaths.

If he were to carry out Simran when in fortunate circumstances, his willpower and mind would grow strong. Even if a calamity should befall him, he would remain indifferent to it. If a person has failed to do Simran during a time of ease, but has taken to it only at the time of a reverse, or on falling ill, or on getting involved in a lawsuit, little can be expected from it. If Simran were to be done ceaselessly, all cares and anxieties would vanish. Then the mind would not give up Simran even for a second.

Kabir says:

Everybody remembers Him in times of distress and nobody does so during felicity. If one were to remember Him while leading a life of ease, why should pain ever visit him? When Simran is not done during comfort and is remembered only during grief, who can ever answer such a supplication?

The Adi Granth has placed great emphasis on Simran.

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Remember the Lord with every breath. Forget Him not even for a moment.

Likewise have Muslim Saints emphasized its great need:

The Lord has thus ordained: 'You remember me and I shall remember you.'

Hazrat Mohammed says:

Persons who repeat the Holy Names of God have angels around them. The Grace of God protects them. They enjoy peace and bliss. God remembers them.

In the Hadis it is stated:

A person who intends to be near God should contact Incarnate in the flesh (a Perfect Master), because in Him resides always the remembrance of the Names of God.

Further, the Hadis says:

I am a close companion of him who thinks of Me. I love him who loves Me.

Farid-ud-Din Attar says:

In your prayers behold your Beloved. Both within and without live in His remembrance, and remember Him inwardly as well as outwardly. In His worship make no one else a partner, for God is One without a second.

The real fast consists in withdrawing the senses from sensual pursuits and employing them in His remembrance.

Simran is Possible Only with the Grace of the Lord and Through the Kindness of a Master

Simran is a precious practice. It is only through great good luck that a person takes to Simran. The secret of Simran one can learn from a True Master alone.

Time for Simran

Simran should be done with every breath – sitting, standing, walking, eating – one should so remember Him with one-pointed attention that he becomes inseparable from Him and does not stray away. But special times for Simran are the night, the midnight and the Time of Elixir (from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m.). Simran during these periods is highly fruitful.

Hafiz enjoins:

Do not waste your time in sleep, because the remembrance of God at midnight and in the early morning hours merits special blessings from the Lord.

Night-time is particularly suited for Simran because of quiet and solitude. At this time the soul currents are not scattered. With the rising of the sun, these currents greatly spread out. Dawn and dusk are times of union (night with day and day with night), and these times have a special spiritual and magnetic power latent in them. The result is that we are then completely saturated with our Master. At these times, without any effort, concentration comes automatically.

Therefore, these two periods are very profitable for Repetition of the Holy Names.

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Carry out Repetition and Contemplation during the Time of Elixir, after leaving your bed. Get over drowsiness and lassitude by deep breathing and some light exercise. At this time the mind is quiet and fresh and it easily concentrates.

The Practice of Repetition of Names is for Everybody

The practice of Repetition is for all – rich and poor – and whoever does it becomes eligible for its reward. But the Simran should be self-less. King or subject, man or woman, of whatever caste, creed or color they may be, all carry out Simran. Whoever does the Simran of Naam (Word), gains salvation. He is highest of all and is truly fortunate.

Everybody remembers the Lord for the fulfillment of desires. One does so for a wife, another yearns for a son, and still other asks for wealth. Everyone has a motive behind his Simran.

Of course, the objects of desires are achieved, but they do not accompany one when he dies. Even his body remains behind. What else can ever go with one at the time of his departure? Kabir says:

He who carries out self-less Simran is the sublimest of all.

This means that we should beg of God naught else but God.

The Scriptures tell us that all things in this world are transitory. They are truly shadow shapes that vanish in a moment. Therefore, begging for anything other than God Himself is to suffer untold misery. So long as the Simran is done with an ulterior motive, we are asking God for

objects of the world, and thus bringing further privations upon ourselves. It is only the self-less Simran that is acceptable to God. A Muslim Saint says:

Do not blacken your heart with useless thoughts. Ask not from God aught else but Him.

Fruits of Simran

The Sikh Scriptures detail many a benefit from Simran. When an overwhelming adversity besets your path, when there is no other help, when foes hotly pursue you, when close relations desert you, when all hopes are dashed and when all avenues are closed, if you still remember God, no harm shall ever touch you. The Lord is the strength of the weak. He is eternal. He is known through the Guru's Shabd.

When a person is depressed for want of food and resources – when even the last penny has left him, when he is without a job, even then if he gives place to the Lord in his heart, he shall forever be freed from want.

When one is torn by cares and anxieties, when his body is diseased, when he is deeply immersed in domestic worries, when he is at the mercy of the buffets of sorrow, when he wanders to and fro and finds no home nor hearth where he can rest – even then, if he carries out the Simran of the Lord, he shall attain inner calm and peace.

When a person is under the sway of lust, anger and attachment, when he is assailed by miserliness and avarice, when he is in the grip of the four vices, namely stealing, drinking, adultery and the persecution of saintly people, when demon-like desires to annihilate others have taken hold of him, when he will not listen to the reading of

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a holy Scripture – even then, if he thinks of the Lord, he shall gain freedom in the twinkling of an eye.

A person may be well-versed in the Vedas and Scriptures; he may undergo penances and austerities; he may undertake pilgrimages; he may perform the six sacred deeds, viz., offering and receiving of charity, reading and teaching the Vedas, and performing Yagya and having it performed, doing all this, if he is still not dyed in the love of the Lord, he will doubtless go to hell.

A person may have many kingdoms; he may rule vast dominions; he may have access to all luxuries; he may own many gardens and orchards; he may enjoy many privileges; he may revel in the pleasures of the world; yet if he has not the remembrance of the Lord, he is doomed to be a snake in his next birth.

A person may be extremely wealthy; he may be abstemious and high principled; he may love his parents, family and relations; he may have a host of men who stand ready with folded hands to carry out his commands; even then, if he does not think of the Lord, he is doomed to hell.

A person may be healthy of body; he may suffer from no disease nor sorrow; he may be completely forgetful of death; he may be engrossed in sense pleasures day and night; he may own everything he wants; yet if he does not think of the Lord, he goes straight into the jaws of hell.

Simran puts an end to sins, pain and doubts. It removes anger and ego. It takes away cares, all ills, and the three attributes. It rids us of ghosts and goblins. It bestows peace and bliss. By Simran a person is emancipated, and becomes a good example and a spiritual benefactor. He becomes a real philanthropist, has few needs, and be-

comes a leader of men.

The devotees of the Lord are alive only through Simran, because without thinking of the Lord they cannot live even for a moment. They are forever absorbed in His Name.

Simran banishes fear of death and frees one from the cycle of births and deaths. It removes obstacles and difficulties, and pleasure and pain. It grants miraculous powers, esoteric knowledge, and the merit of recitals and penances. Duality is shed, the dross and filth of the mind wear off, and the refulgence of God's Name becomes manifest. The devotee is ever at the feet of the Master. He gains glory in the Court of the Lord and, crossing the ocean of phenomena, he attains everlasting salvation.

A person doing Simran remains detached even while he lives among people. The fruits are not obtained by the Simran done the behest of mind, but by the Simran revealed to us by a Perfect Adept.

CHAPTER 3. SOUND OR MELODY (DHUN)

When the first two methods of spiritual practice, viz., Simran and Dhyan, are completed, they lead to the third one which is Dhun.

Simran is complete only when contemplation has been achieved. When Dhyan is complete, Dhun is awakened automatically. This is known as Bhajan in the language of the Saints.

Bhajan simply means listening to the Sound Current, which is also termed by the Saints as the practice of Surat Shabd Yoga. This is done by the soul, or by its attention. It is through Surat or soul that the Divine Melody is heard. The practice awakens the soul that has been slumbering for ages and results in a state of bliss.

Bhajan does not cause fatigue nor involve physical labor. It is Anand-Marg or the Path of Bliss. It is also called the Path of Surat Shabd Yoga. It is superior to both Simran and Dhyan Yoga. In Simran we have to remember God. In Dhyan we have to contemplate upon the physical, the Radiant and the Shabd Form of the Master. By these two means one contacts the Sound Current.

Yogas are of many kinds: Prana Yoga is the practice of breath control; Hatha Yoga consists of physical postures. Both of these concern the gross or physical body and are of low merit. Those that pertain to mind and intellect

concern the astral body. Anand Yoga pertains to the causal body. This is superior to all other Yogas. The path of the Saints is Surat Shabd Yoga, which is the life-breath of all Yogas. No outer practice is involved in it. The Sound Current is heard with the ears of the soul. We gain this exalted state without expenditure of any kind. The Sound is really the manifestation of the Lord. It comes from the highest region and the soul is connected with it.

Surat (soul) and Shabd (Sound) are both of the essence of the Lord. God Himself is Shabd as well as Surat. They are an inseparable triune or three-in-one. The Sound is in reality God-in-Action. He projects Himself into everything and revels in this play. He is the worshiper as well as the worshiped. Naam, Sound or Bani are attributes of the Lord. All religious Scriptures bear this out.

In the Sikh Scriptures the Sound Current is known as the Pure Sound, Truth, or All-pervading Naam, which can be heard only by attaining to the highest state of consciousness.

The Shabd is really the Music of the Lord, and it is listening to it that is greatly stressed in the Scriptures. It is the method of singing the glory of the Lord. It is the Unstruck Melody. It is One, and yet it manifests itself in all. The entire universe is sustained by it.

Shabd gives rise to Dhun, which can be felt at the eye center. This Sound is permanent (never ceases). Nor can it ever be measured in terms of money. Dhun has both Light and Sound.

It is the Unstruck Music that resounds within. What we hear within is its reverberation, by gaining which the mind becomes still. Dhun is born out of Shabd. It has

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been called the quintessence of the Unstruck Music or Truth. Dhun is all-pervading and resounds as the music of the vina in Sach Khand. The vina sound is exceptionally melodious and enrapturing, and appears as the Unstruck Melody. The true Shabd gives rise to the Sahaj state where resounds the Sar Shabd, by listening to which we merge in the Lord. This is Gur Bani, which manifests as heavenly music. Whoever merges himself in it, partakes of the Elixir that issues forth from it.

His mind turns away from worldly pleasures and becomes steeped in joy. He then arrives at the Real Home.

The physical body has nine apertures. The tenth is a secret outlet with a strong door. This door can be opened with the help of Shabd granted by a Master. Within it is heard the reverberation of the Divine Music. When this door is opened, one beholds Light within. It is then that one attains the state of true worship.

Dhun Comprises Knowledge, Contemplation and Meditation

True knowledge consists of Dhyan and Dhun and their practice; this is an ineffable state. The Divine Music ever plays; and it is through listening to it that one begins to love the Lord. This is true worship of the Lord, but it can find a place in our hearts only when the Lord wills it.

It is not possible to obtain this treasure of Dhun by reading Scriptures. The books contain only its description. We may read or hear the four Vedas, the eighteen Puranas and the six Darshans, but these can never equal the sweet music of God's Name. So long as the soul does not contact the Sound within, it remains bereft of the Reality. It is like a bird that imitates the songs of others, but does not un-

derstand their meaning.

Whence Do We Get the Dhun?

This Melody ceaselessly resounds in every human being. It emanates from God Himself. It is resounding day and night, but it is God's gift. By obtaining it the soul merges in the Lord. The music resounds within. It is only a highly-evolved soul, however, who can put us in contact with it. It is through His Grace that one can attain it. But Sahaj Dhun one can acquire only in the company of Saints. When this happens, one is able to merge in the Lotus Feet of the Lord and is freed forever from woe and misery. By steadfast devotion at the Feet of the Master one attains freedom from the clutches of the Negative Power. Kal is mighty and powerful. No one can conquer him. Yet even Kal remains away from Dhun.

The inner Melody is resounding ceaselessly. It is eternal. But in spite of its ringing day and night in everybody, we remain poor. We are deprived of this treasure. It lies latent in us, but we quit the scene of life without awakening to it. We never care to dig for the treasure. It is only when we meet a Master and follow his instructions that we become aware of it and open the knot of the material and the conscious.

The Dhun is wide-awake within. Together with it there is Light. Those persons who may have acquired powers to perform miracles, although they may sit long in meditation, remain unaware of it. They assert that there is only 'silence' within and nothing else. If they were to contact a genuine Adept, they would realize both Light and Sound within and would then be free of doubts, suspicions and dissensions.

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The Sahaj Dhun does not reveal itself automatically. It comes about only through Simran and Dhyān. On its manifestation, one gains salvation. This is the real 'Arti' that continues without ceasing. It ends only at the time of death. In the Sikh Scriptures it has been termed 'Kirtan'. This true worship, in which resounds the Divine Music, is realized through a Master who has himself conquered death.

The real adoration of the soul is the Katha, Kirtan, Rag, Nad or Dhun, which pleases God. When this is heard the devotees' desires are fulfilled.

Where can we get this Dhun? God is our real Lord. In His Court resounds the Divine Melody. When a devotee is able to still his wandering mind and, with the help of a Master, gains access to Daswan Dwar (the Tenth Door), there he drinks the Elixir of Life. It is at this place that the Master showers Ambrosia and the Sound Current resounds. Sahaj-Dhun then manifests in the body. By listening to it one subdues the mind, and the temple of the body becomes sublime.

The Shabd in this temple has five resonances. These are the guide-posts for our journey home wards. Therefore this Dhun is also called the five Sounds. When the soul currents rise up, after leaving the six body centers (chakras), the Dhun manifests itself. The Dhun emanates from the Lord's Home and reverberates in all of us in the forehead, between the two eyebrows.

Who is Eligible for the Dhun?

To obtain Dhun it is essential for one to be the disciple of a Perfect Master. Dhun manifests itself only in the devotee of a Master. It appears only when the course of

Contemplation is completed. When the devotee attunes to Dhun, he realizes the inexpressible Truth.

Shabd is a Royal Road to God-Realization. It is by traversing this road that the devotee reaches the Court of the Lord, which is Sach Khand. There he meets with no obstacles. He constantly dwells upon Naam and remains steeped in it. Both the Negative Power and Maya remain away from Dhun and do not cross the path of a devotee.

Fruits of Dhun

Mind is not amenable to control, even though millions of ordinary methods may be tried. Yogis of the past tried all their techniques and failed; the intellectuals gained nothing from philosophical discussions and critical commentaries; the efforts of anchorites performing penances and austerities proved abortive; the learned use all their knowledge, but with intellect and cleverness alone they failed to subdue the mind. The only remedy for controlling the mind is to listen to the Sound Current. No second way exists.

When the mind listens to the Shabd Dhun, it is completely enraptured by the bliss that Dhun confers. One who has joined his consciousness with Dhun goes beyond the reach of Kal, the Negative Power, and thus ends the ages-long cycle of birth and rebirth. The mind becomes still after hearing the sweet Melody, with the result that one's ego vanishes and one gains his heart's desire.

The Shabd Dhun permeates all beings, and by listening to it one becomes a Saint, God's Name then dwells in the heart and one is attuned to Him. It is through the aid of Dhun that the Soul merges in the Lord.

CHAPTER 4. DYING WHILE LIVING

Everyone has to die someday. Whether man or beast, rich or poor, healthy or diseased, nobody escapes death. All have to pass through its gate. This soul that has taken the physical form has to leave it. Everybody knows that he has to quit this world someday, but he knows not when.

Death is real, but life (in this world) is unreal. The Bible says:

Dust thou art, and to dust returns. We have never cared to think about what kind of a journey lies beyond the gates of death. We lament the death of others. But actually, we should be concerned with our own end and should prepare ourselves for our own end and should prepare ourselves for our own life beyond death.

What is death? Do we feel any pain at the time of death? In the Bhagvad Gita there is a statement to the effect that the pain of death is so acute that it is equivalent to being stung simultaneously by a hundred thousand scorpions (the sting of one scorpion is exceedingly painful).

And the Koran says:

The pain of death may be likened to a thorny shrub passed into the body. In the Sikh Scriptures also there are references to the pain of death.

What kind of country do we have to pass through after

death? Whom are we to deal with? We must ponder over these questions. The Scriptures make occasional mention of this subject, but we pay little heed to them, for we always believe them to be either fantasies or fairy tales, or efforts to wean people away from sin, or to induce them to perform good deeds. We have to cross the gates of death. No one can be an exception to this. Saint Paul says:

Death is the last enemy to be conquered. We should not shut our eyes to this subject.

It is our common experience that whenever we have to go to another country, we make preparations for it and carry with us the necessary funds. We make arrangements for the means of transport, be it an automobile, a horse-drawn carriage or a railway train. We write a letter to a friend in that country, and also decide about where to stay. We are so careful in these worldly matters that we never undertake a journey without making adequate arrangements. When we have to go to a new country, we even provide for a guide to accompany us. Yet for the journey after death, which hangs over our heads like the Sword of Damocles, and which we all must undertake in due course, we care very little. Have we arranged for food, which is Naam or Shabd, for this journey? Have we decided upon a guide, or a Master (Guru) who has personal knowledge and experiences to accompany us? Have we ever thought of the place where we are to stay? Leaving aside these matters, we are even completely ignorant of our destination and of the person who can help us to get there. Nay, we have even forgotten death.

We are very clever about our worldly affairs and always make appropriate arrangements for their successful prosecution. But with regard to death, which has no time fixed for it and may come at any time – in childhood, in

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youth, or in old age – we have never given a moment's thought.

A Master alone knows everything about death. At the time of death, when family and children, our wealth, possessions and body, all leave us, it is the Perfect Master alone who accompanies the disciple. For this reason He is our only true and genuine friend.

The Perfect Master is a true guide in the Astral, Causal and the higher purely spiritual regions. That is why the Scriptures have strongly emphasized the need for us to meet such Masters and to keep constantly dwelling upon them in our mind. In this way alone can we strike at the very root of transmigration and achieve everlasting bliss.

The Saints have solved the mystery of death. They leave the human body every day and travel into the Astral and Causal regions. In their company we learn the means by which we too can triumph over death.

Death is not to be feared. It is only the name given to the phenomenon of the soul leaving the body. After discarding the physical body, the soul ascends to the Astral, Causal, and higher regions. In Persian this phenomenon is called "Intakal", which means to undergo change. It is merely the withdrawal of the soul from the gross senses, and its entrance into finer regions. It is merely giving up the present garment, namely, the body. It does not mean annihilation. There is life after death, although we may not be able to see it. All Saints accept this principle.

What Happens at the Time of Death and After?

To solve this riddle, people have spared no efforts. The intellect fails. The learned and the illiterate are equally

helpless in resolving this mystery. The reason is that no one has returned after death to relate to us his knowledge. Again and again the thought crosses our mind, how satisfying it would be if someone had gone to the regions beyond death and had returned to narrate his actual experiences! We merely make guesses, but with no success. No telescope is able to see the regions beyond death, nor are they accessible to the airplane. These instruments and machines can merely tell us a little about the material regions. They are of no value where the higher regions are concerned.

This subject has been dealt with at length by the Saints. They have described the method of passing through the Gate of Death and of conquering death. By following this method, a devotee can also pass through the Gate of Death and travel through the regions beyond it. He leaves and returns to his physical body at will. While doing this he is completely conscious, and whatever scenes he witnesses he vividly remembers.

Plutarch described the state at the time of death as follows:

At the moment of death, the soul experiences the same impressions and passes through the same processes as are experienced by those who are initiated into the Great Mysteries.

Those who follow the instructions of a True Master die daily – while living. They go into the regions above, and they come back into the same physical body at will.

By Simran all the active energy in the body is concentrated at the eye center; by Contemplation it is fixed there; and by means of the Sound Current it ascends to higher regions. When consciousness separates from the body, it

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is known as dying while living. The practitioner leaves his body in the same way that the soul leaves it at the time of death. The difference is only this – that his connection with the physical body is not completely broken. There is a silver cord, referred to in the Bible (Ecc. 12:6), by means of which one can leave the body and return to it at will and be at all times connected with the body. In this manner he gets an insight into death while living. He travels in the Astral, the Causal and the higher regions, and becomes fully familiar with them. He is able to meet and talk with the inhabitants of these regions.

One of the benefits of the teachings of the Saints is that a disciple crosses the Gate of Death in a state of happiness and thus conquers it. This is the experience of all disciples who have been blessed with the Grace of the Master. It is not merely talk or a fable taken from some book of Holy Scriptures. People in general, whether literate or illiterate, believe that no one knows what lies beyond death and that no one has ever returned. They are afraid of the very name of death, for they know nothing about it nor as to how it comes about.

But the Saints teach us how to go beyond death while living. Whoever desires to learn this from them can easily do so and thus be free of ignorance. Death has no fear for a follower of the Path of the Saints. If one learns the art of dying while living, he can forever end the cycle of birth and rebirth. He loses all fear of death, for every day he crosses its gate. Therefore, Saints eulogize the state of dying while living and teach the manner of doing it. Death is sweet if a person can die while living.

Dadu says:

Oh Dadu learn to die first, for everyone has to die soon or late. The

Koran also enjoins that one should die before his death. This does not mean that one should commit suicide. After death every soul has to go helplessly to the Astral and higher regions. But the Scriptures enjoin: Where you have to go after death, go there by dying while living. Practice such a yoga as will take you to the regions above during your sojourn in this world.

Saints die while living, many times a day at will, and traverse the upper realms. They sever their connections with the physical world during their spiritual practice, and then return to the world. They have no difficulty in doing this.

Dying while living is not accomplished easily. The method can be gained only through the Grace of a Master. Only that person can die while living who has subdued his mind and curbed his desires and cravings, and has annihilated his ego. This is not as simple as it may seem. It is not as easy to do as it is to talk about. One achieves it by renouncing all desires for the world. So long as desires assail the body, the soul cannot succeed in leaving it. It is only by detaching oneself from the body and mind that one can die while living. When for the first time the soul leaves the pot of clay (body) during practice, it has to pass through the Gate of Death. Giving up the world and its desires and surrendering completely to the ever-helpful Master, let your soul rise to higher regions. You will experience no trouble.

The body is an ocean of Spirituality which none can fathom. Only one who dies while living can obtain pearls of super-consciousness from it. Such a one, if he enters the ocean of his own body even once, can recover a treasure of super-consciousness from it. Otherwise, the treasure remains completely hidden.

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One who dives deep in the ocean and rises up into the sky will make the higher regions his abode and will realize the jewel of the Lord (Hari). So long as we yearn for life (in this world) we can never obtain this precious Jewel. It is through the Grace of the Lord that a rare devotee who dies while living can find this Jewel. If you wish to realize God, you must die while living, for it is impossible to attain Him so long as you do not die. So long as you cherish worldly desires, God- Realization will not come to you.

A person who dies while living lives forever. One who looks upon life in this world and death with the same attitude, is also free from death. This dying while living has nothing to do with being cremated or buried. It is a state or condition in which the Master bestows eternal life on his disciples.

Maulana Rumi says:

It is not death that will take you. It is a tomb. Death is a change that will usher you into light from darkness, and bestow eternal bliss upon you. You need have no fear of death, for apart from the physical body you have other bodies. Therefore, do not be afraid to come out of this body.

We can never realize true life so long as we do not go beyond the domain of death or, in other words, so long as we are not born into the subtle higher regions.

Christ says:

*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.
(John 3:3)*

Maulana Rumi says:

Oh friend! If you wish to attain life eternal, then die before death overtakes you. Oh good-natured friend! Die before death overtakes you, surrender your life to the Lord, and thus walk away from this life. So long as you do not die while living, how can you ever get the fruit of Life? Therefore, die while living and avail yourself of the value of this human life.

Maulana Rumi further says:

O man, you have died a number of times but have remained covered with veils, for you have failed to realize the secret of real death.

Kabir says:

The whole world keeps dying after death, for no one dies the real death. I have died a death that will make me never die again. So long as you do not know how to die while living, you will not gain freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

You cannot reach the top of a house unless you ascend all the steps of a ladder. If there were a hundred steps and a person should climb only ninety-eight, he would still remain ignorant about the housetop. If a well were a hundred feet deep and a person had ninety-nine feet of rope, he would fail to fill his vessel with water. In the same way, so long as the soul does not go completely beyond the domain of the body and the senses, it can never know the scenes of the upper realms.

Hafiz also says:

Oh man! So long as you do not go out of the body, how can you ever tread the path of Spirituality?

Only those persons who die while living can taste the fruits. Therefore, so long as the soul does not leave the body completely during one's lifetime, births and deaths

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will continue.

When the soul ascends within, it comes across the galaxy of stars. So long as the soul does not cross this region, it is not able to behold the sun and the moon nor the Radiant Form of the Master.

Oh wise man! So long as the veil of the body does not vanish, the Radiant Form of the Master does not manifest. Therefore, make a real death your own and remove this veil of the body. Oh man living in the Will of God! (Gurmukh) the Master confers this death upon you to enable you to live eternally. So long as you remain alive on this earth, you should be able to leave your body at will and traverse the higher regions.

The spiritual regions are the abode of your soul. If a person dies such a death, his soul need not return to this world any more.

Maulana Rumi says:

Oh soul! Your abode is in heaven. You are an inhabitant of that place. Unfortunately, you have become prisoner in this pot of clay.

Swami Ji also affirms:

Your abode is there, where the physical body does not exist. Why are you then tied down to this physical body?

A person whose soul has traversed the upper realms, before death has overtaken him, can alone understand what it is to die while living. Intellect is helpless to comprehend this phenomenon.

The chief essential in Spirituality is to die while living, because it is after such a death that the soul becomes really alive. Most people in the world are ignorant of this true

path, for they are afraid to die while living.

Where can we find this true spiritual knowledge? We can do so by transcending our intellectual knowledge. The Real Being can be found only by going above the physical being. Self-realization can come only by transcending the physical self. So long as you do not die a real death, how can you gain these benefits? Therefore, Oh man! Go and die this true death so you will fulfill the real purpose of human life. Oh ignorant man! So long as you do not die this true death, never will you be able to stand in God's presence.

This is the real secret of dying before death. Only by dying such a death does one become eligible for the Grace of God. There is no other method by which one can be accepted in the Court of the Lord.

Remember that the gracious look of the Master is better than a thousand efforts. It is highly rewarding, for it pulls the soul out of the nine portals and collects it at the Tenth Gate. Our own sharpness, cleverness and effort are not fully beneficial, for thereby one may be led astray and have to face numerous privations. The Grace of the Master one can gain by dying while living. In other words, it is obtained by making the soul currents leave the body and concentrate at the Third Eye. It is only the dauntless disciple, who has full faith in the Master, who realizes this Grace. It is the Grace that brings about devotion; and it is devotion that entitles one to His Grace. Both go hand in hand.

But such a death, namely, dying while living, can be had only through the Grace of the Master. There is no other way. The lovers of the Lord, by dying while living, ever drink the wine of happiness and bliss. This is the privilege

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of those to whom the Master Himself offers the 'Wine'.

Shamas-i-Tabriz says:

How wonderful it would be if you should take your soul out of the body some night, and rise above to higher realms after leaving the 'tomb' of your body. If your soul should do this, you would forever escape death's sword. You would enter a garden that knows no autumn.

The natural death can relieve us from the worries of the world; but if we die while living we are rid of the sufferings of all the regions and end the cycle of birth and death. It is for this reason that Maulana Rumi boldly asserts:

Oh Soul! Wake up, rise above before death overtakes you; and behold the kingdom of everlasting peace and bliss.

What really is this dying while living? The headquarters of the soul in the body is at the eye center, and from here the entire body receives its energy currents. In the practice of dying while living, there is no need to stop breathing. Simply collect your full attention at the eye center by doing Simran, thus depriving the senses of their motive energy. The body will then appear as a corpse. In other words, the gross senses should cease to function and the fine ones get awakened, so that the soul can rise to subtle regions and behold their glory.

The soul cannot behold the spiritual regions with the physical eyes nor can it hear the Divine Music with the physical ears. There the feet do not carry one. Nor are the hands of any help. Even the tongue can give no aid.

Guru Angad gives a description of the condition of dying while living. He says:

You have to see without eyes. You have to hear without ears. You have to walk without feet. You have to work and speak, using neither hands nor tongue. Even while living you have to die, and only then can you hear the 'Word' of God and meet your Beloved.

Tulsi Das also affirms this condition.

There are many methods by which the soul can be concentrated at its headquarters, that is, by which one can die while living. But the method of Simran, Dhyan and Dhun is the easiest and best means of achieving this state without difficulty.

By Simran and Dhyan the soul collects and enters the Tenth Gate. By listening to the Shabd Dhun it comes out, drawn upwards by the Shabd's magnetic force. Without these practices it is impossible to leave this pot of clay. No other method exists. Guru Arjan says:

Dying while living can be accomplished only through Guru's Shabd.

Only then does one ferry cross this ocean of phenomena. Swami Ji says in Sar Bachan:

Save Shabd, there is no other way to effect release from birth and death.

Dying with the help of Shabd, one attains everlasting life. A devotee of Shabd never dies a second time.

One who dies while living begins to tread the path that is exactly opposite to that of death. He attains the 'Sunn' state. He truly drinks nectar and becomes worthy of true devotion. Such a person attains God-Realization and is

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honored in the Court of the Lord.

The condition of dying while living is the result of the Master's Grace, listening to His Satsang, and devoting oneself to Naam Bhakti. It is only then that one crosses the ocean of life and is acclaimed in the Court of the Lord as having fulfilled the mission of human life.

The disciple or the devotee is the only one who works for everlasting bliss. In other words, he is the one who practices the Shabd that confers this bliss. Such a one knows both life and death, and treats them alike. Such a one is the beloved of the Lord.

The state of dying while living is the state of separating the conscious from the material. This is a highly evolved state. Such a person knows himself and his mind, and comprehends the mysteries of life. But this state can be achieved only by persons on whom descends the Grace of the Lord through an Adept.

CHAPTER 5. DEVOTION (BHAKTI)

Devotion is an age-old and innate quality of dedication, religious fervor and ardent attachment in man. It is described in many places in the Ved Mantras and the Upanishads. The Bhagwad Gita, Bhagwat Puran and other Scriptures also comment on devotion at considerable length. Guru Nanak also pointed out that the Vedas and other religious books have always extolled the value of devotion.

The night (of life) is dark but the Light within is pure. Bereft of the Name, all is worthless. The Vedas commend the song of devotion. He who hears and believes, sees the Light (within). The Shastras and Smrities too stress on the Name. (Adi Granth)

In the religious books of the Hindus two methods have been specified for attaining communion with God:

The path of (spiritual) knowledge – (Gyan Marg).
The path of love or devotion – (Bhakti-Marg or Rah-
ishq).

Lord Krishna clearly states in the Gita:

The path of devotion is superior to the path of Knowledge. But amongst all seekers, I consider him to be superior and foremost who thinks of Me within himself and contemplates on Me with love and devotion. (Gita, 6-47)

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The path of knowledge is also described in the Gita, but at the same time it is very clearly asserted that the path of knowledge cannot be followed successfully without faith and devotion.

Oh Arjuna! Those persons who have no faith in Me, do not have communion with Me and are born and die again and again in this transitory world. They do not attain Salvation.

God cannot be known through the sense organs. Neither can He be known through the intellect or by reasoning. He can be realized only by devotion. And austerities and incarnations without devotion are of no avail.

What is Bhakti?

The word Bhakti in Sanskrit means the repetition of Holy Names or prayers of devotion, remembrance or worship. To give one's love and attachment to a highly qualified person or to the Deity is called devotion. In other words, unceasing attention and love coming from the heart of a person for a spiritually advanced and noble soul is termed devotion.

Guru Nanak Sahib said that God Himself is devotion. Guru Amar Das stated that devotion to God is love for Him, and this love cannot be achieved by any outward show.

Devotion is a quality by which the soul rises upwards and attains communion with God. Thus God is attracted downwards towards His devotee and comes and dwells within him.

Narad Rishi says:

Ardent love for the Lord is devotion.

Devotion to the Lord is a strong magnetic power by which the attention is removed from worldly objects and becomes fully concentrated in the Lord. There is thus no interference by ones intellect or power of reasoning. Devotion is the act of withdrawing our attachment from all directions and fixing it only in the Lord.

A true devotee alone can perform devotion, because his mind and his body are completely engrossed in love and adoration of the Lord; so much so that God Himself comes and meets him.

This type of devotion is not material. It brooks no interference. It is a strong magnetic current which attracts the soul towards God and connects it with its Beloved. A tiny glimpse or idea of such a love is partially portrayed in some of the rare types of true love in this world, because the principle underlying worldly love and spiritual devotion is the same. The only difference is that worldly love is transitory and is subject to dissolution. It cannot give us the same high degree of happiness and eternal bliss as does spiritual love and devotion.

Everybody wishes to attain the bliss of God-realization.

Nothing is dearer, oh Nanak! To Him, than Bhakti. (AdiGranth)

The reward of true devotion is communion with God (God-realization). And devotion to God is the highest form of practice by which to achieve communion with the Lord, as compared to yoga, knowledge, contemplation, repetition, penance, pilgrimages, worship and so forth.

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Guru Arjan Sahib says:

Some are busy getting happiness out of yoga, worldly pleasures, knowledge, contemplation, worship, penance, going to holy rivers and religious places, and reading Scriptures. Nothing yields, oh Nanak! greater happiness than Bhakti. (Adi Granth)

Devotion is the method by which one can meet the Infinite Lord who is eternal and deathless. Shandlya Rishi says:

Devotion consists in withdrawing one's love, ideas and thoughts from worldly objects and in thinking of the Lord alone, and in keeping oneself wholly engrossed in this thought. It leads to lasting communion or contact with the Lord, by withdrawing one's attention from the objects of the world.

Shankaracharya also praises the value of devotion. He says:

Of all the methods for the achievement of Salvation, devotion has the highest place. To search for one's own self is devotion. It may be difficult. There may be certain barriers or restraining ties, but it has the highest and the purest aim, and one should not deviate from it. It is like our association with people. We always try to leave evil associates, but we cling to good ones. Similarly, we should abandon our attachment to the world and its objects and cling to attachment or devotion to the Lord, which will withdraw our attention from worldly objects and connect us with Him. We should cling to that type of attachment.

Devotion is an Elixir because it gives us the gift of Eternal Life. And the fountain of that Elixir is in the hands of a Satguru or Master. If one is able to create conditions of devotion in himself, then he himself becomes eternal or everlasting, like the object to whom he has given his devotion.

The taste of devotion is intoxicating. It attracts the mind and creates a condition of intoxicating bliss, which cannot be described either by pen or tongue. It is impossible for anyone to express the joy and happiness which springs from Bhakti. It is beyond description. Its taste is the prerogative of the soul alone. The enjoyment of its taste may be compared to the case of a dumb man enjoying sweets; although he enjoys the taste, he cannot describe it.

Mira Bai says:

The world is happy with the intoxication of wine, but I have drunk deep from the fountain of love and devotion. Day and night I am intoxicated with its bliss.

Difference Between Love and Devotion

Devotion should be of such a nature that a person, while living in this world and doing his daily work, should surrender everything to the Lord and should not forget Him even for a moment; and if he were to do so, he would become restless.

Lord Krishna says:

I consider him to be the highest yogi who has faith in and devotion for me, and who, in that state of faith and devotion, repeats my Name.

Bhakti is described in the Krishna Leela. It is also briefly described in Bhagwat. The gopies (cowherd girls) had dedicated everything – their physical selves, their mind, their souls and their possessions – to their Lord. Their minds were always engrossed in remembering Him and they were always thinking of Him, so much so that they

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would see their Lord everywhere. To these lovelorn gopies, Krishna one day said:

Oh gopies! You have broken the iron-like strong hoops of worldly attachments and have merged yourselves in me with devotion and love. This state of your mind is beyond any reproach, and I am not capable of repaying a love like yours. Therefore, you should kindly relieve me of that burden.

Krishna once sent a message to the gopies through Udhava, and while giving the message to Udhava his throat was choked and his eyes were shedding tears of love. He said:

Oh Udhava! These gopies have surrendered their minds and their hearts to me. I am their life. They have forgotten all their worldly duties for my sake, and all their worldly responsibilities have been surrendered at my feet. I am, therefore, always thinking of them. These women of Gokal consider me to be the highest object of love and they are restless in my absence. When they remember me, they forget about their own bodies and minds. And now they are just living from day-to-day in the hope that I will soon return to their village. They are one with me and I am one with them.

Udhava went to their village and spoke to the gopies about Yoga. He was surprised to see their condition, for they were having the vision of Krishna both inside and outside at all times of the day and night. The gopies themselves told him about their state of mind in the following words:

There is no room left in our hearts for anything other than our Krishna. That Lord is in every pore of our body. When we walk or talk, when we are awake or asleep, we cannot forget; nor can we be away from the vision of our Lord even for one moment. Udhava, you have given us a very elevating discourse and we are extremely grateful to you; but we are helpless because our minds and bod-

ies are full of devotion to him. An ocean cannot be contained in a pitcher, and our eyes are now restless to see our Lord Krishna.

They then continued:

Oh Udhava! We are not capable of doing any yoga practice. Being women, we cannot understand the yoga of knowledge. How should we do our spiritual practice? You ask us to close our eyes wherein the image of our Lord is always present. Good fellow! You have a sweet voice and a sweet tongue, but we are not prepared to listen to your deceitful words. You ask us to keep our hair tied and our ears torn like those of a yogi. Who is prepared to take this trouble? You ask us to besmear our bodies with ashes (Babhut) and to give up the use of sandalwood. You do not know that we are burning in the fire of separation. The Lord for whom the yogis do such austerities and roam from place because they are separated from Him – that same Lord is seen by us within. He cannot be separated from us even for a moment, just as our shadows cannot be separated from us.

The gopies then told Udhava:

Oh Udhava! Please go and give your yoga teachings to people who are suffering because of separation from the Lord. Here, He is with us at all times, for we have become one with our dear Lord.

Devotion, love and intense love (bhakti, prem and ishq) are three separate names, but they have the same meaning. There is no difference. There is, however, a slight difference in the degree of their intensity.

Devotion is a spontaneous magnetic current which attracts one towards one's Beloved. And love consists in merging oneself into one's Beloved. It is one-pointed attention and attachment to the Lord. In other words, it is the culmination of devotion.

Devotion Consists in One-Pointed Attention and Needs Only One Support

Devotion is not a subject for reasoning or even for thinking. It is an intuitive emotion of love. The intellect cannot comprehend it. It has a strong and spontaneous magnetic power which is beyond one's control, and which attracts one to an object seen or even unseen.

A devotee must have faith. Firm belief is a prerequisite. When that belief takes the form of faith it turns into devotion, and eventually it culminates in love. Worldly attractions or pleasures do not interest such a devotee. Only love for the Lord and a strong attraction towards Him remain.

To remove from the mind all desires for the things of the world and turn the mind towards the Lord alone, is devotion. Thus all our desires and all our actions are surrendered to the Lord. The ego vanishes automatically, the devotee thinks that everything belongs to the Lord, and that he himself also belongs to Him, and ultimately he merges in Him.

Shankaracharya says:

Oh Lord, although there is no difference between you and me, yet I am yours and you are not me! Why? The waves arise from the ocean but the ocean does not come out of the waves.

Guru Nanak at one time was employed in the provision store of a king and was once weighing some grain on a pair of scales. After he had weighed twelve times and was weighing the thirteenth (tera), he called out *tera, tera!* (Besides the figure 13, *tera* also means yours). He was so absorbed in the love of the Lord that as soon as he said

tera, his mind's attention immediately centered on the Lord. As he continued weighing, instead of going to the next number and the succeeding numbers, he constantly cried out, "tera, tera". Oh Lord, I am yours. I am yours, and this is all yours.

All worldly ties are broken and only the support of the Lord remains for one who is engaged in devotion without any idea of self. So long as such devotion is directed to lower beings instead of the Lord, it is not the highest type. But as soon as the devotion is directed towards God alone, leaving no room for worldly objects, reasoning, intellect or other supports, then instinctively a voice comes from the individual's mind, uttering the following words:

Oh Lord, you are the support of my life. I bow to you hundreds and thousands of times. While sitting, walking, sleeping or awake, I am thinking only of you. You are my support, my family, my strength, my wealth and everything. (Adi Granth)

All observances, except devotion, viz., Karma (Actions), Gyan (Knowledge) and Yoga (Discipline) are performed with some effect. In devotion one has to seek only the support of God. So long as we depend on anything other than God, the temple of our mind (human body) does not become fit for God to enter.

Oh heart! You should vacate your house so that there will be room for your Lord to enter; otherwise He will go somewhere else. (Adi Granth)

Tulsi Das says:

I have the support of only one. He is my strength, He is my hope, and He is my faith. To my Guru I offer all my love, and I am restless for His Lotus Feet like the (chatrak) rain bird for a drop of

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rain.

Devotion, Action, Knowledge and Discipline (Bhakti, Karma, Gyan and Yoga)

Action, knowledge and discipline are practices of attaining communion with God. But devotion is both a practice and the reward of such a practice. For the path of knowledge and for the path of Yoga, one must have certain qualifications to be able to make any progress. But devotion can be performed by the weak, the sick, or even by one who is of low intellect. It is easier than the path of knowledge, because one does not fall or waver once he has taken up this path.

In the Gita there is mention of Gyan Marg (the path of knowledge) and of Bhakti Marg (the path of devotion) for attaining communion with God. But as already mentioned, Lord Krishna has given preference to devotion.

Some people think that knowledge is a means for achieving devotion, whereas others think that they are both interconnected. Narad Rishi believed devotion to be the means as well as the end. But another great Rishi of ancient times considered that both yoga and knowledge were essential for devotion because, according to him, devotion needs concentration and purity of mind, and these are considered to be the essential qualifications for knowledge and yoga.

The Bhagwat says:

Devotion to God creates knowledge. Such knowledge is the true knowledge, which results in attachment to the Lord. Mere superficial knowledge gives nothing, nor does devotion without faith. And knowledge without faith is also considered to be useless. (Chapter

4, Verses 29, 36, 49)

In the Granth Sahib it is stated:

You should follow the instructions of your Guru, because without devotion all types of intellectual actions are useless.

Tulsi Das says:

Bhakti is complete in itself and is not dependent on any other practice. On the other hand, knowledge and detachment are dependent upon it.

Devotion is Natural

The path of devotion is the easiest, and everybody is capable of treading it. The feeling of devotion is to be found in human beings and in some of the lower types of life like cattle, dogs and some other animals. It is a natural quality and is designed by God Himself. Everyone has it to some extent, although it is more developed in some than in others.

There are five different types of devotees:

Hirsi - Those who practice devotion only superficially, simply because they see others who are devoted and try to imitate them.

Arat - Restless persons

Jigyasu - Seekers

Artha Arthi - Selfish persons

Gyani - Intellectual persons

Hirsi: People of this type have no real desire for devotion, but when they see genuine devotees they imitate them and thus come into the company of Saints. Natural-

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ly, it takes a very long time for them to reach the stage of true devotion.

Arat: Those who become restless because of worldly troubles, as a result of which they seek the protection of the Lord. They believe God to be everything. This devotion is of two kinds. One is of a lower order, and the other is of a very high order. The devotion of a lower order is like that of a sheep dog for his master. Even if the shepherd is very poor or of a low status, to the dog he is the king of kings, and nothing can shake the dog from his devotion to his master. Such devotion is simple and ordinary. But gradually it becomes of a very high order, and in due course such a person desires nothing but love for God to be present in him. Such a devotee does not see the faults or weaknesses of the object of his devotion.

Jigyasu: A Jigyasu is a seeker who wants to know something about God. What he is able to learn, creates belief and then faith in Him. Then the feeling of devotion is naturally aroused. In the beginning, however, he tries to thwart his own ideal by reasoning. But gradually all his doubts are removed and he subsequently loves not only God but His creation also.

Artha Arthi: This is a person who has some worldly or religious purpose in mind, and indulges in devotion for an ulterior motive such as wealth, fame, power, and so forth. But when his selfish motives are fulfilled, he does not leave devotion. Naturally his love for and faith in the Lord, as a result of which he satisfied his ulterior motives, does not diminish. In the beginning he loves the devotees of the Lord and hates others, but gradually this is removed and in due course he loves all the creatures of the Lord.

Gyani: This is a different type of devotion from the other four types, because such a person, having knowledge, knows about action and reaction, about religion and spiritual matters, and he then becomes a devotee of the Lord with faith and love. Such a man is ready to make progress, and as soon as he has an opportunity to meet a Master; he is immediately successful on the Path.

The Principles of Devotion

The first principle underlying devotion is that God is the Creator of all and is omniscient. He is pure, flawless and whole. He is omnipresent. Human beings, the lower species of life, and in fact the entire universe are a sign of His existence. We are all His children. Hence there is a natural mutual affinity between ourselves and all others. For this reason we should respect our elders, be kind to those who are younger, be friendly with our equals, and we should also love our enemies.

Love your enemies. (St. Matthew 5:44 St. Luke 6:27, 35)

The second principle is that this universe is His creation, and it is all beautiful and full of happiness. Each one, of course, looks at this world according to the state or condition of his own mind.

The third principle is that one should be happy in the Will of God, and should always remain contented and grateful for whatever happens to him. Whatever is being done is for our own good. This is beyond any shadow of doubt. What we may consider as trouble has actually come in order to elevate the condition of our mind. It is well known that gold becomes purer and brighter when it is put into fire. Therefore, one should never complain.

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The fourth principle is that one should consider it to be the greatest sin to hurt the feelings of others. To provide comfort and happiness to others should be considered the highest obligation, because non-violence or non-hatred in thought, word and deed is the highest form of religious duty.

The fifth principle is that one should become a devotee by taking support from his Guru or Master, so that by being in contact with such a higher being one may also eventually attain the same stage.

One should never talk of I-ness. One should talk only of Him, so that in due course there will be nothing but Him. The highest aim of devotion is described in the following lines by Kabir:

I have been saying: 'Thou, Thou' and I have become Thou, myself having completely vanished. I am grateful for Thy Name, because by speaking it I see 'Thou' everywhere I look. To talk in terms of self is a very great evil. If you can be relieved of it; try to do so, because, oh Kabir! A piece of cotton cannot escape from the clutches of fire if it is brought into contact with it. You are in me and I am in you. How can I see any difference? And, whenever I wish to discover a difference, leaving you aside, I meet with trouble. When you are, I am not, because I have experienced this from all aspects. Whenever I see you, nothing remains of me. The rope of 'mine and thine' is completely tied around the people of the world, but this humble Kabir is not bound by it because he has the support of the Lord.

Prerequisites for Devotion

In order to be truly devoted it is necessary to believe in the omnipresence of the Lord. True devotees are always welcome at the Gates of God. They give their devotion to God through the grace of the Lotus Feet of Saints, because it is only through them that they are able to see God ev-

erywhere and are thus devoted to Him.

Devotion is a natural attribute of the heart. But this quality can be developed only through the grace of a True Master who is himself dyed in devotion to the Lord. The knowledge obtained from books is not sufficient.

Why should one be devoted to somebody else, and to whom should one be devoted? How should that devotion be performed? What methods should be used for that purpose? All these things can be learned from a Master.

Saint Ravi Das says:

The feeling of devotion in one's mind is not awakened without the company of Saints, and without such a feeling devotion is not complete.

Why Should We Be devoted?

The quality of devotion is working instinctively in all human beings. It is a natural inclination in everybody to live in communion or in happiness and joy with somebody else, because man by nature is a social being and is not content unless he is able to become one with the object of his affection. Till such a time he remains restless and his mind wavers.

You cannot see your face in ordinary plate glass, but if it is chemically made into a mirror, you can see your face in it. In a similar manner, if a pure heart is filled with devotion and love, that heart is able to see in itself the image of God.

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To Whom Should We Be devoted?

We should be devoted to that which is sublime, beautiful and perfect, which has a power of attraction like that of a powerful magnet and can draw the minds of others into its own, and which fills our minds with a peculiar happiness and tranquility. It is true that the feeling of devotion is not awakened towards anyone who does not possess the fullness of beauty and an attractive form.

In this world people have devotion of various kinds. Some are devoted to amassing wealth. Others are happy in devotion to their family. Still others take pleasure in becoming great in the eyes of society and try to acquire knowledge and artistic abilities.

The devotees of wealth work day and night ceaselessly and are able to amass some wealth, but this leads to a desire for amassing more and more. If we are able to save a thousand rupees, we are then naturally inclined to save more hundreds of thousands, and this money-amassing obsession completely overpowers us.

One who is greedy cannot, because of that greed, freely use his wealth, nor can he leave it. He is, therefore, burning in the secret fires of his greed. When one devotes himself to wealth, he is always afraid of thieves and is constantly thinking of how to keep his wealth safe in vaults or strong boxes. This worry becomes a part of his life. He is also afraid of his wealth being taken away by the powers that be. All comfort and peace of mind are destroyed by the constant worry.

Lord Ram Chandra says in the Yoga Vashisht:

By the amassing of wealth all good qualities are destroyed, in the

same manner as the heat of the sun dries up the drops of dew on the leaves of the trees.

A greedy person is extremely selfish because he is not capable of using his wealth for his own needs, and will not dole it out amongst the poor or others. So it is true that wealth is not worthy of our devotion. We were not born for amassing wealth, because wealth is like a shadow that lengthens and shrinks at different times, and when wealth goes, it causes a mental disturbance. Actually, wealth is for the use of man, and man was not born to be its slave.

Our relatives, our family and our community – all are subject to extinction by death. Nobody is free from death, and everybody is going his own way. If all these people are subject to death and separation, why should we attach oneself to them? They all have different temperaments and naturally there are differences of opinion. Consequently, devotion to them cannot be unchanging or always the same.

Devotion to one's community and to one's family is better than devotion to one's own self. And devotion to one's own nation is still better. But this has natural pitfalls because it gives rise to favoritism and group rivalry. Sometimes one has to do desirable and undesirable things in order to keep up one's own reputation, for one is always concerned about the criticism of others.

Yet it is desirable that a person engaged in devotion to his nation or country should be fearless of all criticism, should stick to his principles, and should not be afraid of any adverse opinion. Truth will not diminish and should never be abandoned.

Selfish people even go so far as to destroy the happi-

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ness of others for the fulfillment of their own desires. Such a person was Nero, the Emperor of Rome, who was fiddling while Rome was burning.

People who are absorbed in devotion to their own family often create enmities with others. People who are devotees of their country also quarrel with each other and with other countries. The fire of war and enmity in the world is entirely due to the pugnacious tendencies of such people.

Similarly, those who are proud of their intellectual attainments are often fond of arguments and wrangling, which lead them farther away from the Truth. Such people always try to fight on the plane of intellect. The egotism of knowledge swells their heads, and they are so intoxicated by it that at times they even forget their principles. Brother becomes an enemy of brother, and by the help of science, technology and learning, weapons of destruction are produced. This type of knowledge is constantly on the increase and is a cause of conflict and misery.

All these things – wealth, family, intellect, and so on – may be good for our own use and happiness, but they must be used properly; and because it is not possible to do so, they are not worthy of our devotion. They are incomplete in themselves, and are not permanent.

Amongst all the types of devotion, the highest is that which is offered to God (Sat Purush), who is One, Unchangeable and Indestructible. He is the Creator of all, and we are all His children. By loving God we are also able to love all His creatures, because we are all brothers and God is the Father of all of us. Through this love there flows the current of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

Devotion to the Master Guru Bhakti

We have not seen God. How can we worship Him or offer our devotion to Him? Under these circumstances, whom should we worship? Who is the being in whom God has manifested, and who is able to create the right conditions for devotion and for helping us to increase our love for Him? Such a person is none other than a real Master. In Him there is the spark of Truth. He is a living example of the beauty of Truth and Spirituality and is able to guide His disciples on the right path by drawing their minds in the right direction.

The best and the highest method of meeting God is to love the Master and to remain at His Lotus Feet. This is the first step of the ladder towards God-Realization. Devotion to the Master is to love Him. It is to live according to His orders and directions – physically as well as mentally. In other words, one should give away one's heart to one's Master.

It is essential that we give our heart to our Master, for, when one gives away one's heart, one automatically gives one's whole body and puts one's entire life in the hands of the Master. If our life and our body are not ours because they have been surrendered to the Master, then where are our religious beliefs? They too are all merged in the Master.

This body, mind and life – and even our religion, all bind us to this world. As soon as they are surrendered at the Lotus Feet of the Master, we become detached and shall not be born again. Then nothing remains in the way of the progress of the soul towards God-Realization, and our running about in this world is finished. This is only

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a small fraction of the benefits resulting from devotion to the Master. Actually, the advantages are so great and so numerous that they are beyond description.

Devotion consists in fixing the form of the Master in our heart. This devotion should be similar to that of the chakor (moon-bird) for the moon. Then love is awakened in the heart of the disciple. So long as love is not of that type, the effort to create conditions for such a love should be continued. Once devotion of this high type is established in a human heart, the soul automatically starts rising upward and is able to catch hold of the Sound Current.

Those who try to listen to the Sound Current without having true devotion for their Master are ignorant. Because one listens to the Sound Current only by the grace and mercy of a true Master. The magnetic power of His love and our devotion attract the soul towards higher regions.

Swami Ji says:

If a person tries to follow the practice of listening to Shabd Dhun (Sound Current) without devotion to the Master, he is ignorant, because Shabd will be heard only by the Grace of the Master, and it is the Master alone who will pull the souls upwards.

A Gurumukh is a person who is a true devotee of his Guru. By being a Gurumukh one is able to open the gateway for the soul to soar towards the higher regions.

Devotion to the Master is the foundation of all practices. The other methods are all branches leading from it. Love for the Master is a unique treasure. It is impossible to describe this state of devotion in cold print.

A mother's love for her child is beyond human description. It binds the two together and there is no power that can break it. But love for the Master is far above the love of a mother for her child.

A lover loves his beloved very much. A glow of happiness lights up his face as soon as he sees his beloved. But the Master has a unique spiritual beauty and magnetic power of attraction. His form radiates thousands of blissful currents of attraction which invigorate the body and the mind.

Even if one were to see the Master's face at all times, or for hundreds of times and with hundreds of eyes, the mind would never be satiated, because every time that face is seen it is beheld with a new light and a greater radiance.

Just as the sparkling wine in a wine glass pleases the mind of a drinker, similarly, devotion to the Master gives physical strength and mental happiness to the devotee of a Guru when he beholds the beautiful eyes of his Master.

A fish cannot live without water, because without it, it dies gasping for water. Similarly, a Gurumukh is sustained by spiritual energy as a result of diving deep into the ocean of love for the Guru. For him, nearness to the Guru is heaven, and to be away from the Guru makes him burn in the fires of hell.

A papiha (rain-bird) is fond of rain drops, and will drink no other water. Similarly, a true devotee will not look with the same amount of love at any person other than his own Guru, because his Guru is the support of his life, and the disciple will not accept any other support.

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Love for the Master is sweet and magnetic, and is able to bring happiness to the disciple.

On beholding the Guru, there is an indescribable ecstasy which is spontaneous and permeates every pore of the body. Even by having a small taste of this ecstatic state the soul is steeped in the Master's love.

Guru's Simran (remembrance or repetition), Dhyan (beholding him internally or externally), and listening to the Shabd (Sound Current), as instructed by the Guru, are the three effective practices for purifying the mind.

It is true that love is not awakened unless there is real beauty in the beloved. The nightingale will hover over fragrant flowers, but it will never go near artificial or paper flowers. The spiritual beauty of the Guru attracts thousands of souls by awakening love in them, and takes them beyond the limits of birth and death.

The Satguru is beyond description. We poor souls are not worthy of worshiping Him. Even the gods and goddesses are not able to comprehend Him. Only those who have the grace of the Lord are able to know Him.

We can offer devotion only to someone who is superior to ourselves, and we are able to imbibe His qualities only to the extent of our love for and faith in Him. A Master is full of spiritual qualities and powers, and we shall imbibe His spiritual qualities and powers to the extent of our love and devotion to Him.

When we love someone, we imbibe his qualities and become like him. In accordance with this principle, if we worship our Master, we will imbibe all His qualities and we shall become like Him. The beauty of the beloved al-

ways enters the life and body of the lover.

Everything exerts a definite influence in its immediate vicinity. An electric bulb will spread its light up to a certain limit. Similarly, fire will spread its heat within a certain sphere. Water in tanks or pools has the effect of making things cool in its own area. In the same manner, every conscious being spreads his influence within a certain area. Spiritual currents emanating from him will affect persons coming in contact with them. This is known as the personal aura. Whoever comes near is definitely influenced.

We get warmth by sitting near a fire and cold by going in the vicinity of ice, in the same manner, if we sit near a highly evolved soul, His spiritual rays will certainly bestow His influence on us. There is, however, one necessary qualification, that is we are benefited according to the degree of our love for, faith in, and devotion to, Him.

Just as water cannot enter a stone, even if the stone is immersed in it for a long time, similarly, those who are without devotion are as impregnable as the stone. (Adi Granth)

A human being is composed of physical body, mind and soul, and devotion is rendered with the help of all the three.

The physical body consists of five gross elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth. The finer elements of the senses are derived from these and consist of: hearing, touch or feeling, seeing, taste and smell.

When we sit near the Master and listen to His words with our ears or hearing faculty, that is known as shabd bhakti (sound or hearing devotion).

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When we touch the Master's feet with our hands, it is called "sparsh bhakti" or devotion by touch. When we bow before Him and the Master places His hands over our head or embraces us, that is also touch devotion.

When we behold the Master without blinking and steadily gaze at Him, that is known as Rup (form) devotion.

With our tongue we repeat His Names, and also eat parshad which is bestowed by Him in His grace. That is known as "taste" devotion.

Imbibing the sweet fragrance emanating from the spiritual currents that radiate from the body of a Master is known as "smell" devotion.

There is another type of sense devotion which is popularly known as pashu bhakti (devotion through the grosser senses). This is performed only by those who still harbor animal desires. Such people have not yet developed vivek (discrimination). They are full of narrow-mindedness and religious bigotry, which cause them a great deal of trouble and pain. The majority of people in this world are of this type. They are deeply engrossed in personal dissensions and quarreling, and in fighting cases in law courts.

Some of these people are known as guru pashu i.e. they lack discrimination and cling stubbornly to their beliefs. Others are called admi pashu. Still others are known as aurat pashu. They are narrow-minded and dogmatic in their views and beliefs. Such people do not imbibe the truly noble impressions and qualities of their Guru. If a pitcher is kept inverted, rain water will never enter it.

Such persons sometimes come under the influence of their own convictions and even act against the instructions or wishes of their Master. This causes them trouble and is also painful to their Master. Real devotion is done with discrimination.

Kabir says:

All the people in the world are either blind followers of a guru (master, guide or teacher), or of men, or of women, or of religions. But a man in the right sense of the word is he who exercises discrimination and caution in all matters.

The second type of devotion is mental devotion. A person's heart (antahkaran) has four different attributes: chit, manas, buddhi and ahankar. Chit is used for the reception of the Master's words. Man (pronounced mun) accepts those words. Buddhi uses discrimination in understanding and making use of those words. Ahankar is the quality of firmness in following the words or instructions. Such practice is known as mental devotion to the Master, and it can be achieved only by concentration of the mind. The ears, eyes and the tongue are controlled and concentrated, and contact is made with the Naam and the Master. This is done by means of three practices which are known as Simran (repetition or remembrance), Dhyan (contemplation on the Form of the Master), and Shabd (listening to the Sound Current).

These practices are to be performed externally as well as internally. Externally, we do the Simran of the Master at all times, see the Master's Form and contemplate on it, and listen to the instructions and talks of the Master. By these three external practices, love for the Master will increase, we will be able to come near to the Master (within) and we will be able to concentrate our attention within.

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The spiritual powers of the Master will enter our minds and will enable us to make our contemplation steady. Then our soul will be able to catch hold of the Sound Current and soar upwards. At the time of Initiation, a Master imparts the full details of these three practices to his disciple.

Sound, touch, form (sight), taste and smell are the five types of preliminary devotion of a lower order. Thereafter, Simran (repetition or remembrance), Dhyan (contemplation), and Bhajan (listening to the Sound Current) externally as well as internally, are the three next higher kinds of devotion.

The first stage of devotion is simple and gross. The second is finer, and the aim is to contemplate on the Form of the Master within. In this category there are eight different types of devotion. Mahatma Charan Das describes the qualities of such devotion in the following verse:

You should do Simran, sing His praises, contemplate and worship. You should have love for the Lord in your mind, and place your soul at His Feet. You should be humble and serve the Gurumukhs, Sadhus and Saints, and also remain in their company. It is good to serve them. Dedicate your own self with faith and firmness, and imbibe into your mind forgiveness, continence, contentment and mercy.

Remember your Master, bow to Him, contemplate on Him and worship Him. Love the Lord, and place your soul at His Feet.

Next comes spiritual devotion. This consists in the soul's contacting Naam by means of concentration at its center (the headquarters of the soul in the body), and to remain happy in the enjoyment of Naam. This is known as Naam Bhakti. By this method the soul rises above the

physical and mental planes and goes to finer regions.

In ordinary language, Simran, Dhyān and Bhajan are considered to be three types of devotion; but actually they are one, practiced internally.

For devotion it is necessary that the soul, the body and the mind should act simultaneously. If one has given his heart away, he has virtually given everything – his body, his life and everything else is dedicated to the object of his love. The attachment of the heart is real devotion, which is, in other words, nothing but intense love. If you attach your heart to the Master, that is known as Guru Bhakti. The word 'Bhakti' (devotion) is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Bhaj', which means service. So, service to the Master is also Guru Bhakti.

O Brother! Be the humblest of the humble. Guru Bhakti, which is service to the Master, is achieved only by a very few. (Adi Granth)

People say that they believe in God, that they worship Him and also love Him. We can believe that they have faith in God and that they also worship Him, but it is not possible for everybody to love Him. True and intense love can be experienced only through another human being. For instance, we observe that a man loves his wife, but if she dies and then visits him in her astral body, he will cry out that it is a ghost and will not want to see her. The reason is very clear. She is no longer composed of the same elements and is now in her astral form, while he is in the physical or gross form.

Similarly, God is invisible and inaccessible, and man is still in his gross physical form. So at first, a human being needs a Master in the physical form, who will enable him to rise out of the physical body (die daily), make him finer

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(pure spirit), and thus make him capable of loving the Lord. Guru Amar Das says:

Devotion is not possible, nor is happiness achieved without love. It is only by devotion to the Master that the mind receives courage and a person gains the wealth of love.

Devotion to the Master is a step towards true devotion to God.

Someone might say, perhaps, that God can manifest His beauty and consciousness to human beings by His Divine Will. Truly, this is possible; but so long as a person does not soar high and attain (at least) astral consciousness, he will not be able to understand or realize within himself the beauty, the power and the light of the Lord. If the Lord were to manifest Himself to a person who was not so prepared, that person would be overcome with awe.

The Hindus believe in ten incarnations of God: Machh, Kachhp, Nrsinh, Vaman, Parshuram, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalik. All these incarnations are of the god Vishnu, but devotion to and worship of these ten incarnations is confined only to Rama, Krishna and Buddha, because they incarnated as human beings. Hundreds of temples have been built in their memory. The other seven incarnations are not worshiped anywhere.

Similarly, amongst the Jains there is only one incarnation, called Tirthankar. The Christians also worship only one incarnation, named Christ. Amongst the Muslims it is said that the Lord made a human being and commanded even the angels to bow down before him and worship him.

Worship of a human being in the form of the Master is

also described by the Sufis. Man is the representative of God.

The Hindus believe that a man without a Guru can never attain salvation. Mohammedans of the Sunni sect also believe that there is no salvation without a Master. Maulana Rum says:

When the person of the Master hast thou accepted, in His person are included God and the Prophet.

Again, he says:

The true mosque is inside the beloved and noble souls of God. That is the true and real place to worship God. The mosque built out of water, earth and stone is for the spiritually ignorant people whose inner eyes are not open. The mosque of the lovers of God is in the heart. It is only the ignorant people who worship elsewhere. The beloved of the Lord remember Him by cleaning their minds and their hearts.

Kabir Sahib also expressed this idea in a slightly different language saying:

My mind has become a bird and has flown to the sky above. It found the heaven empty because He is ever in the hearts of His Saints.

We should consider this matter with a calm and clear mind. That is, true and intense love can be developed only for someone of one's own species. This is a proven fact and cannot change. When God wishes to accept the love and worship of human beings, He comes in the form of a human being. In reality, Khuda (a Persian name of God) means "one who comes himself". 'Khud' means self, and 'A' means come.

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The question will naturally arise whether devotion to a Guru or Master is the worship of a finite being, rather than of the Infinite Being who is the all-pervading Power. If one wishes to bathe in the sea, he will do so only at the seashore. The Guru is like the shore of an ocean of infinite spirituality where one can take the bath of salvation.

To our limited understanding, the Master may appear to be finite. Actually, he is infinite. He is the medium for attaining God-Realization. He is the medium for taking us from physical to astral, from astral to causal planes, and even further up – stage by stage – to the Unlimited Power (God) above, by means of his instructions and discourses.

If one were to assert that he worships and contemplates on the form of God, which is omnipresent, it can be said that at the most he contemplates on the form of a vacuum or of the ether. Besides, it is not visible to our sense of sight and it will not be helpful in awakening in us the currents of spirituality.

God is all-pervading. A thief steals, but the all-pervading Lord does not stop him from this evil act. The conscious power which stops one from doing such acts is that of the Master. He teaches, guides and helps. God is omnipresent, like electricity; but electricity cannot help us unless we make contact with it through a finite switch and thus connect ourselves with the source of the electricity. As soon as contact is made, light appears and even machines and factories are run by this power.

The relationship between beings of the same species has a great deal of power in this world for creating love and attraction. We are on the physical plane, and we can only love one who is also on this physical plane. We are human beings and we should love only a human being.

We have not seen the Lord. How can we offer our love to Him? In other words, it is clear that in order to love the Lord we must love Him through one of His manifestations. Such a man is the Guru.

A Master has two forms. Externally he is a human being; but internally he is, in fact, God. He is in the form of a human being outside; but he is God-in-man, or God-plus-man. He has contact with human beings on one side, and with the Lord on the other. From this point of view he has two aspects. One is that of a human being, and the other is that of God. His real form is Shabd. Shabd creates the physical body and dwells in it.

And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. (John 1:14)

A Master is the medium through which individuals are connected with God. In other words, Paramatma (God), Shabd (Sound Current or Word), and Guru (Master) are three different forms of the same Lord. If we offer devotion to Shabd in the physical form, which is the Guru, we are then immediately connected with the Lord inside. Devotion to the Guru is, in fact, true devotion to the Lord.

If we were to study the entire universe, we would see that man is at the top of creation.

The entire universe is your servant, and you are the Lord of this earth. (Adi Granth)

Human beings are endowed with the gift of intelligence and discrimination to a far greater extent than all the other creatures in this world. All other creatures are, therefore, not worthy of our devotion. Actually, devotion to them would pull us down.

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The question arises, why should a man worship another man? The answer is that there is a great difference between one man and another. A Guru has assumed the form of a man, but he is not an ordinary man. Internally he is always in conscious contact with God.

There is no other method of achieving spiritual progress except through devotion to a Guru. Without devotion to the Guru all other actions or religious practices are fruitless. Just as one does not become wealthy by getting wealth in his dreams, similarly, one's acts, without devotion to the Guru, bear no fruit.

Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jains – nobody can achieve eternal happiness and peace of mind without devotion to a Guru. Therefore, if one were to sacrifice one's life for the sake of obtaining devotion to the Guru, it should be considered a cheap bargain, because that is the only method of meeting the Lord.

All religious Scriptures and Saints have laid emphasis on the need for devotion to a Master, and maintain that this is a step towards meeting the Lord. But devotion must be steadfast. Then other practices will be beneficial. All other practices are useless without devotion to the Guru. The Hindu Upanishads have also described the importance of Guru worship:

He alone meets the Lord who has created in his mind the highest form of devotion, and such devotion should be of the same intensity for the Guru as it is for the Lord.

Actually, it is not easy to meet a Master. Kabir says:

Consider it a cheap bargain if you are able to meet a Master, even by sacrificing your own life.

Like the Lord, a Master has a finite and an infinite aspect, and it is by devotion alone that we are able to see Him in both of these aspects. We can see the form of the Master through the eyes of our devotion. Then we shall see that the light of His eyes is spread over the entire universe. A Master may be compared to an ocean, and a disciple to a rivulet that flows into and merges itself in the ocean. Thus the disciple completely loses his identity in the ocean-like spirituality of his Master. Bhai Gur Das says:

A disciple should merge completely in his Guru like a dead body going into a grave.

In the Granth Sahib also we find the statement Merge yourself into the Guru. This means that one has to forget one's own identity and become one with the Guru. Muinuddin Chishti says:

Nothing can be contained in me except my Guru, just as nobody else can enter the palace of a king.

So long as we do not complete our devotion to the physical form of the Master, we shall not be able to listen to the Shabd, nor shall we be able to meet the Lord.

By devotion to the Guru we are able to get rid of the worldly attachments. The gross attachments can be cut off only by means of Guru Bhakti (devotion to the Master), and the finer attachments of the mind will be sublimated by means of Naam Bhakti (devotion to Naam or Shabd). Naam Bhakti can be obtained from no one but a Guru. So long as we do not meet a Guru, we cannot get Naam; and so long as we do not obtain Naam, the ties or cords binding our mind to the world cannot be cut. Christ describes

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Guru Bhakti in the following words by giving an example:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, you can do nothing.

As the father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. (John 15:4, 5,9)

Just as a twig, when grafted to a tree, becomes one with the tree, and the life and energy of the tree become a part of the twig – in the same manner, those who have connected themselves with the Lord are completely one with Him. In other words, a twig that has not been grafted to a tree is separate from the tree. Accordingly, if we are not connected with the Guru, we are separate from Him. We should, therefore, “graft” ourselves onto a Guru, and the result will be that all the qualities of God will be manifested in us.

A Gurumukh is a devotee of the Lord (through devotion to his Guru). Such a devotee completely surrenders himself to his Guru and becomes one with Him in exactly the same manner as water merges into water. He is in no way separate.

Internally, the devotee is grafted onto the Guru, and thus becomes free from death and fear. The Guru is Amrit (life-giving elixir) and a person who is immersed in Amrit can never fear death.

Guru and God are two different entities, but their Godhood is one. Similarly, the Guru and his devotee appear to be two different persons but they have one soul; that is,

their souls are one, and when a devotee speaks, it is not he but the Guru who is speaking. His eyes show the spark of the Guru's light. The Guru is always one with him. Shamas Tabriz very aptly describes the oneness of the Guru and His devotee in the following words:

I am thou. Thou art I. I am the body; thou art the life. So none can say that I am different from Thee.

Kabir Sahib expressed the same truth:

When 'I' was, Guru was not. Now Guru is, I am not. The lane of love is so narrow that it cannot contain two.

Saint Paul also expressed his ideas about the oneness of the devotee and the Master:

I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. (Gal. 2:20)

Hafiz spoke in a similar strain:

My heart has become so full of my Beloved that I have lost all idea in my mind of my own self.

He does not stop there but continues:

Every cell of my body has been captured by my Beloved (Master). My condition is that I really do not exist, because everything is He, He and He.

Devotion to the Master is intense love for Him. If we love anybody, we serve him. We are prepared to sacrifice everything for him. Love knows no burden and no compulsion. A devotee gives away everything for the sake of his Beloved – his body, wealth, mind and soul; in fact, everything is surrendered at the altar of the Master. To serve

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the Guru is to be devoted to Him.

The Master is also equally concerned about His disciple. He wishes the disciple to make progress in all respects. Sometimes He is angry with His disciple for his benefit, but the heart from which this seeming anger emanates contains a never-failing fountain of love for the disciple. The words may appear to be harsh but they are saturated with love. And it is for this reason that a devotee finds even these harsh words to be sweet. A sign of Guru Bhakti is that whenever a Guru uses harsh language or is angry, the disciple takes it to be sweet and is not offended.

A devotee has the greatest love for his Master. He lives and is happy in the Darshan (beholding) of his Guru. To be able to behold the Guru (have his Darshan) bestows a unique benefit. The gestures of the Guru enthrall the mind of the disciple to such an extent that he is prepared to sacrifice himself for a glimpse of them. To Majnun, Laila appeared to be the most beautiful woman on the face of this earth. Maulana Rum says:

A devotee moves around his Guru with as much reverence and love as does a pilgrim going round a mosque. His mosque is the living body of his Master. He does not worship the dead or the idols, but he worships a living being. He is the companion of his Master because at all times he is thirsty for his Darshan and, like a compass, moves around the center of his Master.

Maulana Rum further states:

Even the Kaaba also moves around Him. O God! What is it about a Master that even the highest places of worship are insignificant before Him.

Hafiz says:

Those who are saturated with love for their Master go to Him with as much love and respect as do those who are going on a pilgrimage to the Kaaba

He continues:

I am intensely in love with my Guru. What have I to do with religion or bigotry? I am restless in the pain of separation from Him, so much so that I have lost all consciousness of union or separation. The eye-brows of my Beloved are to me like the maihrab of the Kaaba. Why should I bother about anything else?

A devotee does not consider anything in the world equal to his Guru. The beautiful gardens in paradise and the tooba (a life-giving tree in heaven), the palaces of the beautiful damsels there, cannot even approach a particle of dust from the lane of the Master. The Court of the Master is a treasure worth the entire wealth of the world, and the devotee cannot refrain from kissing the earth at the door of His house.

Bhai Nand Lal wrote:

To a faithful devotee his Guru is his world, and he is united with Him. Both the worlds are too small a price to pay for even one hair of the Master.

Bhai Nand Lal also says:

O My Master, even the kings of the world cannot equal a beggar at Thy door!

Guru Bhakti is Difficult

Guru Bhakti is extremely difficult. It is like walking on the edge of a sword, and is not the work of a coward. On this path one has to walk with his head on his palms (in his hands), i.e. one must destroy his ego. In devotion one has to efface himself completely by

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merging in his Beloved Master. This is to be done daily, and those who cannot do this are busy in eating, drinking and enjoying life. (Kabir)

Karam Yoga (devotion through action) is achieved by means of some effort, but in devotion one has to eliminate all other attachments, because this method is directly connected with the heart (spiritual heart center). If the mind is conditioned accordingly, so that other attachments are eliminated, then everything is achieved.

In Bhakti one does not depend on any outward observances (religious ceremonies, etc.). All these things are artificial and showy. There is a world of difference between a true devotee and one who merely lives according to the rules of a religious order. A devotee is absorbed in the feet of his Beloved (Master), but the worldly man is influenced by worldly opinion.

True devotion does not depend on outward forms. Such devotion and love is rare in this world. So long as we are confined to the outward forms and rituals, we cannot be true devotees. All these ties have to be removed from the mind and from the heart, in order to become a true devotee. (Kabir)

Kabir has also further expressed this thought as follows:

There is a vast difference between a devotee and a person following outward observances, just as there is a vast difference between the earth and the sky. A devotee is happy at the feet of his Master, while the ascetic depends upon the approval of the world. Asceticism, caste or creed do not exist in a true devotee. Those who are the devotees of Naam (Shabd, Sound Current, Word) are rare in this world. So long as one is attached to caste or creed, he is not a true devotee. He alone is a true devotee who renounces all connections with caste and creed.

Bhakti is difficult and very rare. To follow outward observances is easy and common. Bhakti is not merely an outward practice. When one is blessed with the wealth of devotion, the Master becomes a part of every cell of the body of the devotee and guides him with His grace. But such devotion, full of intense love, is achieved only by one with good karmas.

Devotion is difficult and rare. Outward practices are easy to perform. Everybody knows that devotion is quite different from outward observances. When the treasure of devotion has been bestowed on a person, the Guru comes to his aid. Such devotion is achieved only with very good karmas. (Kabir)

Kabir Sahib further states that it is not always possible to be born in the human form. Therefore, we should abandon the transitory pleasures of the world and be absorbed in devotion to the Guru.

O Kabir! You should show your devotion to your Guru by discarding all the pleasures of the world, which are like poison eating into a man, because this human form cannot be obtained every time.

Devotion to the Master is the Path of Surrender of Self or Ego

Because the path of devotion has many advantages, a seeker of Truth is always happy and eager to follow it. But so long as a human being is not able to purify his mind of all the low desires of the senses, he cannot enjoy its fruit. If a person puts on an outward show of humility, it is of no use. If service is rendered for any selfish motive, one can receive no real benefit.

The question arises, how can we attain God who is Himself selfless and free from all desires? In this world,

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people wish to become devotees because they see others following the path and for the satisfaction of their own arrogant minds. If a person who is under the influence of worldly desires, finds anything lacking in his devotion or in the satisfaction of his desires, he, in his ignorance, blames his Master. Kabir says:

O Kabir! Devotion to a Guru brings unbounded happiness in the mind of a devotee, but if one does not cleanse his mind of low desires, he cannot enjoy its bliss. So long as devotion is not desireless, any service rendered is useless. O Kabir, how can one attain God, who is selfless and desireless? The people of the world follow the path of satisfaction of their own ego. People of this kind blame the object of their devotion whenever, in their ignorance, they find any defects.

Devotion is another name for the sacrifice of one's life (surrendering one's self). It has a strong and unique influence. Just a glimpse of the Guru's greatness before the eyes of a devotee will make him dance with joy around his Guru.

This is the path of giving one's life, because it is only by surrendering one's self that one can achieve devotion. This path is open to all. One who is prepared to sacrifice himself will get it. Mansur, while ascending the scaffold, cried out to all devotees:

Life, created out of intense love, is here. Come, whoever wants to get it.

It is difficult to understand true devotion, because it is achieved without any selfish motive and by freeing one's self from all ambition. It is something for which, under the influence of love, one has to sacrifice everything – body, mind, life and all beliefs – and desire nothing in return.

Kabir says:

The idea of devotion is difficult to comprehend. One should give his mind and his life, and remain detached from the world. Bhakti springs from the mind, and if one wants to comprehend it, one should sacrifice one's mind. If, in searching for it, one has to give away one's body, one should not hesitate to do so.

In the mind of a devotee there is a fathomless ocean of love, and he is able to surrender everything belonging to him in this world and the next. Hafiz says:

If my Master accepts me, then I am prepared to sacrifice this world and the next, even for the small black mole on His face.

In this world the mind of each individual is filled with thousands of ideas, but in devotion there is no such thing, for then the mind is fixed on one thing alone and will not be turned from it under any circumstances.

The sight of a true devotee becomes so keen that he sees his Beloved in every place and in everything. His thoughts, his contemplation and the intoxication of his love occupy his mind at all times, and his longing becomes intense. He loses all contact with this world and the next, because he has given himself up completely to his Beloved. How can he look at anything else, and what interest can he have in rituals, ceremonies, days of the week and things of that nature?

Shall I bow in meditation or look at you? I have lost all memory of my idol.

Kabir says:

Where there is devotion there are no rituals or intellectual discus-

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sions or ceremonies, for once the mind is absorbed in love for the Beloved, there is no time to keep track of days or nights.

What is the Object of Being Devoted to a Master?

Why should we love the Master? It is done chiefly so that we may imbibe the nature and ideals of the Master. By loving the Master, His consciousness brings light within us and we forget everything about this mundane world.

We are naturally in a state of attachment to this world, whether it be our household, our children, our friends or others. A Master has a unique magnetic power by which we are attracted to Him.

The purpose of our love for Him is that our love may be detached from all other objects and centered around Him. If a stream of water has nine outlets, and if it were allowed to flow through only one of the outlets – all the others being closed – its pressure would be so strong that the water would pour out in a flood, even if the opening is a tiny one. When our love is detached from everything else and is attached only to the Guru, then we are free from all the evil ties and attachments of the world, and contact God.

By loving the Guru, the disciple assumes His very form. Hafiz says:

If you have entered the palace of your Beloved, then you should catch hold of Him with strong hands. In other words, you should sever your thoughts from everything else.

A devotee always remains absorbed in the love of his Guru, who is the manifestation of God. Persons given to rituals and ceremonies say their prayers a number of times

daily, but a devotee remembers his Guru at all times, with every breath of his life. He will never forget his Guru – who is the manifestation of God – and always remembers with his mind and with his body the sweet recollections of his Guru's actions. A Guru is the giver of spiritual life to His disciples, and sustains everybody.

Devotion to the Guru is in fact devotion to the True Lord. If one were to call it worship of man, then such man-worship was founded by God Himself. He commanded the angels to bow down before man when He created him. A Master is a human being, but He is a complete person, and without Him a disciple can have no success in this life or hereafter.

The currents of love emanating from the heart of a devotee strike against the heart of the Master, draw power from it, and return to the heart of the disciple with a double force. In this manner the spiritual powers of the Master enter the heart of the disciple and it appears to him that the Master has become one with him, and he himself feels one with the Master. Once the disciple is in communion with the Guru, all the gates of bliss and happiness are open to him.

Such a devotee need not do anything else, because the Master enters his mind with all His powers. The disciple then gets a feeling of Guru in disciple and disciple in Guru, so much so that the disciple becomes Guruman or Guru plus man. Because a Guru is God incarnated as man, the disciple also becomes a Godman.

These great children of Light, who manifest the Light, who themselves are Light, they being worshiped, become one, as it were, with us and we become one with them.

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Devotion is an essential and most important part of the way of Spirituality. We should detach ourselves from all worldly ties and go in search of a Guru. By His grace only can we be given the gift of Shabd. We should devote ourselves to Him. Kabir says:

O my Master! Thou who art the Lord of Lords, bestow on me the gift of devotion! I do not want anything except to be in your service day in and day out.

All Scriptures, sages, saints and mahatmas have laid great emphasis on devotion to a Master, because without devotion all our spiritual practices take us only half-way and do not bring proper results.

What Type of Devotion Should Be Rendered

The object of devotion is to create in two people attachment and attraction for each other. It has many qualities. If a person comes to a Master after properly adorning himself with intense love, as a woman goes to her lover in fine clothes and ornaments, then he will surely receive love from Him. The Bhagwat says that devotion is of nine different kinds:

Listening to the Guru's words with rapt attention and fixing these in one's mind.

Singing hymns and engaging in spiritual talk.

Simran (repetition and remembrance).

Physical service.

Worship.

Prayer (for guidance and grace).

Humility.

Feeling love and reverence for the-Master.

Complete surrender.

These nine practices lead to the path of true devotion.

This is to hear discourses in praise of God and to fix these thoughts in one's mind. We have not seen God, therefore the first step towards devotion to Him is to listen to His praises. By listening to these a feeling of love is created within our minds. Considerable importance is therefore given to this practice.

I would pray for a thousand years in order to listen to the praises of Ram (God), who is beyond life and death.

We should listen to the praise of the Lord and take support only from Him.

O Nanak! By listening to the praises of my Lord, I am happy and all my doubts have vanished. (Adi Granth)

This is the first step towards the path of devotion. So long as thoughts about God do not enter one's mind, the foundation of love cannot be laid.

If you wish to become a beloved of the Lord, then make Him your own; throw out all anxieties as well as quibblings, and fix your mind in His Lotus Feet.

How can one make one's Beloved one's own? This may be explained by an example: A newly married girl talks about her husband with her friends. Her object is to fix the love of the beloved in her mind by remembering him, and his form is always before her mind's eye.

In her mind she sings praises of her spouse. In this manner she increases her remembrance of him and fixes it most firmly in her heart. She also looks at him with a

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fixed gaze of love and devotion. In this manner the love for her beloved becomes so strong that it is always in her mind, even when she is occupied with her household duties. Thus strong currents of love for her beloved surge through her mind. She becomes one with him, and no difference remains between the two. In this manner she imbibes his nature.

God is one. We are all His brides, and one who is loved by Him is really exalted. Devotion is an all-pervading quality, which spreads in all directions. In order to imbibe it, a disciple should first listen to talks about Him from Saints and Mahatmas. He should sit in the company of people where such discourses take place. He should not sully his mind by listening to any other talk, because God will not enter the temple of our body so long as it is not pure.

When you visit your elder or your superior, you look at him with respect and attention, and try to prevent any other thought from entering your mind at that time. But when you sit in devotion in remembrance of God, how many thoughts and ideas – even of an impure nature – enter your mind? How great is the injustice you do unto Him?

As soon as the devotee is able to fix the thoughts of God in his mind by listening to His praises, he will begin to sing them, because Out of the abundance of his heart a man speaks. Gurbani says:

One should sing the praises of the Lord day and night. By so doing, His form will be fixed in one's mind.

Together with this, one should repeat and remember His Name at all times, even while sitting, walking or

traveling. The Sikh Scriptures lay considerable emphasis on Simran (repetition and remembrance), because it is by Simran alone that one is able to fix one's love for the object of his love in the mind.

Go on repeating the Name of the Lord. That is the only remedy that will give you happiness. Then all your troubles and anxieties will be obliterated. (Adi Granth)

Repeat the Name of one Lord, because by this nothing will be lost.

If one is not engaged in Simran, then his life is wasted in the same manner as a field becomes barren without rainfall.

One should listen, one should do the Kirtan (sing His praises) and one should engage himself in Simran. While doing all these, one should also perform physical service at the feet of the Master, and should at the same time fix His form in his mind. In other words, one should perform service to the Master outwardly and devotional exercises inwardly for the attainment of Naam.

One should do all types of worship, because worship and service rendered with love and humility cleanse the mind.

One should always remain in an attitude of prayer and ask for grace and guidance.

7 and 8. All the six practices should be performed with humility and devotion. The devotee loves the Master as he would love a friend, respects Him as he would respect a father, worships Him as a bride worships her husband, and sacrifices everything for Him. The following quotations are all from the Adi Granth:

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O my Lord, please listen to my one supplication. You are happy in your Home, whereas I am wandering homeless.

What should a poor girl do if she is not able to win the favors of her Lord? She tries hard, but does not find a place in His court.

I was not able to commune with my Lord tonight, and my entire body aches. What is the state of those women who pass their nights alone!

O my Lord, what qualities should I acquire to be worthy of meeting Thee? I am ignorant. I am not beautiful and have no wisdom.

My devotion and love for the Lord have helped me in giving up all passionate desires and feelings of anger. The Lord has become happy in seeing me in my beauty and devotion.

The Lord's commands are sweet, and my negative desires and feelings have vanished. I am now the beloved of my Lord, and my mind is rid of all worries.

One should make a fan of his hair and should serve the Saints with it.

I feel happy and contented with Seva, such as to fetch water, to pull the rope of a fan, or to grind corn for the Saints. All high positions such as kingship, the possession of wealth or property and positions of power, are worth nothing except being thrown into fire.

Make me the humblest of the humble, for the humble are all dear to God. O my Friend! I would wish to be the dust of Thy Feet at all times.

That Friend who is with me in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of my life is a welcome Friend of mine.

He alone is my Friend who is near me at all times.

The devotees of the Lord are always happy. They are just like small children – free from the net of Maya (illusion) and above worldly desires. Just as a father keeps his children happy and in comfort, similarly God keeps His devotees always happy.

Just as a child respects his father, similarly a devotee lives in accordance with the commands of his Guru. No secrets remain between the two, Nanak is happy because all his desires are fulfilled.

9. We have to enter the temple of our body for the worship of the Lord, rid the mind of all superficial and external tendencies, and offer flowers in the form of one-pointed attention by surrendering body, mind and heart at the sacred Feet of the Lord.

The contemplation of a devotee is always fixed on the form of the Guru, and he thinks about his Master day and night. His attention is centered on Him uninterruptedly. When he dies the soul will go where the Guru is. It cannot go anywhere else. The following quotations are from the Gita:

And he who at the last hour remembers me only and then departs – leaving the body – enters into me. Of that there is no doubt.

Whatever form a man continually contemplates, the same he remembers at the hour of death, and to that very form he goes.

On me fix thy mind, to me bring thy devotion, to me offer thy sacrifice, to me make thy obeisance, then to me indeed shalt thou come. Solemn is my promise to thee, for thou art dear to me.

Those devotees who have fixed their attention on the Guru will never go empty-handed; they are free from all troubles and pains as well as from the clutches of the Negative Power.

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When a person concentrates the attention of his body and mind and speech, in other words, when he concentrates his soul at the eye center, then his inner eye is opened and he is able to see the Lord inside, whose luster radiates there permanently like that of the sun. It is therefore necessary that the internal eye be opened in order to enable a person to have communion with the Lord.

Then he sings His praises, sees Him at all times, and bows before Him with his mind and with his life. He sees Him inside with the inner eye, and does not look for Him outside. Even if the physical eyes are open, they remain open but do not see (at that time), because all the attention is centered within. In other words, all outward activity is stopped and he is conscious of his Beloved within himself.

Kabir Sahib says:

O my Beloved! Enter my eyes and I shall immediately close them, for then I shall not see anybody else, nor shall I permit you to look at anyone else. When I am awake I see you. When I sleep I feel you inside. At all times I think of you, and I do not forget you for a moment.

Kabir further describes the proper type of Bhakti:

We should place a beautiful bed in the pupil of the eye, which should serve as a room. The eyelid should serve as a door, and the Beloved should come and lie in this bed. Then my dress should be Prem (Love), and the collyrium should be of Shanti (peace and quiet). Put the vermilion of courage on my head and then only can I enjoy the happiness of being with my Beloved.

The path of Love is easy but the difficulty lies in us. We do not know how to dance and in our ignorance we find fault with the floor. The path of the Beloved is very difficult – just like the edge of

a sword – and once you come out to dance, there is no question of feeling shy.

All Saints have described Bhakti as being comparable to a wife's love for her beloved husband. Even Narad Rishi described Bhakti in the same strain. Every devotee has love for God in the same manner as a woman has love for her husband. We can describe, only by means of an example, the happiness which comes to a person when he is in communion with God, by saying that it is similar to the love between man and woman. The Hindu Upanishads tell us:

As a lover and a beloved meet and are happy in the intoxication of their union and feel that they are one and are at that time absolutely unaware of happenings in the world beyond their physical bodies, in the same manner, when a devotee communes with God, he feels much greater happiness and goes far above pain and desires, because this happiness is the consummation of all desires.

This analogy is found not only in the Hindu Scriptures but also in many other books. Cardinal Newman says:

If the soul desires to obtain the height of bliss, it is essential that it becomes like a bride yearning for her beloved.

Christ also referred to God as a Bridegroom in one of His parables, and those who looked for the Bridegroom were referred to in that parable as brides. Many saints amongst the Christians have referred to themselves as the brides of Christ, and describing the inner experiences of their mind, they have given the idea of a spiritual marriage.

St. John supplicated Christ in the following words:

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Make me your bride. So long as you do not press me to your side, I can have no pleasure from anything in this world.

When St. Francis saw the resplendent form of Christ in his state of super-consciousness, he cried out:

O my beloved Lord! I am now your wife.

St. Catherine often said that she was betrothed to Christ. She also wore a ring and said that it was the sign of love from her beloved Christ.

What is the meaning of love for the Lord? The currents of devotion have to be concentrated inside. This is real devotion. Nothing else.

What Are the Practices by Which We Can Be Successful in Devotion?

The first condition is to have only one object in mind, for devotion should be offered to one only. The rays of the sun are able to burn a piece of cloth if they are concentrated through a magnifying glass, but if they are spread over a large area they are unable to do so. Similarly, if the currents of devotion coming from one's mind are concentrated on one's beloved, then the fruit of devotion increases and one can act in any manner one desires.

So long as devotion is not one-pointed, the idea of duality will be on one's mind, and consequently, there will be no concentration. Therefore, for true devotion, one-pointedness is most essential. In other words, the object of devotion should be one.

A woman who has one husband is "sohagan" (happily married). She is able to obtain real happiness out of

marriage. Contact and communion with one person or one object only gives purity of heart and also results in a joyful life. Intimate contact with more than one is impure and leads to disputes and other troubles. This is also true in connection with the spiritual life. Kabir brings this idea home to us in the following quotation:

A chaste and faithful wife is dyed in the hue of her beloved. In other words, she is the queen of the home, whereas the other type moves from place to place and has no goal. A faithful wife who has only one husband is very happy; but a woman who has many is foul of mind and body. Both types are to be found in the human form.

Therefore, in the Sikh and other Scriptures one will find emphasis placed on the fact that the object of devotion should be one:

You should sing the praises of One. You should have Simran with a one-pointed mind. How can I praise the qualities of that state in which mind and body are both joined in being devoted to one object of love! (Adi Granth)

We should think of only one object and we should repeat the Name (the five Holy Names) of only one object (the Lord). That object should rest firmly in the seat of our mind and we should sing His praises at all times and remember Him with concentrated attention.

In devotion it is considered sinful to give place in one's mind to thoughts of love for more than one object, because that brings no results. We should not give our heart to anyone other than the object of our love, because if we do that, we will not have peace of mind.

The second essential condition is Satsang (true association). We should stay in the company of persons who

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have devotion fully established in their minds. A melon near another melon will take on its color. If we are in the company of Saints, we shall also be dyed in the hue of their devotion. In other words, our devotion will become strong.

Association with a Saint is exalted and pure. Whoever remains in such company develops the state of communion with God. (Adi Granth)

Devotees whose minds have made friends with Saints are so much dyed in the hue of God's love that their love will never waver. (Adi Granth)

O Kabir! It is better if dhak (a bitter shrub) is grown near a sandal tree, because once it is placed near sandalwood it will imbibe its fragrance. (Kabir)

Devotion is a gift which is bestowed on devotees. When we enjoy this boon, we are fully saturated with the color of devotion. But this can be achieved only by the grace of the Lord.

Association with Saints is association with God. Their grace and kindness is the grace of God, because God is manifest in the Saints, and the Saints are fully immersed in God.

The devotee of the Lord is the same as the Lord. There is no difference between the two, even if one of them should be found in human form. (Adi Granth)

In the Bhagwat, Krishna says:

Saints are my heart, and I am their heart.

We should avoid bad company. Wealth and lust are

two difficult obstacles which cause destruction if one is engrossed in them. By intimate contact with bad company one becomes lost. Likewise, we should not associate with persons whose behavior turns our minds away from our object of devotion, because association with them will lead us astray, will make us arrogant, and will tempt us into many other vices.

Even if you have many good qualities, you should lead a life of humility and consider those qualities as a gift from God, because God loves the humble. Remember this well in your heart and do not enter into unnecessary disputes or critical discussions, because such discussions lead nowhere. They may be compared to churning water.

The path of devotion is also the path of action. Kabir says:

This devotion is a path of action and not of intellect. Therefore, do not talk but practice devotion, for then you will achieve something.

We should not indulge in disputes with anybody, because the tongue that speaks ill of others should instead drink only the Name of Ram (God). (Adi Granth)

The third essential condition is a proper diet. Our food should be satvik (that which produces tranquility and pure thoughts). This includes rice, wheat, pulses, milk and curd. Food conditions our mind, so our ideas will have the same qualities as the type of food we eat. If we take rajsik food (that which produces restlessness and anger), like meat, fat, and so forth, the mind will become restless. But if we take tamsik food (that which produces sluggishness), like stale food, fish, wine, and other heavy pungent thing, we shall be prone to laziness.

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Consider the entire world as having issued from the one God, and therefore do not harm or injure any body's mind by your talk or action.

The study of Scriptures, maintaining good character, the practice of simran, attending satsang, the habit of non-violence, kindness, purity of body and mind, faith, prayer, seeing God in everything – all these factors help us in our devotion to Him. One should forget himself and everything else while engrossed in love for the Lord. He should lead a life in accordance with the edicts of his religion. Then he makes progress towards the object of his devotion; otherwise, he reverts to idle pursuits.

How Can Devotion Be Achieved?

By God's Grace. He holds the Treasure of Devotion.

Thou art the true Friend, and Thy treasure is full of devotion. (Adi Granth)

The gift of devotion is in the hands of God. In other words, He Himself makes it possible for us to be His devotees. He cuts asunder all the ties binding His devotees to the world and makes them free.

He Himself bestows on His Gurumukhs (those devoted to the Guru or Master) the gift of spiritual knowledge, and places in their hands the treasure of Devotion, which is the name of Hari (God). (Adi Granth)

It is only by the grace of the Lord that it is possible for human beings to perceive God. They alone attain Him who are devoted to Him with their body and their mind. They are always happy in that state and remain satisfied. For this reason the writings of wise and noble men put

emphasis on devotion. In the Gita, Krishna says:

Put your mind in me. Also fix your intellect in me. Then you will come within.

God loves His devotees more than anyone else. The Gita further states:

In all the three worlds, spiritually awakened people are dear to Him; but even more does He love those people who have a feeling of intense devotion to Him in their mind.

The highest action and the highest quality in human life is devotion. If one does not practice it, his life is wasted.

We cannot attain communion with God by our own efforts. However, if we are blessed with the grace of God, we can have communion with Him. He is beyond the reach of physical, intellectual and even spiritual effort alone. Only those on whom God has bestowed His grace are successful in attaining communion with Him. In the Kath Upanishad we find:

Devotion is obtained by God's grace alone. You cannot know the soul by the study of the Vedas alone, nor can you do so by your intellect and reasoning. He alone can attain Him whom God Himself selects, or over whom the grace of God-flows.

In other Upanishads (the philosophical and mystical parts of the Vedas), communion with God is stated to be dependent on one's surrender to Him. If we have His grace, He attracts us to Himself within, and we become restless to meet Him. It is beyond human power alone to attain this state.

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By the Grace of a Master

The path of devotion is a difficult one. It is achieved only through a Master and by those on whom God has bestowed His grace. Then only are their minds inclined towards devotion to Him. Even angels are yearning for devotion to Him, but it cannot be obtained without a Master. We cannot become devotees merely by reading Holy Scriptures and other books.

Gods are yearning for devotion to the Lord, but it can be attained only through a Sat Guru. The learned try to find Him in their studies, but they do not find Him. (Adi Granth)

Only through the teachings or bachans (words) of a Guru is one capable of becoming a true devotee. No other method can accomplish this, because the treasure of devotion is obtained only by service to the Master. All other practices are external and lead us outward, hence they are not capable of producing devotion in us. The internal fires of passion cannot be subdued without the grace of the Master.

The fire burning within us cannot be extinguished without a Guru. Even the outer fire of worldly desires and passions is very strong. Without service to the Master, devotion is not possible. How can one do it by himself? (Adi Granth)

A Master is actually an ocean full of surging waves of devotion. He grants it to those devotees on whom his grace falls.

The ocean of devotion to God is in the hands of a Sat Guru. If Sat Guru is pleased, he opens the gateway to attainment of communion with God. (Adi Granth)

A person attaches himself to devotion only if a Master,

who himself is free from the shackles of birth and death, gives him the gift of devotion, frees him from the cycle of birth and death, and puts him in communion with God.

Masters are free from the shackles of birth and death. They come into this world to bestow grace on others. They give us the gift of life, bestow on us the boon of devotion and thus put us in actual communion with Him (God). (Adi Granth)

By Naam Bhakti (Devotion to Naam, Shabd or Sound Current).

Sat Guru is the keeper of the treasure of Hari Naam, another name for devotion to Naam or Shabd, and he is capable of implanting this devotion firmly in the minds of his devotees.

By the grace of God we met a Sat Guru who taught us to practice devotion to Hari Naam day and night. (Adi Granth)

Without Sat Guru we cannot have devotion nor can we attain Naam. O Nanak, whoever practices Naam, he is dear to Sat Guru. (Adi Granth)

In the Sikh Scriptures the practice of Shabd Dhun (listening to the Sound Current or Word) is called devotion. True devotion is love for Guru Shabd, by means of which a person fixes the Lord in his mind. Devotion to Shabd is dear to God. We cannot have true devotion by running about in the world. Devotion can be achieved only by engrossing ourselves completely in Shabd.

True devotion is devotion to Shabd. In other words, it is love for Guru Shabd, by means of which a devotee fixes the Name of God in his heart. (Adi Granth)

Devotion to Guru is the practice by which Sahaj Dhun is attained.

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Without such devotion it is not possible to remove the coverings of dirt from one's mind. By means of Shabd and by adorning herself with it, the soul completely surrenders herself – like a wife to her husband – and thereby attains communion with God. Guru Bani (Granth Sahib) again says:

Devotion is the term given to the practice of attaching one's self to Naam and Truth. Naam is going on day and night, and by saturating ourselves fully with its color we cannot be dyed in any other color.

Hari's Name is known to very few. It can be known only through Shabd, with the guidance of a Guru. A person who so devotes himself completely, day and night, attains permanent peace and happiness in the state of Sahaj.

Those who are dyed in the color of Sach (Truth) do not take any other color on their minds or souls, but this is attained only by those for whom it has already been ordained.

While praising devotion, it should also be mentioned that by means of devotion one is able to learn the practice of dying while living.

It is by devotion alone that we learn dying while living, but we achieve this with the grace of a Guru and are thus able to cross the ocean of life. (Adi Granth)

That devotion is true in which whatever is ordained by the Lord is accepted with equanimity. All friends and foes are considered by such a devotee as sons of the same Father. In other words, to one who submissively follows the commandments of the Lord, whatever happens is good. Such a condition of mind is true devotion. Friend and foe are considered equal. This is the sign of one's greatness. (Adi Granth)

Intellectual people try to realize God by means of the intellect, but they fail because they rely on books and Scriptures alone. Ascetics of the different religious orders remain superficial in their ideas and do not go deep into the Truth. Therefore, all these persons are deprived of salvation. The people of the whole world are running a mad race hither and thither, without devotion and Shabd practice.

O Nanak, without devotion the whole world is unable to have contact with Shabd. People of intellect want to find it by reading Scriptures. People who rely on the vow of silence also are going astray. Even ascetics do not find salvation. (Adi Granth)

True devotion can be achieved only through a Guru. By devotion one can listen to the Sound Current within oneself, by means of which ego is destroyed and the devotee attains happiness forever and meets the Lord.

True devotion can be achieved with the guidance of a Master, because the true Sound Current is then fixed in one's heart. By serving the Sat Guru one attains eternal happiness, and by burning his ego, merges into Shabd (the true form of the Guru).

The practice of Shabd is true devotion, because by means of this we are able to join ourselves with the Truth, and the Name of God is imprinted in our minds permanently.

By means of True Shabd my devotion is fruitful and I feel happiness in my mind. My mind and my body are fixed in true devotion day and night, and my heart is in communion with the Lord. (Adi Granth)

My mind is repeating the name of Hari day and night. True devotion is that by which the name of Hari is fixed in one's mind. (Adi

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Granth)

Who Achieves Bhakti?

Devotion to God is unique and can be achieved only by rare Gurumukhs, because a Gurumukh realizes the treasure of devotion. But knowledge of how to obtain this treasure can be obtained only from a Sat Guru, as the Sat Guru is actually the keeper of the treasure of devotion.

I achieved high status by Guru's guidance, and I am drinking the Elixir of Truth through Shabd. O Nanak, devotion to God is unique and is achieved only by a rare Gurumukh. (Adi Granth)

The treasure of devotion can be known by a Gurumukh only, through a Sat Guru, because the Saints alone can make a Gurumukh great. (Adi Granth)

Bhakti is Not Idleness

Bhakti does not teach us to remain idle, because a devotee works, and all his actions are surrendered in devotion to God. In other words, he is not concerned with reward. We cannot be free from actions, but we should perform our worldly duties in order to keep this Hari Mandir – temple of God (human body) – in proper condition. By this method the Lotus Feet of the Lord will be imprinted in our hearts and we shall always sing His praises.

The Lotus Feet of the Lord are in my heart. The Name of God is on my tongue. O Nanak, what harm can come to a person who remembers God every minute? (Adi Granth)

Devotion to God is the true reward in our life. (Adi Granth)

We merge ourselves in Him only if He beckons to us and gives us the benefit of devotion. (Adi Granth)

The religious customs and rites that produce faith and devotion in us are useful, and we should follow them. Jami says:

Lose your name and your religious customs in devotion, for the only custom that is recommended is that by which the idea of devotion is produced in us.

The Signs of Bhakti

The true sign of devotion is the singing of such praise of the Lord as does not interfere with the concentration of the soul. The singing of such praise refreshes our remembrance of Him and keeps alive the current of devotion in our minds at all times.

Dancing in ecstatic devotion to the Lord is not devotion, because by such dancing the attention of the mind is deflected. For true devotion it is necessary for one to have “bireh” (longing and restlessness to meet the Beloved).

If one is arrogant or greedy in devotion, that devotion is the lowest or tamsik form of bhakti. If the idea of self-praise or fame enters one’s mind, the devotion is known as rajsik bhakti. But if all desires are eliminated and we offer our devotion as part of our natural and innate duty, it is called satvik bhakti.

The real or true devotion is beyond these three gunas (qualities). It is pure. It is without desire, is dedicated entirely to contemplation of the Lord, and will manifest itself through a surge of emotions from tear-laden eyes. A devotee of such a pure type is always happy at the Lotus Feet of the Lord. He has no desires and does not care for worldly pleasures, nor do the comforts of heaven have

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any attraction for him. Even the idea of salvation cannot remove his attention from the Lotus Feet of the Lord.

I do not want a kingdom, nor do I want salvation. I want only love for Thy Lotus Feet! (Adi Granth)

A devotee of this kind is always absorbed in remembrance of the Lord. To him God is very dear, and he is also very dear to God. But his devotion is not blind faith. He is fully conscious of the presence of the Lord.

In the beginning, devotion starts by singing praises of the Lord. Then gradually it is transformed either completely or to a great extent into pure devotion, which is performed with concentrated mind and body. The Gita states: Pure Bhakti is always able to find the Lord.

Narad described this devotion by saying that the inner feelings of a person who is successful in his devotion are of such a nature that he thinks himself to be a tool and the object of his devotion as the user of the tool. He thinks himself to be a cart, and the Lord is the one who sits on it and guides it.

What can a poor puppet do? It acts according to the directions of the wire puller.

When devotion is fully settled in one's heart, then all worldly ties or attachments are automatically cut off and worldly pleasures become insipid.

Devotion is Not a Physical Sentiment

Devotion is a type of love which comes from the soul and includes currents of respect and veneration. In such a

state of love, one tries to provide comfort and convenience for the object of his devotion. He is prepared to suffer all types of inconveniences, and is happy only when the object of his devotion is pleased and in comfort. For his Beloved he sacrifices his body, his mind, his wealth, his beauty, his intellect and even his life. All these are surrendered at the feet of the Lord as the material of worship. In other words, he eliminates his ego completely.

On the other hand, physical sentiment or love always aims at the lover's own happiness. In other words, he makes the object of his love an instrument for his own comfort and enjoyment.

Time for Devotional Practice

God has created this body with its worldly attachments and worldly desires. But in this body we can sow the seed of Hari Bhakti (devotion to the Lord), and all times are suitable for this purpose. Day and night both are good for this purpose. If we only plan to practice devotion and waste all of our time in planning, then no time would remain for devotion.

If we start thinking about the time for devotion, then no time remains for devotion itself. He alone is a true devotee who remains in devotion day and night. (Adi Granth)

The Time of Elixir which is in the early morning hours is, however, considered to be the most appropriate time for this purpose because the seed of devotion to God, sown at such a time, is never wasted.

Hari is a treasure full of all precious jewels, and one can get this treasure if one devotes oneself to remembering Him at the elixir time. (Adi Granth)

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The treasure of Hari's Name, if sown at the Time of Elixir, will produce results which can be used freely and will never diminish. (Adi Granth)

The Path of Devotion is Open to All

God is love. He is not bound by caste, creed or nationality. Everyone, whether man or woman, is entitled to enter the Path of Devotion. This path is open to all. The following quotations are from the Ninth Discourse in the Gita:

A sinner, howsoever deeply fallen, if he turns to me with undivided devotion, must indeed be counted a saint; for he has a settled resolve (to sin no more). The undivided devotion subdues both his passions and his evil deeds.

For soon he becomes righteous and wins everlasting peace; know ye for a certainty that my bhakta (devotee) never perishes.

For finding refuge in me, even those born of sin and of low caste, shall reach the supreme goal.

In this way, the Bhagwat states that the Path of Devotion is for everybody. The lowliest of the low can become pure and clean by devotion to Him. The only requisites are faith and one-pointed devotion, which have the power to connect our soul with the Lord.

One who does not possess devotion and faith may be of a very high caste or even of a royal family, yet he is much lower than a person of a poor family and low caste who possesses devotion and faith. Narad says:

Devotees of the Lord are not distinguished by their birth, knowledge, beautiful appearance, high family status, wealth or even religious rites or rituals, because all true devotees are near and dear

to the Lord. They are conscious of God inside as well as outside of themselves, and they are always happy in His company.

Another Rishi says:

Members of all castes and creeds, even if they are of a very low order, are entitled to tread the Path of Devotion. Such are the teachings of noble persons.

Amongst ancient orthodox Hindus the right of spiritual knowledge and action was not given to everybody. For instance, reading or reciting the Vedas was forbidden to members of the lowest caste. There are no restrictions barring anyone from the Path of Devotion.

Nobody will question you about your caste or your creed. He who devotes himself to the Lord is of the Lord.

The only aim on this path is to have communion with the Lord and to achieve salvation. Ramanuj said in very emphatic language that worship of the Lord is the equal right of every one, and that devotion frees the mind from all sectarian ties. Ramanand also spoke against caste and creed, saying: Nobody should ask a person about his caste or creed, because whoever worships Him is of Him.

Chaitanya Dev also preached devotion without regard for caste or creed, and gave his teachings to everybody, whether man or woman.

If a person of low caste worships the Lord, he becomes high. Go and ask Bidur, a low caste person into whose hut the Lord Himself went. O my brothers, listen to the unwritten song of the Lord because by so doing the appetites of the mind and body will disappear.

Ravi Das, a poor cobbler, sang to the glory of the Lord. By so

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doing, this fallen man became noble, and all high-caste people touched his feet.

Naam Dev was devoted to the Lord. Although people called him a tailor, members of the highest caste raised him high, because from his lips came the Name of Hari in pure devotion.

Of all devotees, even if they have the tilak on their foreheads and have visited the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage, O Nanak, only those are happy who are engaged, by His grace, in remembrance of the Lord. (Adi Granth)

Devotion is Superior to and Easier Than All Religious Ceremonies and Rituals

Devotion is superior to outward observances, the path of knowledge and yogic practices. By knowledge and by religious observances one develops a touch of arrogance. In devotion one becomes submissive and develops the quality of humility. It is for this reason that knowledge and outward observances cannot attract the grace of God. Those who are humble, surrender themselves completely, and rely on the grace and mercy of the Lord. They attract His grace towards them. The love for the Lord is thus awakened in their hearts.

Compared to the bonds of outward observances, the Path of Devotion is easier, because this path does not need learning, physical strength, wealth or fame. Only faith in the mercy of God, a pure and simple nature like that of a child, together with the contemplation of God are the essential factors. This path can be followed alike by young and old, men and women, the healthy and unhealthy, the high and the low; in fact, it is open to everybody. And on this path one has not so much fear of falling away from it as is the case with the other practices.

Devotion is superior to all practices. The Gita says:

The yogin is deemed higher than the man of austerities; he is deemed also higher than the man of knowledge; higher is he than the man engrossed in ritual.

And among all yogins, he, who worships me with faith in his inmost self all rapt in me, is deemed by me to be the best yogin.

Therefore, persons who follow the Path of Devotion are superior to those engaged in yogic practices, outward observances or the path of knowledge.

Devotion, knowledge and yoga are methods of meeting the Lord. The difference between them can be explained by an example: Suppose a king has a consort and two servants. Whenever any person wishes to see the king, the servants stand at his door and wait for his call, but the consort goes freely into the king's room. Devotion may be likened to the king's consort, while knowledge, outward observances and yogic practices are like servants. These methods cannot by any means be compared to devotion. Goswami Tulsi Das has very clearly given a comparison of Bhakti (devotion) with Gyan (knowledge). He says:

Knowledge is very difficult, but Devotion is easier. And a devotee is always happy, because in his path there are no obstacles.

The ultimate fruit of all spiritual practices is devotion with love. Those who try to follow the path of spirituality with their intellect, find many obstacles in their way and remain very much below the heights attained by a devotee. Hafiz says:

The sill of the door of Devotion is far above that of knowledge and

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intellect, but only he can kiss it who comes prepared to surrender himself completely for its sake.

God is in the hands of devotees. There is no other method, except devotion.

One gaineth Thee not, O God, by despising (the world) nor, if one readeth out the Vedas to the others, nor, if one bathes at the pilgrim-stations, nor, if one roams the whole world through, nor, yea, by being knowledgeable and clever, nor, if one giveth away more and more in charity, for everyone is under Thy Sway, O Unfathomable, Unperceivable God! But, Thou are in the hands of Thy devotees and they lean on Thee alone. (Adi Granth)

Obstacles in the Path of Devotion

Lust, wealth, lack of faith and talking about enemies create obstacles in the Path of Devotion. Talking about or even listening to discussions about sex topics arouses a feeling of passion. Similarly, love songs and bad company become hurdles. One should avoid these things. Men and women should therefore remain aloof from each other.

Talking about wealth creates a feeling of greed. Listening to talk about the wealthy position of others or dwelling on the subject, also creates a desire to get rich and naturally leads one away from the Path of Devotion.

Atheists are those who do not believe in the existence of God. By associating with them, doubt or lack of faith is created in one's mind and this becomes the cause of one's downfall, for the foundation of devotion is pure and true faith.

By listening to talk about one's enemies a feeling of anger is produced in the mind, and that is also an obstacle

in the Path of Devotion, because love and anger cannot blend.

Of all these obstacles, the worst one is pride in one's own wealth, power, offspring, knowledge, intellect, caste, creed, family status, good character, beauty, and so forth.

The best ornament that adorns a devotee is humility. On the Path of Devotion one has to discard all useless ideas and attach his mind to the thought of his Beloved alone. Only then comes the grace and mercy of the Lord.

Another obstacle in the way of devotion is hypocrisy. To pretend to be virtuous, religious, a devotee, an ascetic or a truthful man – all these are forms of hypocrisy.

Just as a clean cloth takes a dye easily, a pure heart imbibes the Light of God more easily. On this path one has to become as innocent as a child, because only the innocent enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Verily I say unto you, except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 18:3)

Thou art our father and mother, and we are Thy children. (Adi Granth)

It is also necessary to abstain from stealing, telling lies, arrogance and so on, because these are all bad habits.

Fruits of Devotion

By devotion all the desires of a person are sublimated, resulting in contentment; and he is therefore freed from the cycle of birth and death. His mind has no desires, because all his desires are fulfilled in remembrance of God.

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He loves everybody, since he loves God and thinks all as His sons.

Hatred and enmity vanish by means of Bhakti. One remains intoxicated in devotion to the Lord, because the elixir-like sweetness of devotion keeps him indifferent to all pleasures and pains of the world. On meeting the Lord, one gets everything and therefore does not run after the world. He remains happy at the Lotus Feet of his Lord.

A devotee absorbed in love for his Lord is happy day and night, and does not desire anything else. He is full of love for his Beloved, for whom he has no thought of self-ish love. Nothing else is needed by such a devotee.

One who tastes the fruit of devotion is fully satisfied, and for him the fruits of all other practices are tasteless.

Nothing appears sweet to a devotee except the Name of the Lord. I have discovered that all tastes are insipid compared to His remembrance. (Adi Granth)

A devotee sees the Lord here, there and everywhere. He sacrifices himself to the Lord, and all his actions and religious observances are surrendered at His Feet. The goal of his life is confined to devotion to the Lord only.

By devotion all sins and bad actions are annihilated and the mind becomes pure. Actions devoid of faith and devotion, whether religious observances or austerities, do not purify one's mind. Devotion is a natural tendency of the mind. By means of devotion all sins are washed away, because it is the sustaining factor of purity.

By devotion to the Lord, the entire attention of a devotee is dyed in remembrance of the Lord – sitting, rising,

coming, going, sleeping, walking, eating, drinking – all these actions are surrendered to Him. As a result, the devotee is freed from the shackles of the world.

So long as devotion is not awakened in our minds, we cannot be freed from the cycle of birth and death. A devotee ultimately merges in the Lord. His ego, which is the cause of his remaining in the cycle of birth and death, is destroyed, as his thoughts of “mine” or “I-ness” vanish. In this manner, his cycle of coming and going is finished.

A devotee is colored in the dye of devotion. If a person is absorbed in some particular thing, he becomes one with it. If he devotes himself to Naam Bhakti (the practice of Shabd, the Sound Current or Word), he achieves a superior kind of devotion to the Lord. Devotion frees one from fear, pleasure and pain, and brings instead bliss, peace of mind, satisfaction of the heart and contentment.

By becoming a selfless devotee one becomes detached permanently from the world. Devotion removes one from the dark labyrinth of the world and makes him pure. Even the Negative Power does not come near a devotee. Ego is destroyed, mind and body become pure, doubts are removed, and the mind is fully imbued with devotion. The devotee crosses all the three gunas and goes into Sahaj, the fourth stage.

One who has been asleep for so many births is awakened, his cycle of birth and death is finished. He crosses the ocean of this world, and achieves salvation and Sahaj. In other words, he is able to reach his own Home, which is the highest region of spirituality. Such devotees are able to meet the Lord, and the soul is merged in the Truth, is decorated like a bride, goes into the Court of the Lord and is honored there.

CHAPTER 6. INTENSE LONGING (BIREH)

Bireh has various stages. The first is the recollection of one's Beloved, accompanied by longing and contemplation. This condition of recollection and contemplation becomes so strong that a devotee's attention is completely diverted to the form of his Beloved, which always remains fixed in his mind's eye. The Beloved becomes the sustainer of his life, and he will not leave Him.

The two are merged into one, and a state of complete calmness and tranquility is achieved. In this state the devotee loses his own self and sees his Beloved everywhere. A heart that has true love for the Beloved is naturally happy and feels a current of ecstasy when he sees or meets Him.

Bireh is the name of the active state of love. A lover who possesses Bireh does not wish to lose sight of the Beloved even for a moment. Whenever he is not able to see Him or happens to be separated from Him, a feeling of pain stabs his heart and he feels an inner anguish. But the taste of this pain of separation is in no way less sweet than that of being with the Beloved. This is called Bireh.

Why is intense longing created? Simply because our soul has not been able to succeed in getting what it actually longs for. Just as the chatrak (rain bird) becomes restless when it does not get the nectar-like rain drops; just

as the chakor (moon bird) is disappointed when it is not able to see the full moon; just as a mother becomes restless at the time of separation from her son, or a wife from her husband; just as a fish is in anguish without water – in a similar manner our soul is intensely restless because of its separation from the Lord.

This intense longing always surges up like a wave or current in the heart and refreshes the mind with remembrance of Him. As a result, the heart's agony is assuaged by continuous remembrance and contemplation of the Lord. This creates a feeling of happiness. It is a stepping-stone, over which a seeker has to tread to attain communion with the Lord.

In order to meet the Beloved, intense longing comes first, in the same manner as flowers bud and bloom on a fruit tree before it can bear fruit. Where there are no flowers, there can be no fruit.

Similarly, where there is no bireh (intense longing), there can be no meeting with the Beloved. In other words, this longing is a pre-requisite for meeting the Lord.

In the state of intense longing, every cell of the body becomes restless with the memory of the Beloved, and without meeting Him or seeing Him the heart is not appeased. We seek out those whom we call saints and sadhus because they have achieved communion with the Lord, and we beseech them to help us in meeting the Lord. Inside of us there is an urge to meet Him and we cannot live without Him.

Oh my Master, help me to meet my Hari (God). My mind and body are hungry to meet Him. I cannot live without seeing my Lord, and there is an intense and restless longing in me. (Adi

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Granth)

The history of the lives of all the Saints reveals the intensity of their desire and longing for the Lord. The people of the world eat, drink and are happy with the worldly pleasures, and sleep soundly at night. But a lover weeps and sighs, and is wide awake the whole night long in his longing to meet the Beloved. Such a soul pines to meet the Lord and cries out:

Oh, will it ever be possible for these eyes to see Him!

When separated from Him, ornaments for the body, tasty food or fine clothes have no attraction. Guru Nanak very beautifully draws the picture of the soul in such a state:

A wife, separated from her lord, cannot sleep at night. She becomes feeble while sighing for her beloved, and she weeps in longing for him. Adornments for her body, sweet and palatable food, and other pleasures do not interest her.

The Lord is not with me and it is a dark night, with lightning bringing fear to my mind. My bed is lonely, I am without my Lord. The pain is so intense that death is preferable to it.

A wife cannot live without her husband. The night appears to be like poison, sleep does not lull her and she cries out: 'O my beloved, listen to my prayers and come to me!'

Without my Beloved I have no comfort and I am weeping all alone. O Nanak, a wife who does not meet her husband is miserable. (Adi Granth)

Again, Guru Nanak says:

On seeing my condition, a physician was called. He felt my pulse

and found nothing. And how could he find anything, because my heart was suffering the agony of separation! (Adi Granth)

Guru Nanak further writes:

O God, on hearing me cry, the whole world has begun to weep. The trees and birds are crying, but the sense of separateness in me has not wept, on account of which I have been separated from Thee. (Adi Granth)

Guru Amar Das also described the condition of a devotee's soul in the Adi Granth:

How can I live without my Beloved, and what is my life worth without Him? I cannot sleep without Him and I find no attraction even in putting fine clothes on my body.

O my Lord, come and meet me! Without Thee I am helpless. Sleep will not come to my eyes nor can I take any interest in food or drink. How can I find any happiness without my Lord, and how can eating and drinking give me any solace! I therefore beseech my Master, in all humility, that if it pleases him, he should permit me to meet my Lord.

Guru Ram Das says:

I cannot live without my Beloved even for a moment. Just as a person addicted to drugs and intoxicants dies if they are withheld, similarly I am dying without Thee. O my Lord, those who are thirsty for Thy Darshan (to behold Thee), want nothing else. (Adi Granth)

Guru Ram Das further states:

Without the Lord every cell of my mind and body is in a state of anguish, and there is no sleep in my eyes. I am suffering in mind and body from the pain of separation. The poor doctors cannot

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diagnose my malady. Like one addicted to intoxicants and drugs, I cannot live without my Beloved even for a single moment. Those who have an intense desire to meet Thee are not interested in anything else. (Adi Granth)

The Tenth Sikh Guru also described very beautifully the state of intense longing. He says:

Please convey the feelings of all of the disciples to our dear Master, and say that without Him even living in comfort is like living with the snakes. That we are drinking pain and anguish out of cups covered with thorns, and are suffering blows like those from a butcher's axe. O, our Beloved, it is better for us to lie on our death beds in bireh (intense longing) than to live in worldly comfort which (without Thee) is as painful as a burning oven.

Kabir Sahib also described this condition in the same vein. He says:

No one has been united to his Beloved through mirth. Whoever has attained communion with Him has done so after shedding many tears. If it were possible to meet the Beloved while laughing and in a state of comfort, why should one suffer the anguish of separation? The people of the world are happy. They eat and sleep. Kabir alone is unhappy. He is awake and is crying.

O Kabir, keep away from the life of pleasure and attach yourself to crying, for without it how can you find your Beloved!

Kabir Sahib further describes, as follows, the feelings of pain, anguish and restlessness suffered by a devotee separated from the Lord:

O my Beloved, please listen to my message. How can a fish live without water, for its very life depends on water!

The fire of separation is burning my body and my whole being is

restless. The soul has left the body and is completely merged in her Lord. The angel of death comes, but does not find the soul and goes away. O Kabir, the lover cries out:

'O my Lord, listen to my message. Come at once and meet me, otherwise I shall give up my life! Either bring death to my body if it is to be separated from Thee, or give me your Darshan (show Thyself to me). I am unable to bear this pain of separation any longer. My two eyes have become cups, waiting for the Elixir of your Darshan (a sight of Thee).'

Your devotees who yearn for You are detached from this world, and the hope of meeting You is the sustenance of their life. These eyes weep in agony without ceasing in remembrance of You. By this crying there is some little solace, but these eyes are yearning for the sweetness of Your Darshan. We have made a lamp of this body and a wick of this life, in which blood is being burned instead of oil. Oh my Lord, will it ever be possible to see Thee!

Kabir continues:

My eyes, like those of a mad man, are searching for you every minute. You do not meet me. I am not happy, and am ever in a state of pain and tension. My body is emaciated. Now I am only a skeleton of bones. It is my misfortune that even now my Lord has not come to me. This separation has eaten up all my bones and my body, and has made me dead while still living.

Like a powerful army, this separation has surrounded me. It does not permit me to die nor does it allow me to live, and my life is slowly ebbing away in anguish. I am suffering birah in the absence of my Lord, and separation is troubling me every minute. Day and night I have no rest, and my breath is gradually growing less and less.

Sheikh Farid asked a question of a nightingale:

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O nightingale, why are you black?

Then he himself replied:

I know the reason why. You have burned yourself in longing for the Lord. That is why you are so black.

The source of the following quotation is not mentioned:

This decorating of the body and these pretty clothes are useless as long as we do not meet our Lord. If my Lord were to see me in these beautiful clothes, they would be worth wearing. Otherwise, I should remove them and burn them. I will throw away my bangles, the sign of my union, and will break them into pieces by striking them against my very bed if it is not in my fortune to meet my Beloved, for without that they are useless to me.

In this intensity of love the soul forgets the entire world. It cannot learn to stop thinking of the Lord even for a single second. The Tenth Guru says:

The thatched hut of the Lord of my heart is like heaven to me, but without Him even a palace is like a burning oven.

A soul that is filled with love for the Lord does not, without Him, care for the finest silk or satin, but when she is in communion with Him, she is prepared to sleep even in the dust. In the Sikh Scriptures (the Adi Granth) there is a similar description which says that if a wife be separated from her husband, she would break her very arms as well as the bangles which adorn them. All these adornments are meaningless without the beloved.

A lover always wishes to go to the place of his beloved. Kabir says:

My mind is being powerfully attracted to the home of my Beloved. This world has no attraction for me. I wish to fly from here and go to the country of my Lord, which is so beautiful. There no one comes and goes (there is no birth and death), and to it even the sun and the moon, water and the air can never reach. O, is there anyone who would carry this, my message of longing, to my Beloved!

Kabir also says:

The ailment of bireh (feeling of separation) is chronic and has now gone deep into my bones. It is not possible to get rid of it. It is a pain of love which is even smothering my heart. The feeling of longing caused by separation troubles me at all times, and as a result my entire body is burning. Only one who has caused this pain or who undergoes it can understand this.

This longing and its accompanying pain have overpowered me like a serpent and have produced an abscess over my heart, but I do not try to save myself. I tell the serpent of intense longing to devour me in any manner it pleases.

The whole day is spent in looking towards the path from which my Beloved is to come, and the night is spent in the same manner. Unable to meet the Beloved, I am restless and my heart is troubled. That day will be an auspicious one when my Master will take me by the arm and make me His own. And I shall sit in the shade of His Lotus Feet.

Farid also describes the pain of separation from the Lord in his own poignant language:

O Farid, because of the fire of separation from the Lord, my body has dwindled to mere bone, that even crows come and peck at me, and I tell them 'O crows, you may eat my body but not my eyes, which are still longing hopefully to behold my Beloved' On the day of my birth, when my navel cord was cut by the midwife, it would

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have been better if she had also cut my throat, because then I would have been saved the pain of this separation.

Another Saint, Charan Das, says:

My voice is choked in my throat, the tears are flowing from my eyes, and I am restless in the intense longing for my Beloved, day and night. I am crying: 'When shall I meet my Lord? My chest is being torn. When will the day come when I will have the opportunity of meeting Him?

Mira Bai describes this state in the following words:

I have grown pale like a betel leaf. People think that I am ailing. I even fasted secretly in this separation from You. My father called a doctor who felt my pulse. But the poor doctor cannot diagnose my malady. My trouble is in my heart. O doctor, go back to your home and do not talk about me. I am burning on account of separation. What medicine can you give me! My body has become only bones and my throat is choked with sighs. The ring on my finger can now fit over my wrist, I have grown so emaciated.

O Papiha (rain bird), please be silent. Do not talk of Piv (Beloved), for if any devotee suffering from birah (intense longing of separation) for the Beloved were to hear the name of Piv, he would immediately renounce his life.

I am in one place now, and the next minute in another. I have no rest. I am like a person who has been stabbed, and no one can understand my condition of restlessness. O crow, I am prepared to take out my heart and place it before you. Please take it to the place where my Beloved abides and eat it in His presence and before His eyes. My only attachment is to Naam. I have no other connections. O Mira, I am restless in separation from my Beloved. O God, give me Thy Darshan. My heart is full of the sweet picture of my Lord, and it has become entangled in it. Standing on the roof of my house I am looking at the path along which You will come. How can I remain alive without my Beloved, because He is the healing herb

that can save my life. Mira has sold herself to her Lord and people call her mad.

One person suffering from separation sits in a palace and is happy making garlands of pearls. But there is another one. A brihan (one suffering from separation), who is making garlands of her tears.

I have been counting the stars and passing the whole night in wakefulness. When will the time of happiness come, O God! My Lord, meet me and be never separated from me. O Lord, since you have been separated from me, I have been restless. If I listen to hymns in Your praise, my mind becomes restless, for I find solace only in songs of intense longing for You. With my eyes open wide I am looking at the path whence You will be coming and the night has become as long as half a year. To whom should I tell my story of separation? O my friend, to whom should I relate the story of my separation and intense longing? It is cutting through my heart like a saw. When will Mira's Lord meet her and give her joy by removing her anguish.

Shah Hussein describes the state of a person suffering from the pangs of separation in the following words:

Without my Beloved the nights are very long, the flesh is falling away from my body, and all my bones are exposed. This love could not be concealed even if I wished to do so, for the intense longing due to separation is firmly established in me. My Beloved is concealed in the garb of a mendicant, and I have also become a mendicant. The world calls me mad. Hussein, the disciple of the Lord, says: 'I am attached to Thy Feet.'

Bulleh Shah spent many years of his life in separation from his Master and in intense longing for Him. He describes his condition in the following manner

Now I am feeling restless because of intense longing for my Lord. What should I do? I cannot live – I do not die. Please listen to my sighs. There is no rest for me, either day or night. Without my

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Beloved, my eyes do not close even for a single second. I am in such a state of intense longing. What should I do? Is there anyone who can burn away this state of longing and remove my pain? How can I cross the ocean of life without His Darshan, for I have that longing and do not know what to do. O Bulleh, I am in great distress. Come and help me. How am I to remove this pain? I am in a state of intense longing. What should I do?

Hafiz also describes this state. He says:

Oh my friends, I wish that no one should be a victim of such a state of agony as is mine because of intense longing due to separation. If it were possible to take hold of this feeling of intense longing, I would have covered my Lord with it so that He should also know what intense longing is, and His eyes would also shed tears of blood and fire in the pangs of separation. But alas! This is not possible. I am full of pain and the feeling of intense longing is too much for me. Perhaps my mother gave birth to me so that I should suffer this intense longing. Oh my God, in my love for You, I am like a nightingale singing songs of lamentation, which bring tears of blood to my eyes.

My pen does not have the ability to describe my condition of intense longing due to separation. The waves rising out of the fathomless ocean of intense longing have swept over the heads of people who were anxious to meet the Lord, but the voyage of their boat of life was finished in this manner. When fate found that my mind and heart were captured by the love of my Lord, it tied the rope of anguish of intense longing round my neck, by which it is neither possible to live nor to die. O God, by whom were separation and intense longing brought into this world? The face of this separation should be blackened, and the intense longing should be broken.

Because of longing in separation, sleep, rest and passions all die out.

In my mind the pain of separation is so intense that my tongue would be burned if I wished to talk about it. And if I remain silent,

I fear that my bones will be consumed by this fire.

Buddha sought refuge in the jungles in search of the Truth, and his body became extremely emaciated. Likewise, we may study the life of any other Saint and we will find the same account of intense longing due to separation. Whoever has traveled the path of God-Realization had to cross the river of sighs before he could meet Him. It is indeed true that one has to tread that path through tears. Maulana Rumi says:

Oh man, if you wish to reach the Home of God, you should go by way of the ocean of tears, for it is only in that way that you will be able to reach Him. Dry prayers, dry counting of beads, dry reading of Scriptures, and dry eyes as well as dry heart – all these are like going along a barren path towards God. But if you had gone through water (tears), you would have reached without any difficulty.

What does the rab ab (a kind of violin) say? It tells of the burning of the heart and the tears of the eyes.

Shamas-i-Tabriz says:

Those eyes which are weeping for the Darshan (sight) of the Beloved will one day surely behold Him. In love, weeping acts as a ladder. When you make a ladder of your eyes, then you will automatically be speeding towards the sky. The ocean of the Beloved's Grace reaches from one end to the other, and no place is without it. But this fire of intense longing due to separation is for the purpose of ripening the faith of the followers on this path.

Maulana Rumi again mentions the need for intense longing in separation in the following words:

Look at the nurses who feed babies with their milk. They give the infant scarcely any milk unless it cries for it, because the milk in

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the breasts of the nurse does not flow out unless the child attracts it by its cries. In the same manner, so long as a devotee does not cry while praying to Him, the ocean of the Lord's Grace does not surge out.

Maulana Rumi further says:

Weeping is like the clouds, and longing is like the heat of the sun. Just as the sun's heat is the cause of bringing rains from the clouds, by which this world remains in existence; similarly, separation, longing for Him and restlessness – all these are like fires which make the currents of grace and mercy of God burst out, as the rain does from the clouds, and pacify the hearts of devotees. Tears in the eyes and pain in the heart are the two pillars between which we pass to go within.

Weeping over separation and anguish of the heart are two signs of meeting God. When Rabia Basri was asked whether she said her prayers before or after meeting God, she replied, God comes first, and then I pray to Him. The people then asked:

How are you aware that He is coming?

Her answer was:

When through His remembrance and attraction a current of restlessness is awakened in me, the tears flow from my eyes. He thus touches my soul with love and constantly pulls me towards Him. These are the indications of His coming. Then I bow in prayer before Him.

True prayer is one by which a feeling of ecstasy is created in the soul. Such a counting of just one bead has the effect of thousands of bead countings, because the rosary is being rotated by the longing and anguish of the mind. You need remember Him only once, but it should be with

so much real love that every cell of your body speaks out through your tongue, and whatever you think or speak or pray comes from the heart. The body and the mind should be numb. When those who are extremely devoted to the Beloved bow in reverence to Him, that is true prayer.

A true heart and a current of intense anguish are the true Scriptures which they study daily. The language of lovers is entirely different from that of other people. They consider it to be a work of thieves to pray and worship merely for show and as a formal duty. Such people are far removed from God and are entangled in physical pleasures. The truth is "A preacher is only anxious about his prayer, but the lover longs for that sight of his Beloved." God is in every cell of the lover, and when he bows his head before Him in this state it is impossible for him to lift his head, for the Beloved is in every nerve of his body.

Those who have lost themselves in Him are numb in mind and body. Those who have given their love to someone are filled with longing in their mind.

Through longing caused by separation a devotee washes away his bad thoughts with his hot tears, and remembrance of the Lord takes their place. But this longing can be awakened only by true love and not by crocodile tears.

Such a noble and rewarding longing is awakened only in the hearts of those who have pure and unadulterated love for the physical manifestation of God – namely, the Living Master.

A disciple must have true spiritual love for the physical form of his Master. And when he sees the resplendent form of the Master inside by means of the spiritual practice performed with love, he is then attached to that unique form also and to the Shabd (Sound Current, Word)

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emanating from it. He would never wish to be separated from this. By separation from the physical form of the Master, longing is produced to meet Him inside. And when a devotee does not see the form inside, the absence of the form produces a great restlessness and anguish in the mind.

I have fixed my love and longing on meeting Hari (God). I shall be happy only when I meet my friend and Lord Hari. (Adi Granth)

Last night, throughout the night, I could not sleep with my Beloved (He did not come to me), and every part of my body is aching. If this is my condition after His absence for one night, what is the state of those who never meet Him, and how do they pass their nights? (Sheikh Farid – Adi Granth)

Just as the heat of the sun helps in ripening sweet fruit, and the heat of the fire in the hearth enables one to prepare delicious food, in the same way the heat of longing plays a vital role in helping the devotee on the path of spiritual attainment. It is actually a touchstone or test of love, and at the same time it purifies the devotee's love and devotion, as a goldsmith purifies a piece of gold by putting it in the fire. Hafiz Says:

You should shed tears of pearls from your moist eyes. Perhaps He, in the form of a swan, may be caught by you when this swan is tempted to come to you to eat these pearls.

Maulana Rumi says:

I wish that I had wept so much in my longing to meet the Lord that the tears from my eyes had swelled into a river, and every tear drop had turned into a spiritual pearl. Then I would have placed all those pearls before the altar of my Beloved.

He also says:

Man's work in this world is nothing but to cry in intense longing due to separation from the Lord. Look at the infant. It cries as soon as it is born. It comes into the world crying. Therefore, just as a light burns throughout the night, in the same manner you should shed tears after midnight in longing for the Lord, and continue weeping and asking for His Light. Just as the wick of a lamp is trimmed, similarly you should trim the wick of your head (ego) so that the Light in you increases. In other words, as soon as you learn to sigh while you are weeping, there will be a flood of Light inside. God values the tears of His lovers as He does the blood of His martyrs.

Separation is extremely helpful in kindling the fire of restlessness and thereby obtaining the fruit of spirituality.

If the body burns like an oven the bones are ignited like wood, and the feet are blistered from walking, still a true devotee will not remain away from the Lord, even if he may have to continue his journey by walking on his head. (Farid)

A lover of the Lord, who is separated from Him, does not feel close to anyone or anything else. Even his life seems to be a burden to him and he feels as if he is dying. Guru Angad Sahib says:

If we love someone, we should die before he dies, because it is a sin to live after the death of one's beloved.

When Khwaja Mohammed came to the tomb of his Master, Hazrat Zarzari Zarkash, he fell lifeless upon the tomb overcome by sorrow and intense anguish because of separation from him. But before he died he recited the following couplet:

It is better to die than to live without one's Beloved. It is a thousand times better to make a sacrifice of one's self if deprived of the

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presence of the Beloved.

The pain of separation is like the poison of a cobra. Once it enters anyone's heart, it is not possible to get rid of it by any means, unless one meets the Master. There is no other method.

It is true that life is impossible for one who has intense longing because of separation from Ram (God). If he does live, he wastes his life like a mad man in this world. Kabir)

If the Lord is not reached, then everything – food, clothing and all other comforts in this world are useless. Guru Arjun says:

Without the Lord, everything is useless, just as silken dresses should be thrown into the fire by a bride after the death of her husband.

But if one is in communion with the Lord, he is praiseworthy in all conditions of life; just as a bride would be happy and would look beautiful even if she were lying in the dust.

The fact is that without having an intense longing for the Lord, this physical body is useless. If the object of our coming into this world is not achieved, what is the use of the body? Guru Angad Sahib says:

A head which does not bow in reverence to the Lord should be cut into pieces. The body which has not entertained a desire to meet the Lord should be burned.

Farid says:

We all call, 'Bireh, Bireh'(intense longing due to separation); but Bireh is the king of all emotions. O Farid, a person who is without intense longing is like a graveyard.

Another lover of God says:

The head which does not bow at the feet of the Lord should be broken (is useless).

Intense longing has a very deep influence because of its powerful current of energy. Once it is established, no other impressions can enter the mind. Such a devotee completely forgets his body and his clothes, because he is being pulled by the magnet of the remembrance of his Lord, and his mind is completely absorbed in contemplation of the Lord. If we are being pulled towards something or somebody all the time, we will ultimately merge into that form.

There are innumerable people in the world who are longing for worldly objects, but in this longing they are interested only in material things. It is most difficult for people of this kind to follow the path of Sant Mat. There is no worldly method by which one can find release from this world. All longings are worthless with the exception of an intense longing for the Lord. All others lead to distraction.

Yet most of the people in the world are engrossed in the desire for material gains. They do not listen to discourses on the subjects of Spirituality and meeting the Lord, nor do they have any desire to meet Him, because their eyes are closed and they cannot see anything in its true perspective.

Majnun was fully absorbed in the remembrance of his beloved Laila. His religion, his belief, was nothing but Laila. He would follow wherever she had walked and would bow his head over her footprints. Somebody once told

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Majnun that God wanted to meet him. He replied:

If He wishes to meet me, let Him come in the form of Laila.

Guru Ram Das Says:

All longing is useless so long as the longing for the Lord is not awakened.

The mind is so much engrossed in worldly pursuits that it is not prepared to listen to anything else.

The longing, of a physical nature, that existed between Manu and Laila very rarely turns into a spiritual longing; but if it does, the people to whom this happens are indeed blessed. Actually, true and real longing is established only when we have a longing for the Lord or His embodiment, the Master. It is therefore essential that we find a Master who practices and preaches Naam, because without this it is impossible to achieve the highest goal of Spirituality. If we find such a Master, we should sacrifice everything at his feet.

Longing does not necessarily create only pain and sorrow. It is a unique intoxication of the mind, because one is not willing under any circumstances to banish it, even at the cost of innumerable hardships. We offer our hearty congratulations to anyone who has established within himself the feeling of intense longing for the Lord because such a one is a leader of souls in the Court of the Lord.

What are the signs of Bireh (intense longing)? Kabir says:

One who is in such a state becomes extremely emaciated, even beyond recognition, and daily he grows pale, like the betel leaf.

Charan Das says:

The face is pale, the body is emaciated, the eyes are sad, and the sigh which is breathed out is full of grief. He sighs deeply with every breath.

Maulana Rum says:

If you do not know me, then ask those who are crying because of separation. You should ask my pale face and my dry lips, then you would know my real condition.

Shamas Tabriz told Maulana Rum:

O my son, there are nine signs which distinguish the lovers of God: They heave cold sighs.

The face is pale. The devotee wishes to have communion with the Lord but it is not in his power. Every time he thinks of the Lord he cries out and the tear drops from his eyes are hardly able to extinguish the burning fire in his heart.

The eyes are always wet.

He eats sparingly.

He sleeps little.

Deep sleep does not come to him.

He sighs continually.

He is restless (impatient to behold the Lord).

He moans continually.

When the fire of separation kindles in the heart and the smoke from it is not visible, only he who has experienced it, or who has kindled it, knows it is there. Only one who has been wounded knows the pain. No one else does. This fire burns within, not outside, and it produces water in the form of tears which try to extinguish the fire. (Kabir)

The remedy for one who is in this state of suffering lies

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in the hands of the Beloved. He alone can remove it by granting His Darshan (by meeting him). Dadu says:

To whom shall I disclose my pain and by whom shall I send my message? Even my hair has become tangled by the constant movement of my head while searching for the path whence my Beloved may come. I cannot meet Him and I am not happy. How can one live in such a state? The remedy lies in Him who has given me this pain. I am prepared to sacrifice the world and everything else for a single second's sight of my Lord. I am also prepared to cut my mind and my body into small pieces, and would sacrifice both heaven and hell for Him.

In the same connection Khusro states:

O ignorant doctor! Please leave my bedside for there is no remedy for separation except His Darshan.

The longing due to separation from the Lord has a unique sweetness. Those who are blindly following the dictates of the mind and are fully entrenched in the worldly luxuries of eat, drink and be merry cannot experience that sweet taste, just as a blind person cannot appreciate the fall of tears in weeping. Intense longing and crying for the Lord always turn into happiness. They are really blessed who are so fortunate as to be gifted with this condition. In the Sikh Scriptures we find references to the various fruits of longing due to separation. Kabir says:

In the state of longing and its pain, the things of the world appear bitter. Only the Name of the Lord is sweet.

When this longing is produced in a person, he becomes eligible to merge in the Truth.

Longing produces love and veneration for the Beloved. God is love. Therefore, the devotee comes nearer to the

Lord in proportion to the degree of his longing. He also realizes in greater degree the value of his Beloved, so much so that the pure and noble form of the Beloved is always fixed in his mind. Sheikh Farid says:

O crow, do not eat my body with your beak. Fly away from here because in this body resides my beloved Lord, and you have no right to eat such flesh.

Kabir says:

In my longing for the Lord, all the flesh of my body is emaciated. But so long as I remember Him, this body will not be lost.

CHAPTER 7. TRUTH

The Sikh Gurus talk of Truth at many places in their writings. Ordinary people believe that it means that they should speak the truth which is an element of Sato Gun (good attributes) and is essential for spiritual progress. But the study of the Sikh Scriptures shows that the word “Truth” has been used in them to denote Sat Purush (The True One – the True God).

O Nanak, consider the True One to be the Truth. (M 1 Sri Rag 15-18)

True is the Creator, True is the Cause, True is the Lord, True is the Master’s support, for Truth brings enlightenment. (M 5 Sri Rag 52-8)

Just as the Immortal Lord is beyond the limits of time, similarly Truth has neither a beginning nor an end. It is expressly stated in the Jap Ji Sahib that

True in the beginning, True through the ages. He is True. He shall ever be True. (Jap Ji 1-3)

Truth is therefore the name of the True Lord, the Creator Himself. The qualities attributed to Truth are the same as those attributed to God. The Sikh Gurus have also used the word Naam or Divine Melody for Truth.

*For him who loves the Truth, true is the Word and the Melody.
The Name of God dwells in his heart. He gives up anger and ego-
tism. (M 3 Sri Rag 33-17)*

*In them is the treasure of the Name. Through It are they known.
They worship the Name and contemplate on the Name, which is
the Eternal Truth. (M 1 Sri Rag 17-7)*

*Truth exists both inside and outside and is eternal. Truth rings
throughout the four ages. It proclaims nothing but Truth. (M 3 Sri
Rag 35-9)*

*They merge into the source from which they spring. The Truth per-
vades everywhere.
(M 1 Sri Rag 20-4)*

*The Truth has penetrated my core, and is seen in everything out-
side also.
(M 5 Ram Kali Var 966-8)*

Truth is free from caste, creed or color. It can neither be written nor spoken.

*Beyond color, sign and value are You. Have mercy on Nanak, O
Lord, and bless him with the Name. (M 5 Sri Rag 44-17)*

*Truth is wine without sugar. But it contains the True Name. (M 1
Sri Rag 15-19)*

Truth is beyond the three worlds.

*Beyond the three worlds, Nanak found Truth the sweet Nectar. (M
1 Maru 1042-15)*

Truth, Hari (the Lord) and Sat Guru (the True Master) are one.

I own no one except You my Lord. The True Master is the Truth,

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and the Lord is purest of the pure. He can be attained through the Word. (M 3 Sri Rag 27-4)

This truth is all-pervading and sustains all.

The One Truth pervades and sustains all. (M 3 Vadhans 559-18)

All is Truth. Truth pervades all. But this is known to a rare devotee alone. (M 3 Suhi 754-2)

The Truth is obtained when one meets a true Master and follows His directions. It can dwell within us only through the grace of the Master.

Without the Master all is darkness; but without the Word we realize it not. The Master's Word illumines the way; and one merges in the Truth. (M 1 Sri Rag 55-15)

Through the Master's Word, is banished all egoism. And the Truth abides in the heart. (M 3 Vadhans 560-16)

The Lord is merciful, He Himself makes us realize Him. Through Guru's Word does He dwell in our hearts, and we are attuned to the Truth. (M 3 Sri Rag 37-10)

Those who serve the True Lord attain the glory of Truth. Through the Master's grace He dwells in our hearts, and rids us of all ego. (M 3 Sri Rag 30-6)

In what kind of soil of the heart does the Truth grow?
The Sikh Scriptures have this to say:

The wise and truly great farmer forgets not to till the soil before he sows the seed of the Name. (M 1 Sri Rag 19-1)

Truth is known when one is attuned to Truth. Such a one is both kind-hearted and is charitably disposed. (M 1 Asa Var 468-11)

This Truth manifests Itself only in the higher regions which are devoid of Maya.

Truth is known when the soul dwells at the Holy Place. (M 1 Asa Var 468-12)

The Truth can be had only when one becomes a true devotee of a Master.

Through the Master does one gather Truth, self-discipline, the quintessence of knowledge. Through the Master is one attuned to the Truth. (M 3 Vadhans 559-19)

The Sikh Gurus say that those who realize the Truth are true. They reflect and contemplate on Truth.

Those who know the Truth are ever true. They daily contemplate on the Truth. O Nanak, in whose hearts dwells the True Name, they suffer no pangs of separation. (M 3 Suhi 769-10)

Those who meditate on the Truth alone are True. They reflect on the Guru's Word. They still their ego and purify their hearts. (M 3 Suhi Var 788-5)

Those who realize the Truth are alone True. Bereft of ego they merge in the Name. (M 1 Basant 1174-15)

The Sikh Gurus have mentioned numerous benefits that accrue from contemplating on Truth. One becomes happy and fearless.

Those who know the Truth are happy through all the four ages. (M 3 Sri Rag 55-2)

Realize the Truth and you banish fear. (M 1 Sri Rag 18-5)

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Through the practice of Truth the Lord dwells in the heart and detachment is achieved.

Those who realize the Truth merge completely in the Truth. Through the Master's Word their mind is stilled and they meet the Lord face to face. (M 3 Sri Rag 37-4)

When one meditates on the Truth one's mind is illumined. Then, one remains detached in the midst of Maya. (M 1 Dhanasri 661-12)

Ultimately with the help of Truth one crosses the ocean of worldly existence.

He who loves the Truth transcends both birth and death. Separated he cannot be from Truth which pervades all. (M 5 Sri Rag 46-17)

This Truth can only be realized when the Lord so wills it. A true Master, who is one with the Truth, is a prerequisite for attaining the Truth. But such a Master is met with only by good fortune. On realizing the Truth, one is rid of lust, anger, attachment, greed and egotism and becomes fearless. He is freed from the snares of the Negative Power (Kal) and crosses the ocean of worldly existence and is honored at the door of the Lord. Blessed are those who have realized the Lord through the Truth, by meeting a True Master.

I am a sacrifice to the Master who blessed me with the True Name. (M 5 Sri Rag 53-2)

Those who did not carry the Truth with them were beguiled on the way. Nanak, blessed are they who meeting a Master, realize the Lord. (M 5 Gauri 319-5)

The Lord of Death (Dharam Rai)

The Lord of Death, or Dharam Rai, who is also called Yamraj or Kal Purush, administers the three worlds of Pinda, Anda, and Brahmanda, that is, the gross, subtle and causal regions. He does this under the orders of Sat Purush, the True Lord. All the three worlds are destroyed at the time of dissolution. Heaven and hell, which are in the subtle region are also liable to destruction and are under the jurisdiction of Dharam Rai. Dharam Rai was created by the Supreme Lord; he administers the three lower regions under His orders. He dispenses justice impartially.

Dharam Rai is created by the Supreme Lord. He does not come near a devotee of the Lord. (M 4 Bihagra Var 555-9)

In compliance with the orders of the Lord, Dharam Rai asks all living beings after their death to render an account of their good and bad deeds and he then deals with them accordingly. Hells are meant for the sinners and heavens for those who have performed meritorious deeds. When one's stay in these regions is over, one has once again to tread the eternal wheel of birth and death. He is named Dharam Rai because he dispenses justice according to law (Dharma). For this work, he is assisted by Yama (angels of death) and for this reason he is also known as the Lord of Yamas or Yam Raj. All the universe that is under him is destroyed in the course of time. He is, therefore, the Lord of Time or Death called (Kal Purush or Kal). The Kal Purush sends his agents or incarnations to the earth in every age in order to keep the universe going.

Three forces or gods, namely, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh or Shiva work under him. The force that creates is called Brahma; that which sustains is called Vishnu;

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and that which destroys is called Mahesh or Shiva. He has through Maya created these three forces which create, sustain and destroy. They work under his orders, but cannot, however, see their father Kal.

The one Mother Divine brought forth three deities. One creates, one sustains, and one destroys. He rules as He likes according to His Will. He sees all. He is not seen by anyone. This is the wonder of wonders. Hail to Him, the Primal Being, the pure Light. The one without beginning, without end and ever the same. (Jap Ji7-1)

In the chapter on Kal (the Negative Power) in the present treatise, it has been clearly stated that the True Being (Sat Purush), under whose orders Dharam Rai or Kal works, is imperishable and indestructible. He is, therefore, called Akal Purush (the Timeless Being). Above him is Anami Purush (Nameless Being), who is beyond both Kal and Akal. He is in actuality the Supreme Lord. He is invisible, unfathomable, limitless and everlasting. He is mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib (the holy book of the Sikhs) as Khasam (Lord), Nirala (Detached Being) and Soami (Lord).

Kal or Dharam Rai administers as he is directed to by the far higher True Being (Sat Purush) and he is not the creator of the soul. He can neither create nor destroy a soul. It is only the body that belongs to him. He assigns a body according to individual karmas and takes it back after the allotted span is over. He has no control over the soul, because souls are the children of the True Being and are immortal.

Thus we should adore the true Akal Purush and it is through adoration of Him that imperishable life and everlasting bliss can be obtained. Kal does not wish that anyone should go out of his domain, because the life and

gaiety of this creation is due to the souls that are in it. He accordingly misleads the souls in a variety of ways by means of the mind and the Maya. For this reason the True Being or True Lord sends his incarnations, the Saints and the Masters, from time to time to emancipate those who are in the clutches of delusion. Without taking refuge in such Saints one is not freed from the bondage of death.

Except through a Master no one can transcend death or time. If he is involved with others, he merely wastes his time. (M 3 Shalok 1414-16)

Saints point out the path of emancipation by prescribing the practice of the Word or Holy Spirit (Shabd) or the Name of God. Sat Purush (True Being) is Shabd. He can be attained only by means of the Shabd, and therein lies the salvation of man. It is impossible to escape from the cycle of birth and death through physical deeds such as repetitions, austerities, holy baths, pilgrimages and the like. All these actions are within the sphere of the Lord of Death. But if, through the grace of a True Master, one practices contemplation on God's Name, one clears one's account of karmas and escapes both hell and heaven and also the wheel of transmigration. Those who by great good fortune obtain the company of Saints are served by the Lord of Death.

If you keep the company of the Saints, the Lord of Death will serve you. (M 5 Gauri 271-18)

The Lord of Death punishes sinners but does not come near the devotees of the Lord. He who is dear to the Lord is dear to all.

He who is dear to the Lord is dear to all. Others but come and go in vain. (M4 bihagara Var 555-9)

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Those who are beloved of the Lord are not called to account by Dharam Rai. (M 4 Nat 980-19)

By adoring the Name of the Lord both the mind and its vanity are vanquished and there remains nothing to account for.

By repeating the Lord's Name, one is rid of all sins, and one's account with Dharam Rai is ended. (M 4 Prabhati 1348-13)

The devotees of the Lord are freed from the fear of the Lord of Death of whom everybody else is very much afraid.

The Characteristics and Functions of the Lord of Death

He is a servant of the True Lord (Sat Purush) and dispenses justice according to His law. After death he asks all beings to account for their actions and he punishes the sinners.

He is all-powerful and the creator of the three worlds (physical, astral and causal).

He is the Negative Power (Kal) and ensnares living beings in Maya or illusion.

Dharam Rai is not satisfied with recitals and penances, worship and sacrifices, pilgrimages and charities and the like.

There is no release from Dharam Rai without taking shelter with the Master. An egotistic and proud person remains always in the bondage of Maya.

If one does not possess the wealth of the Name he has to face the Lord of Death who demands the account of his deeds.

The Negative Power (Kal)

The Supreme Lord is self-existent and self-sustaining. He is the Cause of all. He is neither real nor non-real. He is beyond them both. He cannot be reached by mind or speech. That which was and is, is neither darkness nor light. There was motion in Him, which we can describe as a wave. By this wave both the True Lord (Sat Purush) and the Negative Power (Kal Purush) were born. From the Negative Power the creation originated. He has two powers, namely, Time and Space. These provide the warp and woof of the creation. Space helps in spreading the creation, and time is ever bringing about changes.

The cycle of the eighty-four is under the Negative Power. All the lower regions such as Brahm Lok (the region of Brahma), Rudra Lok (the Region of Shankar), Inder Lok (the Region of Indra), Shiv Puri (the Region of Shiva) and Vishnu Puri (the Region of Vishnu) which people try to reach after death by doing meritorious deeds and giving alms and charities and so forth, are under the governance of Kal. These regions are not everlasting or imperishable, but are destroyed after an allotted period.

The world of Indra will doubtless end; the region of Brahma will perish, the region of Shiva will suffer death; all that is within the sway of the three-headed Maya will pass away. (Gauri M5, 237-8)

Maya overwhelms the spheres of Indra, Shiva and Brahma. But it dares not cast its eye on those who keep the company of Saints, it ever washes their feet. (Gujri M5, 500-5)

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All gods and goddesses are under the control of Kal. All gods and goddesses are lured by Maya. Without devotion to the Master not one escapes death. (Gauri M1, 1227-4)

While living within the sphere of Kal we have to still the mind and with the power of the Lord's Name obtained from the Master, we have to rise above Kal's domain, to the regions where both Kal and Maya become powerless and ineffective.

Time and Timeless both are perplexed when the Master stills the mind. (M1 Suhi 764-15)

O fool, what can Kal do to them who have stilled their mind? (M 1 Ram Kali 908-1)

The Negative Power and the True Lord have their own spheres of work. Kal creates nether- worlds and upper worlds, sustains them, and then destroys them. Kal comprises the past, present and future. The Four Ages or Yugas are its revolutions; and years, months, days, hours and seconds are its divisions.

There is a story in the Mahabharata in which a Yaksha (elemental spirit) puts several questions to the great Seer Yudhishtira. One of them was,

What is that which is worth knowing?

Yudhishtira replied,

Kal is cooking all human beings in the huge pan of attachment (to his worlds and their objects) with the fire of the sun, and is stirring them with the ladle of the months and the seasons.

Everything perishes after its allotted time is over.

Therefore, the Sikh Scriptures have described Kal as Jam Kal or “death at the appointed time”. The entire world is under the control of this Negative Power. It is completely in its bondage.

All the world is subject to Kal. (M 3 Gauri 162-12)

The main work of the Negative Power is to allow no one to escape from its domain. He has, as if by magic and deceit, obtained control over all living beings. We have forgotten our original home and we are now destined to wander from door to door. Shamas-i-Tabriz says:

To wander is our fate. We have forgotten our home. He is old and deceitful. He imprisoned us by fraud and magic.

There is another power above Kal which is described as Akal by the Sikh Gurus. Akal connotes Eternity, and this power possesses the qualities of the “eternal now” and unchangeable permanence. Time has nothing to do with it. He is beyond Time and Space. Because this power has no connection with Kal (Time), it is beyond the count of seconds, minutes, days, years and ages. They all merge in His eternal existence. We can conceive of all the three tenses in the existence of Akal. A Muslim Faqir (holy man) has said:

When He (Kal) was not, I was.

Kabir Sahib says in ‘Anurag Sagar’ that the power of Kal originated from Sat Purush (the True Being) and spread downwards from Sach Khand (the True Region). Kal, however, is not allowed to go to Sach Khand. This means that Kal cannot penetrate into the sphere of Akal.

Akal is real. Kal is merely His reflection. The reflection

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is sustained by the original. Just as the moon receives light from the sun and is illuminated by it, similarly Kal is sustained by Akal. Kal is an activated shadow of Akal. The world is sustained by him.

The Vedas and other Hindu Scriptures consider this 'Shadow Being' (Chhaya Purush) to be the all-in-all and the highest power. But he is described by the Saints as Kal Purush or the Negative Power. Kal is highly praised in the Vedas. In the nineteenth chapter of the Atharva Veda there are two verses in praise of Kal. These are called the Kal verses, or verses concerning the Negative Power.

Kal has created the Universe; in Kal does the sun rise; all creatures live in Kal. (Sukt 53, Mantra 6)

Kal has created the bodies of all living beings. And has then imprisoned them in his dominions. (Sukt 54, Mantra 4)

Saints believe that the Lord or Master or Creator has limitless consciousness. He is the Positive Power. He is an unfathomable ocean of love and bliss. He has many powers or agents who look after the creation and its maintenance. These are described as Beings or Purushas. The Supreme Lord is accordingly called the Supreme Being or Param Purusha. Amongst these powers is the Negative Power, or Kal Purush, who is the creator of the universe.

The duration of his universe is limited, after which it must suffer dissolution. Therefore, he is called the Lord of Time or Kal Purush. He is the sustainer of all the worlds of three attributes. There are numberless universes. Each universe is looked after by a ruler appointed by the Supreme Being. Each ruler has three forces or gods – Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the sustainer and Mahesh (Shiva), the destroyer. These create, sustain and destroy a

universe. All these rulers are parts of Kal Purush, who is himself sustained by the Timeless Lord (Akal Purush). All this lower creation is within the power of Kal.

Both Kal and Akal were created by the Supreme Lord. The work of creation and its evolution has been handed over to them.

Kal and Akal were created by the Lord to annihilate this world of form. Oh Kabir, only those in the end are emancipated, who have the treasure of the Lord's Name in their hearts. (Kabir, Maru 1104-7)

The Saints have also described the Supreme Lord as the most Merciful.

He is the sustainer of the world. Most beneficent, wise and merciful is He. (Gauri M5, Chhand 249-7)

The same names have also appeared in the writings of many other Saints. These Beings (Purushas) have been described as:

Mahadayal, Dayal and Kal.
Kal, Mahakal, Satya Purush, Swami and Anami.
Dharam Rai, Ram Rai and Hari Rai.

Similarly, in the writings of many seers and sages, there is mention of Kal and Dayal (the Merciful One) or Akal (the Timeless One). Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru said in one of His hymns:

Salutation to Akal, Destroyer of death, Destroyer of Maha Kal and the Destroyer of the Lord of Time.

Muslim Saints have mentioned Shaitan and Rehman,

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namely, Satan and the Merciful Lord. Shaitan is the same as Kal and is, they say, the Negative Power, within whose sphere fall all the three worlds and regions. The other, the Merciful One, is the Positive Power. It is the source of all power and the Negative Power works according to His directions. Kal cannot interfere with Akal. Both of them have been created by the Supreme Power which has been called variously by great Saints as Khasam (Lord), Maha Dayal (Most Beneficent One) and Swami (Master). The distinction between Kal and Dayal (the Negative Power and the Merciful One) is very abstruse and merits careful study. The Saints hint at it and their writings should be studied.

The transient world is all the creation of Kal. But to one taking refuge in the Lord, Kal can do no harm. The eternal Sound or Melody is the manifestation of the Positive Power. By practicing it one transcends the limits of Kal. Wherever there is the Melody of the Shabd or the Sound Current, Kal cannot interfere and he keeps away from there.

The dragon of death cannot be slain save through the Guru's Word. Then it comes not near. On hearing the Word it runs afar, lest the carefree Lord kills it. (Maru M3, 1054-15)

The Master is Himself Shabd-Incarnate or 'the Word made flesh'. By giving devotion to Him, a person can escape from the clutches of Kal. Dharam Rai (Kal) then serves him.

Dharam Rai serves those who keep the company of the Saints. (Gauri M5, 271-17)

At the last moment of life, the Lord of Death or Kal does not come to take away the disciple of the True Master. The Master Himself comes and takes the soul with

Him. Kal does not come near a devotee.

Those who have not met a Satguru are in the power of Kal. One cannot escape from the clutches of Kal except by serving a True Master.

All gods and goddesses are lured by Maya. Without devotion to the Master none escapes death. (Gauri M1, 227-4)

Kal demands from everybody an account of all actions and in accordance with them he metes out punishments or rewards. Recitals, penances, continence, reading, writing and the three gunas (qualities) are all within his sphere. The only way to transcend them is the practice of Shabd-Dhun, or the Divine Melody and taking shelter with the True Master. But it is only the highly fortunate few who take shelter with the Master and thus escape the clutches of Kal.

CHAPTER 8. THE LORD'S WILL (BHANA)

What is the Will of the Lord, or His Bhana? Bhana means that which is liked by the heart or which is pleasing or gives pleasure. In Punjabi they generally say,

I like it and am pleased with it. It suits me and is very good.

The Sikh Gurus have mentioned the word 'Bhana' many times in their writings.

They served according to the wishes of the Lord. They acted according to His Will. They who did so succeeded. They remained very happy. That is happiness which He likes. That is greatness which He approves. What He likes He considers to be true. He dwells in His Will.

Do such deeds as please the Lord. Perform the actions with which He is pleased. Whatever is liked by the Lord should be desired by us also. Therefore, "surrender to His Will" means that we should be happy in His Will. The Muslim Saints describe it as "submission to His Will". Such a person always says,

Oh Lord, whatever you like is good.

A Persian Saint has said:

The work that did not succeed according to our desire, it was good that it did not succeed.

Whatever one does should be done to please the Lord, so that we may become dear to Him. The key to obtaining His pleasure lies in acting according to His Will.

I bow my head before the wishes of the Beloved.

We should consider what we should do when we wish to please someone. The main thing would be to obey him implicitly. We should not transgress his directions even by a hair-breadth. Look at the animals. A dog that understands the command of its master and does not even remotely transgress it, is liked and patted by its master. An obedient son gives great satisfaction and pleasure to his parents. An obedient wife is loved by her husband. An obedient servant is pleasing to his master. The law-abiding and good citizens are a source of delight to their government. Wherever you may look, you will find this same principle in action. That is, if you wish to please anyone, carry out his commands. Be content with what he wills. This is the way to remain happy and in his will.

All deeds and duties should be performed with a view to pleasing the Lord. Guru Nanak, in the first stanza of the Jap Ji Sahib, has considered the various methods customarily used to realize the Lord. He says that the Lord is not within the reach of the intellect or reason. He cannot be realized by practicing austerities, by keeping fasts, by observing silence and so on. He is not to be found by wisdom or cunning. How are we, then, to proceed in order to gain access to His door and to see Him after tearing away the curtain of Maya? Guru Nanak says that the Lord cannot be realized by any other method except that of obeying and following His Will.

He cannot be conceived however hard we may think. He cannot be

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reached by observing silence however long. Nor can contentment be bought by all the wealth of the world. Of a myriad clevernesses, not one works. How can we be true? How can the curtain of falsehood be rent asunder? By following the Divine Will. It is so written in our fate, O Nanak. (Jap Ji 1-5)

Divine dispensation, divine law and divine Will are three different aspects of the same reality, namely, Bhana or the Lord's Will. The Lord's dispensation is the result of the Lord's Will and so are happiness and pleasure. It is through this that His Law operates. The divine law is the materialized form of divine dispensation. It is the Shabd, Name or Word.

O Nanak, the Lord's Name is the Law. It is explained by the Master. (M 1 Sri Rag 72-2)

He is blessed who knows the Law. The true Shabd is His distinguishing sign. (M 4 Asa 386-2)

'Raza' means to comply with the law without murmur or complaint and joyfully. Raza, in Arabic, means happiness, joy or will. The pleasure of the lawgiver is the prime consideration. We should abide by the law happily and cheerfully. There is complete lack of self and egotism in it. One has to become the very embodiment of the Divine Will.

Rabia Basri once met two holy men. She asked them to tell her something about Raza. One holy man said,

Whatever pain and suffering one receives from the Lord, one should bear them.

Rabia Basri said,

There is egotism in the idea. The other holy man said, Whatever sufferings come from the Lord, they should be accepted cheerfully.

Rabia said,

This also smacks of egotism.

Rabia then added,

One should lose the faculty of distinction between the pleasure and pain that comes from the Lord and regard both of them as His gifts.

Those who act in accordance with the Divine Law or Will are conscious co-workers with it and act according to its provisions. This does not mean that one should sit idle and do nothing. He alone is a doer who performs actions.

The problem of the relationship between fate and self-effort is very knotty. There is a Persian saying:

Man proposes; God disposes.

A man conceives thousands of plans and puts some of them into effect, but fate sits by his side and laughs at him. Effort is the outcome of man's will. Fate, however, is the outcome of the Will of the Lord. What can the will of man do against the Will of the Lord? It has no chance whatever.

However hard one may try, it is to no purpose. That only happens, which is ordained by the Lord.

We come together or separate according to our fate karmas and His Will. Whatever He wills, happens. No one can interfere with His supreme Will.

Some attain to union with Him; others depart in separation. All

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that is His Will shall happen; who else can do anything? (Sri Rag M1, 18-8)

Both the fools and the wise are all tied with the same rope. Human effort is of no avail against His Will. His law is working in all and no one else is the doer. Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru in the line of Guru Nanak, says:

No one is foolish, no one is wise. Whatever happens, it is Your Will. (Majh M5, 98-16)

Whatever You will, happens. There is no other who can do a thing. (M 5 Gauri 154-1)

Everything happened as willed by Him; no one else did anything. By His Will is the world deluded, and lying asleep it does not awaken. (M 5 Gauri 207-11)

Guru Nanak has also said:

All happens according to Your Will. The mind drags one into the mire in the end. (M 1 Asa 356-11)

Namdev, a fourteenth century Indian Saint, says to the same effect:

Nothing will come out of what I do. What the Lord wills that alone is what comes to pass. (Namdev, Bhairon, 1165-15)

Shamas-i-Tabriz says that man thinks up many plans but is not aware of his fate. But only that happens which is ordained by God.

You try to act, but do not know your fate. Nothing avails against one's ordained fate.

Hafiz says,

You should live happily according to His Will, since we have not been given any say in this matter.

Sheikh Saadi has also said:

The arrow of fate cannot be avoided, submit to it cheerfully.

Since there is no escape from the arrow of fate, a man can do nothing but submit to his ordained fate. It is our everyday experience that howsoever much we may try, success or failure is not within our hands. Of course, it is our duty to make an effort. Lord Krishna gave the same advice to his disciple Arjun, to do his duty but to leave its fruit to the Lord, since he had no control over the fruit of his actions.

An old story says that one day an Arab said to Prophet Mohammed, Oh Prophet of God! The Lord is constantly watching over us. What if I do not tie the legs of my camel in the night and thus leave my camel's wanderings to Him, relying on His Will? Would it do any harm? Maulana Rumi has described the reply given by the Prophet in the following words:

In a loud voice the Prophet said: 'Tie the legs of the camel. And then rely on God.'

The Prophet said authoritatively that it was the man's duty to tie the legs of his camel. Perform your duty. Then remain content with the Will of God and leave the result to Him. Try your best and leave the rest to God.

Man is free to a certain extent. He is bound beyond that. We can make this clear by an illustration. A boy is flying a kite. His father has given him a hundred or two hundred

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yards of string. Hiding himself he has kept the rest of the string with himself. The boy is free to fly the kite to the extent of the string that is with him, and no more. Similarly, we should try to act as best we can according to our strength and then leave the rest to the Lord. We should make use of our effort and intelligence to the extent that we can and then bow before the Will of God, accepting It as sweet and welcome. Guru Granth Sahib says:

Live by making an earnest effort. Thus earn and abide in happiness. Contemplating the Lord, meet Him and dispel all care and anxiety. (Gujri Var M5, 522-15)

March forward and look not behind. (M 5 Maru Var 1096-13)

O Kabir, do today what you would do tomorrow. Do just now what you would do today. (Kabir ji Shalok 1371-16)

O my wandering mind! A stranger are you. How would you meet the Lord? (M 4 Gauri 234-4)

The Lord's Will and man's free will are mentioned many times in the writings of the Gurus. If by the Lord's Will, it is meant that everything that happens is bound to happen and that man's efforts are of no avail whatever, then what was the use of the Gurus incarnating themselves again and again, giving out their teachings, taking pains to hold spiritual discourses and putting out scriptural writings? The Gurus say that it is necessary for us to make our own efforts, but these should be in accordance with the Will of the Lord.

The question arises as to how are we to know His Will? The Gurus say:

The virtues loved by the Lord, are taught to us by the Master. Sub-

mit to the Master's Will, and then you will be blessed. I worship the Master. (Tilang M4, 725-12)

The divine virtues that are dear to the Lord are known and achieved through the Master. The True Master is indistinguishable from the Lord, and the Will of the Lord is dear to Him.

He alone is a devotee of the Master who is content with the Lord's Will. Within him ring unstruck Melodies of bliss and the Lord Himself embraces him. (Ramkali, Rag 923-10)

The Master is the Lord's Will personified or made flesh. It is by following the will of the Master that the Will of the Lord is known. But this can be known from a Perfect Master only.

O Lord, keep me ever in Your Will and bless me with the glory of Your Name. It is through the Perfect Master that Your Will is known and one merges in equipoise. (M 3 Prabhati 1333-8)

Mention of these things is made in many religious Scriptures. Ponder over them while sitting in the company of a realized soul. The most important thing is to take refuge with a Perfect Master and then follow without hesitation the path that He enjoins. His utterances are those of God Himself and His orders are God's orders.

O Lalu, as I receive the word of the Lord, so do I utter. (M 1 Tilang 722-15)

When by following the directions of a Perfect Master, one understands it, he becomes the administrator of His will. Whatever he does, he does on behalf of the Lord. The Lord works through him. His will becomes one with the Lord's Will.

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Man's will and intellect, being finite, are weak, deficient and incomplete. If we make them one with the eternal Will and the perfect wisdom of the Lord they will also become infinite. Since the law of harmony is in tune with His Will, the echo of the Divine Melody is felt within man. The deficient will of man then awakens in the perfect Will of the Lord and takes its form. He begins to truly understand and follow His Will. He is no longer obliged to grope in the dark. He sees everything in a clear-cut manner. He is rid of all delusions.

I have tasted of His Will. I am rid of all my doubts. (M 1 Sri Rag 72-7)

He begins to see and understand the writings that tell of His Will. He becomes familiar with all the three aspects of time. Such persons generally keep silent, but sometimes in their delight they say something about the matter.

We may be rich or poor, healthy or diseased, happy or unhappy. All these states are boons from Him, a result of our own karmas. Accept them cheerfully. Be happy with His Will. Try to act as you are directed by the Master, and thus free yourself from the shackles of karmas and death, through the Name of the Lord. His Will is His greatest gift. Nothing excels it. It is only if He wills it that we obey Him. We can meet a Master if it is so willed by Him. We can attune ourselves to Truth and then share the bliss, only if He wills it. But only those for whom it is ordained can obtain it.

I obey as He wills. I get bliss as He wills. He wills and I meet a Master. He wills and I contemplate on Truth. No boon is greater than His Will. Verily this is the truth. I take refuge with the Creator. (Maru M3, 1093-14)

When He wills a thing it happens. One gets a Master and one gets the Name of God. (Maru M3, 1064-1)

The entire universe has been created by His Will. He alone, whom He wills it, loves His Will.

He by His own Will created all the universe. He, whom He wills, loves His Will. (Maru M3, 1064-2)

Pain and pleasure, honor and glory, birth and death, the union of the soul with the body, coming together and separation, habitation in hell or heaven, recitals and penances, wandering in different species, knowledge and devotion, and crossing the ocean of the universe, all are happening according to His Will.

When You are with me, oh Lord, I attain everything. When You abide within me, I am at peace. When You dwell within me, I am blessed. By Your Will You make me a king; by Your Will a beggar. By Your Will flow rivers in the desert; by Your Will bloom flowers in the sky. By Your Will we cross the sea of life; by Your Will are we drowned midstream. By Your Will we love the Lord, and are dyed in His hue. By Your Will He appears dreadful, and we keep coming and going. (Suhi M3, 762-15)

He is the greatest of all. All are under His discipline, and He rules all. All act according to His Will.

Great is the glory of the unfathomable Lord. Through Guru's Word I see His vision. An enraptured and inner peace descends upon me. He is the Over-Lord and His Will rules over all. The Lord has yoked all to His Will. Nanak, the Lord does as He wills. (Sarang Var M4, 2151-12)

That alone is true knowledge and contemplation, which is pleasing to Him. That alone is true worship and recital,

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which pleases Him.

That alone is true contemplation, which is approved by Him. That alone is recital which is pleasing to Him. To abide in His Will is perfect knowledge. (Majh M5, 100-8)

Only when the True Lord wills it, can we worship Him with His Will enshrined in our hearts. It is a true devotee alone who knows what worship is living utterly in His Will. Oh Saints, he who accepts God's Will is in bliss. In the end it is His Name alone that keeps one company. (Ramkali M3, 910-7)

He who is dear to the Lord and submits to His Will is successful.

Blessed is he who is dear to You, may I be a sacrifice unto Your Will. (Dhanasri M5, 676-12)

Blessed are they who obey the Lord's Will. The Guru's Shabd guides them, and they reach the abode of the Lord. (Bhairon M3, 1129-18)

May we be a sacrifice to the one who is loved by the Lord.

He who meets the Master knows the Lord. I am a sacrifice to Him who submits to the Lord's Will. (Ramkali Var M5, 958-14)

When one is loved by the Lord, the Lord Himself forgives him and unites him to Himself.

I am a sacrifice to Him who forgives and unites me with Himself. Says Nanak, in His Will the Lord merges me in Himself. (M 1 Malar Var 1291-12)

Those who love the Will of the Lord become perfect.

Whatever is ordained, no one can efface. Nanak, they become perfect, who love the Will of the Lord. (Malar M3, 1276-14)

He who submits himself to the Will of the Lord merges in Him. This is the highest praise of the Will.

He who accepts Your Will unites with You. He who is pleased with Your Will merges in You. Glorious is submission to God's Will, but rare is the one who submits to it. (Maru M3, 1063-19)

Who Loves the Will of the Lord and Accepts It?

The true devotee or Gurmukh (he who loves the Guru) loves the Will of the Lord.

The true devotee loves Your Will; he easily obtains truth and bliss. Many try to understand the Will but it is the Lord who makes one surrender to His Will. (Maru M3, 1063-18)

Only those to whom He is kind and who love Him accept His Will.

When You will it in Your mercy, they accept Your Will. Devotion is what pleases You. You are the sustainer of the world. (Suhi M5, 747-2)

He, whom He wills, loves His Will. (Maru M3, 1064-2)

He who merely talks and does not understand His Law is not an adept and is of no value. He who accepts His Will is a devotee.

He who merely talks, knows not the Will of the Lord. He who submits to the Lord's Will is the devotee of God. Without it one is false. (Ramkali Var M3, 950-14)

She who is liked by the Lord is the ever-happy bride.

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All embellishments and mannerisms become her. She is the most beautiful of all, and she ever remains happy.

She is truly embellished, she is incomparably beautiful, she alone is the ever-happy bride, who is approved by the Lord. (Asa M5, 400-13)

The clouds are thick and low, it raineth incessantly. Sayeth Nanak: Bride that walketh in the Will of the Spouse, reveleth ever in joy. (Malar Var M1, 1280-16)

He Who Accepts the Will of the Lord is a True Devotee

He is a true devotee, who accepts Your Will. I am a sacrifice unto Him. (Malar M5, 1271-3)

What Are the Signs of Union with the Lord?

The sign of being united with the Lord is that one recognizes His Law. He is always in the same state; he is always satisfied and he is always in blissful enjoyment of His Will.

This is the sign of union with the Lord; the mind recognizes the one true Divine Law. He lives according to the Will of the Lord. He always enjoys contentment and satisfaction. (Majh M5, 106-17)

The Will of the Master or Guru

We cannot see the Lord and are, therefore, not fit to understand His Will. But the Guru is the manifested form of the Lord. It is necessary, therefore, to act in accordance with His Will, since He accepts the Will of the Lord and is His incarnation.

I loved the Will of the Lord; the Master made me do so. The Lord blessed me. (Ramkali, Sad 923-9)

His Will is the Will of the Lord. We can see the Master and we can also enquire from Him regarding the True Path. Whoever follows the Will of the Master is the recipient of the Lord's Grace.

He is kind to those who accept the Will of the Master. The Lord knows the secret of their hearts; they act as He Wills. (Tukhari M4, 1115-6)

He who accepts the Master's Will accepts the Will of the Lord as well. He easily obtains the fruits that accrue by living in accordance with the Will of the Lord. There is nectar in the Will of the Lord. The Guru's Will is permeating the Lord's Will. There is, therefore, nectar in the Will of the Master also. When the Lord so wills it, the devotee, by contemplating on the Naam, can drink that nectar. He can then attain the Truth.

How may I see You? How may I praise You? Through the Master's Grace I praise You through the Word. In Your Will rains the nectar and in Your Will do we drink it. (Majh M3, 119-2)

To the disciple who sacrifices himself for the Master or who enshrines His Will in his mind, the Master Himself bestows His Grace.

How can one serve such a Master? Surrender body and soul to Him. He who submits himself to His Will, the Master is kind to him. (Gujri M3, 490-7)

To act according to the Will of the Master is the duty of the disciple.

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The disciples accept the Will of the Master; the Perfect Master then takes them across. Oh Lord, give us the dust of their feet, that we sinners may also obtain release. (Shalok M4, 1424-6)

He who acts in accordance with the Will of the Master is a true disciple, friend, relation and servant.

That disciple is a true friend, a true kinsman, who acts according to the Will of the Master. He who follows his own will is separated from the Lord and suffers sorrow. (Sorath M3, 601-19)

Oh Nanak, he alone is the Lord's servant who offers his head to God, and accepts the Master's Will, and cherishes the Word in his heart. (Sarang Var M1, 1247-15)

He who serves the Master and merges his Light in his Master's Light is acceptable at the door of the Lord. He who enshrines the Will of the Lord in his inner consciousness, is like the Lord Himself. He assumes His form. There is no doubt about it.

They who serve the true Master are approved of by God. They merge their Light in the Flame. He alone is the servant of God who submits to His Will. (Malar M1, 1287-7)

Those who walk in the Will of the Lord are very fortunate. They easily board the ship of the Name.

The Master is the boatman; the Lord's Name is the boat. How can one get into the boat?

By submitting to the Master's Will, one finds himself ferried across. Blessed indeed is he whom the Master unites with the Lord. (Sri Rag M4, 40-18)

Maulana Rumi in the Diwan (collected writings) of Shamas-i-Tabriz, has made a pointed reference concerning

the disciple and the Will of his Master. He says,

I asked my Master, Oh my dear Lord! How long do you intend to keep me entangled in this world and make me miserable? The Master replied, I will take you where I like; I will keep you where I like. You should remain silent and obey.

Oh Lord! How long will it be that You keep me entangled in the world? He said, 'Silence! You will go where I will.'

He says in the end,

Oh Master! Whatever You Will that alone I know. Whatever You make me see, that alone I see. If You keep me like this, I will so remain. If You keep me in some other condition, I will live like that. In this reply of the disciple there is a complete absence of egotism and complete resignation to His Will.

Except what You wish me to know, what do I know? Except what You show me, what can I see? I will live like this, if You wish it. If You keep me in some other state, I will live like that.

Does the Master leave the seeker alone in this struggle? No, never. He gives support from within, and slaps from outside, so that the disciple may be purged of all impurities. The pot is thus completely made ready to contain the immortal and everlasting treasure.

The Lord has created us. He loves us. He may make us rich or poor, well or ill, happy or unhappy. We should be happy in whatever way He keeps us. They are all His bestowals.

A carpenter saws a log into planks of different shapes and sizes and uses them at different places in making a box, some at the bottom, others on the sides, and still others on the top to serve as a lid. Each serves its own

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purpose. All are chips off the same block. Similarly, we should live happily in accordance with the Will of the Lord in whatever state He keeps us, and make efforts as enjoined by the Master and thus gain freedom from the bondage of death through the power of the Name of the Lord.

My mind is the yard-stick, my tongue the scissors, and I measure and measure and cut off the bonds of death. (Namdev, Asa 485-13)

The Saints and holy men offer this advice that whatever the Lord does, accept it as good.

All that the Lord does, with that I am pleased. This is the wisdom I have received from the Saints. (Kanara M5, 1299-16)

Guru Arjan says:

Place me on a throne, I will be Your slave. Make me a grass cutter, I will not complain. You alone are my Creator Lord, unparalleled and infinite. (Sarang M5, 1211-14)

If You give me happiness, I praise You. If You give me sufferings, I contemplate on You. If You give me hunger, I am content. In pain, I feel pleasure. If You keep me close to You, I dwell upon You. If You beat and drive me out, I call on You. If people praise me, it is Your Glory. If they slander me, I do not leave You. (Suhi M4, 757-11)

If the Master takes me to task, I accept it gladly. If He forgives me, it is His greatness. (Suhi M4, 958-6)

If You make me a king, it increases not my glory. If You make me a beggar, there is nothing that I lose. (Namdev, Gujri 525-2)

Who Submits to the Will of the Satguru?

Only those who are so fated become Gurmukhs (devotees) of the Guru, become attuned to the melody of the Name, and accept the Will of the Master.

A devotee contemplates on the Name with love. He becomes attuned to the Name. If it is so ordained, he accepts the Will of the Master. (Suhi M3, 757-1)

Those who love the Will of the Lord through the Grace of the Master become pure-minded. But this boon is received by him alone to whom the Master Himself grants it.

They accept His Will; they become pure. Oh Nanak, they receive it. He gives it to them out of love. (Ramkali M3, 918-2)

Those who submit to the Will of the Master are rid of their sufferings. They become happy forever and their glory increases day by day.

He who submits to the Will of the Master is freed from all sufferings. (Sri Rag M4, 89-9)

He who acts according to the Will of the Master is freed from all poverty and misery. (Kanara Var M4, 1313-19)

The instruction that the Master imparts, that the seekers hear. They who submit to the Master's Will, their glory increases four-fold. Mysterious is the way of true seekers, they not merely hear but are intoxicated by what they hear. (Gauri Var M4, 314-9)

The egocentric man is entangled in the net of the mind and intellect. He is engrossed in cunning and cleverness and wanders about in doubt. He does not accept the Lord's Will. He comes and goes. He goes through the cycle of transmigration again and again and suffers greatly. He never dwells in his original Home in Sach Khand, the

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True Region. Other unhappy results of not submitting to His Will are given as follows:

The blind and egocentric man plays clever. He accepts not the Will of the Lord and thereby suffers great pain. He is lost in doubt; he comes and goes; he does not find the True Home. (Maru M3, 1064-2)

In this Iron Age, Kali Yuga, egotism is very powerful. No one is ready to believe another. Those who have met a Master and accept His Will sing the praises of the Lord and are always satisfied. In this age, those are indeed blessed who live according to the Master's Will.

He who accepts the Will of the Master, he lovingly sings the praises of the Lord. Those are blessed in the Iron Age, who live within the Will of the Master. (M 3Shalok 1414-1)

When one repeats the Names given by the Master, he begins to live within His Will, and all his doubts and fears are removed. He begins to say from his heart,

I accept what You wish. That is good, which is acceptable to You. Oh Father! Thy Will be done. Whatever You do tastes sweet. Oh Lord! Give us the boon of Your Name.

I serve the Master and sing the Lord's Name. Oh You destroyer of doubt and fear, I submit to Your Will. (Suhi M1, 752-17)

Whatever You do tastes sweet. Nanak asks of the Lord the treasures of the Naam. (Asa M5, 364-3)

The Divine Law (Hukam)

The Divine Law originates from the Will of the Lord. Both are the same thing, but they are different in aspect. At first, one likes a thing. It is then necessary to find the

means by which to obtain it. That means is the Shabd, the Sound Current or the Holy Spirit. The element of control or regulation in this process is called Law, and it is universal.

From the Will of the Lord there originated the Lord's Law, as the Name (Shabd). This became the Creator of all the universe. In this way, the Law is the connecting link between the Lord's Will and the putting of the Lord's Will into creative action.

Your Law created the worlds of myriad kinds. Your Law is inscrutable; oh infinite, unfathomable Lord! (Suhi Var M3, 786-1)

All the universe was created by Divine Law and He, as the Creator, is running the universe according to His Law.

The Ruler rules in an orderly manner. (Jap Ji, 2-3)

The Scriptures describe Him as a witness of all that goes on in the universe, but Saints describe Him as the Supreme Lord and the Creator. The Lord is not perishable. His Law also is true and imperishable.

Oh King, Your Law is true. The Lord is imperishable. He does not come or go. (Vadhans M5, 562- 17)

Guru Nanak says that everything emanates from the Divine Law. Everything takes place according to this Law, and according to it the administration of this universe has been placed under the control of the Negative Power or Kal. It is only by knowing the Divine Law that one can travel beyond the sphere of Kal. The Lord can do whatever He likes. We human beings have no control over the acts of the Lord.

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All are born and act according to Your Law. Your Law ordains, and Kal governs us. Your Law ordains and we attune ourselves to You. What You will, happens. We have no say in it. (Sri Rag M1, 55-17)

All the universe comes into being and is ultimately destroyed according to the Divine Law of the Creator.

The Law creates or destroys millions in a moment. It binds all and releases them from bondage. (Malar Var M1, 1289-3)

To bind all and then to release them from bondage is the work of Law. All must obey the Law. The entire process of coming and going is carried out within His Law.

Life and death are within His Law. (Maru M1, 1012-4)

Coming and going is carried out according to His Law; it is governed by it in every detail. (Gauri M1, 151-11)

His Law determines birth and death; this Law bestows sufferings and enjoyments. (Suhi M5, 760-14)

To worship others is unreal like a dream; His Will determines the laws of death and birth. (Asa Var M1, 472-18)

Days and nights, dates and days, seasons and months, earth and skies, air, water and fire, all the habitations, worlds, universes and conscious regions are created by the Law. No one can say how vast is the Law or what is its extent. People exhaust themselves by singing its praises and pondering over its meaning and operation.

All the nights, all the days, all the dates, all the seasons, all the months, all the earth, all the matter, all the seas, all the winds, all the fires, all the underworlds, all the towns, all the lands, all the regions, all the forms - no one can measure the Law, no one can de-

scribe its purpose. Many have tried to describe it; many have tried to state its qualities. They simply tired themselves out. (Sarang Var M1, 1241-15)

He whom He loves alone submits to the Law.

He builds and He destroys and merges all in Himself in His Will. That alone happens which is the Lord's Will. (Asa M1, 414-10)

What is the Law? To know this is very difficult. We cannot describe it in any way. In the second stanza of the Jap Ji it is said that "The Law cannot be described". It is not a subject for exposition. It can only be experienced by the inner self. But what is happening in accordance with His Law and what can be thought about it has been described in the second stanza of the Jap Ji.

According to His Law He manifests. The Law cannot be described. According to Law living beings appear. According to Law they grow. According to Law they are high or low. According to Law they get pleasure or pain. According to Law one gets salvation. According to Law another always wanders. All are subject to Law. None can transgress it. He who understands the Law, oh Nanak, is no more guilty of egotism. (Jap Ji, 1-6)

All the universe of form, whether gross, subtle or causal, has been created by His Law which is indescribable. It is the Shabd or the Name, and it is a manifestation of the Lord.

Oh Nanak! The Name is the Lord. It is explained by the Master. (Sri Rag M1, 72-2)

Blessed is he who understands the Law. The True Shabd is its insignia. (Asa M5, 386-2)

We can describe nature to a certain extent but can say

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nothing about its Creator. The natural scientists have discovered many of the laws of nature, but they are nowhere near the end. How can they, then, say anything about its Creator? The laws of nature are not by themselves the Law, but they are governed by the Law. The Law is their basic cause, and it is related to the Lord.

The Law is the Creator. Nature is His creation. Even if we know the creation, how can we through it, know the Creator? Guru Granth Sahib says that all living creatures were created by His Law. All the sentient and insentient universe was created by His Law. Man gains glory by means of His Law. Exaltations and degradations occur according to His Law. All this is in the hands of the Law Giver. Our pains and pleasures are also arranged for according to His Law. It is according to His Law that many a man is pardoned, while others are sent back into various bodies. The result is that both conscious beings and unconscious matter are governed by the Law, and nothing is outside of it. When all is within His Law, there should be no place left for pride and pride should vanish.

He who understands His Law is freed from his feeling of egotism. The Lord is the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of all. There are, to be sure, forces of nature, but there must be some Capable One driving them all. The seed has, no doubt, the power to grow, but there is always the one who sows, the one who waters, the one who tends the field, and the one who gathers the harvest. It is He who has given seed the power to grow, and the earth and water the power to nourish it. Pain and pleasure, life in higher or lower species, and bestowals from the Lord are all the result of our karmas. It is, however, the Lord who is the law-giver, and the law is written according to our karmas.

He enforces the Law. He enforces it according to our deeds, oh Nanak! He is true. His court and courtiers are also true. (Sarang Var 1M4, 241-4)

He whose power upholds the Universe, and establishes everything of its own kind, whose beneficence blesses everyone His Will becomes our deeds. (Asa M1, 493-15)

Oh Nanak, He writes the fate of everything, He writes as He sees. (Asa Var M1, 466-15)

In all the regions there is the same Law, and universes are created and destroyed in accordance with it.

One Law prevails in all the regions of the universe. Everything is created in accordance with it. (Gauri M1, 233-7)

His Law is Absolute. It cannot be obliterated.

Hear the One. Sing of the One. He is in the heavens. He is in the underworlds. His Law cannot be evaded. Whatever is written is binding. (Maru Var M1, 1091-6)

In a battlefield the commander orders the army to advance, and sometimes, to save it from danger, orders it to retreat. He gives orders as the situation demands. But an ordinary soldier does not understand his orders. Those who obey, escape the danger.

We cannot know the intentions of any man. How, then, can we understand the Law of the Lord? A man resolves to go west but circumstances compel him to go east, on a journey about which he had never even dreamed. Created works are destroyed in a moment. Deserted lands become populated. All our cleverness proves of no avail. The Law of the Lord prevails everywhere.

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One intends to go west, but the Lord takes him east. The Lord can undo what is established in a moment. He then does as He wills. Cleverness is of no avail. Whatever the Lord deems right comes to pass. (Gauri M5, 496-9)

We think of various plans, but only that happens which is to happen. Everyone wants his own good but what happens is often not even dreamed of.

We think of various plans; but that happens which is ordained. We all seek the good of ourselves; but that happens which is not in our thoughts. (Bilawal M4, 800-8)

What is that power which overrules our unwearied efforts and endeavors? That power is the Divine Law. The Muslim Saints call it Mushiat-I-Ezdi, God's Direction. Our intellect or even astrology, has no say in it, since it emanates from a center quite beyond their reach. Who can know it? His Law supersedes all laws. It is verily the command of the Lord. It is the Cause behind all causes and the Power behind all other powers.

Of all the adepts You are the greatest; of all the actions Yours are the most fruitful. Of all the orders Yours is the supreme One; of all the commands Yours is the Highest. (Gujri M5, 507-18)

Our intellect is limited. It cannot understand the Divine Law. His Law has tremendous powers. We have to humbly submit to it. We can never go against it. Before the Will and Law of the Lord we cannot but surrender. It is useless to struggle against the unfathomable ocean of this world.

Submit to the Will of the Lord; there is no other way. It is of no avail to struggle against it, to cross this abysmal ocean.

From the river of Divine Law there flowed innumerable

streams of life.

By one Word the whole universe came into being and myriads of rivers (of life) came gushing forth. (Jap Ji, 3-17)

If anyone thwarts His Law through self-pride or conceit, he is uprooted by its onward rush and is completely annihilated. Those who always bow before the Law and accept it willingly, understand the power of Its flow and remain happy in following It.

Shed your ego, O Godman, and be at peace knowing His Will. Accept with pleasure all that the Lord does and dwell upon Him in joy and sorrow. (Gauri M5, 209-14)

So long as we do not understand His Law, we remain unhappy.

Unless we understand His Law, we remain unhappy. (Asa M5, 400-17)

Obedience to His Law leads to eternal happiness. Those who cling to the axle of the mill of His Law are not ground between Time and Space – the two stones of the mill, and they thus escape being ground to bits. Guru Nanak says that the entire universe is being crushed between these two stones and nothing escapes this crushing. But it is a wonderful fact that those who take refuge at His door escape unscathed:

Between the two mill-stones the grain is ground. Only they escape, who cling to the mill's axle. (Var Majh M1, 142-19)

It is not only difficult to know the Divine Law but it is also difficult to describe or expound it. Guru Nanak, in the third stanza of the Jap Ji, says:

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Who can sing of His power? No one can do it. Who can sing of His bounties? No one knows His signs. Who can sing of His attributes? Who can sing of His greatness and His deeds? Who can sing of His inconceivable knowledge? Who can sing of His molding bodies out of dust? Who can sing of His taking away life? Who can sing of His restoring life? Who can sing of Him who appears far? Who can sing of Him who is ever near? Who can sing of Him who has no end? Millions of men give different descriptions of Him the recipient tires of receiving, the Bountiful One gives. In every age one lives on His bounty. The ordainer has laid down the Law. Oh Nanak, the carefree One is happy. (Jap Ji, 1-11)

Those who claim to expound His Law do not do so correctly. Some talk of His power, but do not have the power to describe it. Others describe His bounties and gifts while still others sing about His attributes. However, who is there who can possibly sing truly of His virtues and bounties? Who can sing of His knowledge and His wisdom? It is difficult even to imagine these things. He molds bodies out of dust and reduces them again to dust. He takes life away and then restores it. He is so far away and yet is so near. He is omnipresent. Who can describe such a powerful Lord? Man is weak, unwise and imperfect. How can he describe the High, the Wise and the perfect One? Even if he does so, then it is, as has been said:

You are the King, oh Lord! If I call You King of kings is it any praise for You? (Bilawal M1, 795-4)

He is and has been described in millions of different ways. There is no end to it. This subject remains ever fresh.

Philosophers have been arguing about the 'why and how' of God for centuries. But true knowledge of God is still where it was.

The bountiful Lord grants countless boons but the recipients get tired of receiving them. Man has been receiving them for ages, and yet there is no end to them. He is the Eternal Truth. He exists forever. His Law is perfect. His commands are immediately carried out.

By one Word the whole universe came into being and myriads of rivers (of life) came gushing forth. (Jap Ji, 3-17)

The great ordainer is running the universe according to His own Divine Law. Even while doing all this, He is carefree. He is detached and unconcerned.

All the universe is being run in accordance with the Divine Law, the knowledge of which we gain from the Master. Through Him we become acquainted with the known and the unknown principles of His Law and become happy forever.

After meeting the Master I realized His law. Since then I abide in bliss. (Asa M5, 400-17)

The Law of the Lord together with His Name pervade everywhere. Why do we then not see Him? We learn from the happy brides, realized souls, that the curtain of egoism stands between us and the Lord. Unless we annihilate this ego, we cannot know His Law.

Ask the brides who have eradicated their ego, they love not the Lord's command who love their own selves. (Vadhans M3, 568-4)

Who Can Understand that Law?

Guru Amar Das says that He who created this world knows the Divine Law, Hukam. The Creator Himself correctly understands the Law.

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He who created the world knows the Law. He Himself observes and knows it. (Majh M3, 118-9)

Can His Law be understood by anybody other than Himself? If so, how? Only he to whom the Lord is kind and bestows His Grace, can understand It.

The Law is known to those alone to whom He is kind. By observing It the happy bride obtains the Lord's love and bliss. (Gujri Var M3, 510-15)

Oh Nanak! He is kind. He is friendly to those who observe the Law. (Gujri M5, 523-18)

One can observe the Law only when the Lord wills it.

He with whom the Lord is pleased, observes the Law; and by so doing he is ferried across. (Kabir, Gauri 337-4)

When the Lord is pleased one merges in His Will. And accepting it, one is at peace. He always repeats the Lord's Name and easily contemplates on Him. (Dhanasri M4, 690-18)

The result of observing and recognizing the Law is to become attuned to the Shabd and the Name.

They who observe the Law, in them does the Shabd dwell. (Sri Rag M1, 72-6)

To those who are beloved of the Lord, merit and demerit are the same. It is by submitting to the Lord's Will that one is in bliss reflecting on the Master's Word. (Maru Var M3, 1092-15)

It is only according to the Eternal Law that one is exalted as a Satguru, True Master.

The True Guru was blest with glory by the True Guru. Knowing this to be the approved Will of God. He tested his sons, nephews, sons-in-law, his kindred, but the ego of everyone was humbled by Him. (Bilawal M4,853-15)

The Law is manifest in the Master. Unless one meets a True Master, he can neither obtain the True Name nor can he know the Law.

You will see the Lord's vision, and even the hot wind will not touch you. I do not say it myself, I say that which is the command of my Lord. (Suhi M5, 763-6)

To be able to know the Law is the result of the kindness of the Master. It all depends on His Will.

When one observes the Law one knows Him. But this can only be had through the Master's kindness. (Malar Var M1, 1289-7)

All trade, all farming is in accordance with the Law. Through submission to the Law is all glory. Through the Master's Word is the Law revealed, through the Law is our union with the Lord. (Vadhans M3, 569-2)

The Law is known only when one meets the manifest Master or True Master. Then the Law abides in the heart. There is no other method of learning how to know it.

When I met the Master I learned the Law; it now dwells in my mind. Whatever you wish is true. Truth pervades all. (Gujri M3, 491-19)

One gathers the wisdom of the three worlds, when he learns the Law from the True Master. (Asa M1, 414-8)

It is only a sincere devotee or Gurmukh to whom the Lord is kind, who can understand the Law.

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All is created according to Law; by Law it is destroyed. The fool is blind and ignorant. Rare is one to whom is revealed the Law in His pleasure and mercy. (Bihagana M3, 556-13)

True is Your Law, through the Master it is known. He who loses himself knows the Truth. (Majh Var M1, 144-7)

Fruitful is the coming into this world of a devotee who is accepted at the door of the Lord. By understanding the Law he attains real bliss.

Fruitful is the human birth of a true devotee, for he who understands the Law is blessed. (Gujri Var M5, 523-16)

By practicing the Name given by the Master, the feeling of egotism is banished, and a devotee begins to understand the working of the Divine Law. He bows to it and sees it at work in all. He constantly observes it and ultimately merges in the Lord.

To observe the Law is the most noble of all actions. Such a person meets no obstruction on the way to Sach Khand.

He who observes the Law enters His court. Having the password of Truth, he is not held up. (Asa M1, 355-13)

Various benefits of living according to the Law are mentioned in the writings of the Gurus. Doubts and worries are removed. One becomes pure and gains salvation. Shabd or Naam or Truth is realized and egotism is destroyed. Death and birth cease. Eternal bliss is obtained and the real abode is attained. One merges in the Lord. The disadvantages flowing from not living within the Law are also mentioned by the Gurus.

CHAPTER 9. THE SOUND CURRENT (SHABD)

Shabd is a Sanskrit word. Unlike other words, its original root is not known. It means sound, letter, voice, name, conscience, word, clarity, declaration, expression, speech etc. That which can be spoken or that which can reveal secrets, is called Shabd. However, the Gurus and the highest Masters have used it in a very deep and abstruse sense.

The Shabd is the Supreme Being and Sustainer of All

Before the creation, the Shabd was unmanifested and nameless. It then existed in itself. In that state it was called indescribable, nameless, invisible, unfathomable, unutterable and inexpressible. When it became manifest it became known as Naam (Name of God) or Shabd.

When Shabd was unmanifested it had no name. When Shabd manifested, it became the Name or Naam. (Sar Bachan)

Prior to its becoming manifest, there was no sun or moon or sky. The Shabd was formless.

The Shabd, however, is consciousness. All are under its control. Nothing can manifest without its help. The Shabd is the life, the essence, the root and the quintessence of every created thing. It does not depend on anyone for manifestation. On the other hand, all that is manifest or unmanifest is sustained by it. It sustains Ishwar, Brahm

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(names for the ruler of the second spiritual region) and Par Brahm (the ruler of the third spiritual region). Whatever exists in this creation is Shabd. It is the cause of all creation and dissolution.

Through the Word is the Creation and Dissolution. Through the Word is the Evolution of Creation again. (Majh M3, 11 7-8)

The beginning and end of all things is Shabd. All gross matter, the sky and so forth, subtle matter, sound, form, taste and scent are all Shabd. Whatever exists is Shabd. Whatever is manifested from Shabd cannot be anything but Shabd. Shabd is our creator. Shabd is our sustainer. We are of Shabd and Shabd is ours. The Gurus say that Shabd is the Supreme Lord. All are within His control. He is the all-powerful Cause and the Creator.

He is the wife; He is the husband; He is the Cause of all. (Basant M1, 1190-10)

You are the Supreme Being. The great One without a second. You yourself as Shabd pervade everything. Whatever You wish comes to pass. (Asa M4, 448-11)

What is the Shabd?

The Shabd, Sound Current, Word or Holy Spirit is not a subject matter for speech or writing. In order to make it understood, we can only say this much, namely that it is the quintessence of the Lord and that it sustains millions of universes and regions. It is the soul-current of consciousness. It is the Celestial Melody. It is the life-current which originates from the Lord and pervades everything. The Lord creates and sustains the entire universe through this great Current of Power. It gives life to the whole of the creation and can take every living being back to his

Original Home or the Lord. The currents of the Lord pervade everywhere, like radio-waves. His Divine Music fills all space. Unless our radios are correctly tuned to it we cannot hear this music. As we grow more and more subtle, we begin to hear clearly its melodies. Shabd is a string which connects everyone and everything with the Lord.

The Shabd is the basis of all true religions, for religion means “that which connects us with the Lord”. All the forces of nature are sustained by the Shabd. The life force is also its manifestation, even though it is working in the regions of Maya. Like electricity, Shabd, whether manifest or unmanifest, pervades everywhere. It is all-powerful and is the Creator of all.

Guru Nanak describes it as Hukam (Command or Law) in the Jap Ji. He says that it cannot be adequately expressed or explained. However, he describes in the second stanza of Jap Ji whatever is happening within its compass:

All things are manifestations of His Will; but His Will is beyond description. By His Will is matter quickened into life; by His Will is greatness obtained; by His Will some are born high and others low. By His Will are men's joys and sorrows ordained; by His Will the pious obtain Salvation; by His Will the impious wander in endless transmigration. All exist under His Will, and nothing stands outside. One attuned with His Will, oh Nanak, is wholly freed from ego. (Jap Ji, Stanza II)

Shabd is of two kinds: manifest, and inner. The manifest Shabd is called Varnatmik and the inner Shabd is called as Dhunatmik. Knowing the Varn-atmak Shabd, it is possible to know to a certain extent the Dhunatmak Shabd.

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On hearing words of love every pore of our being is thrilled with delight. On hearing words that speak of detachment and self-effacement, we begin to entertain feelings of detachment and surrender. On hearing harsh words, we become angry. Sweet words produce happiness and bitter words, pain. Words of sympathy give hope and unsympathetic words depress. All these powers are inherent in Shabd:

Shabd killed them and they died, kings lost their kingdoms because of Shabd. Those who always remembered Shabd, succeeded in their mission. Shabd is the cause of happiness; Shabd is the cause of pain; Shabd is the cause of hope; Shabd is the cause of despair.
(Kabir)

The greatness of Shabd is unfathomable and limitless. If this is true of the manifest Shabd, it can well be imagined how powerful the inner Shabd is. On listening to the melody of a violin, one gets peace. It attracts our attention and makes us become absorbed in it. When a gross outer sound can produce such a condition, how powerful would the inner Shabd be?

Shabd is the Creator

In the Scriptures of all religions, Shabd is recognized as the Creator of the universe. According to the Vedas, fourteen regions were created by it. In the Quran it is said that fourteen regions came into being by the power of the Kalma. In the Gospel of St. John in the Bible, it is said that the world was created by the Word or Logos. St. John says,

In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things ... were made by Him.

Guru Nanak says that all the creation is being sustained by Shabd and that it is the Creator of the entire universe. The earth and sky are made by Shabd, which pervades them and sustains the entire universe:

The Word is the life of sky and earth. From its refulgence all take birth, and all creation sings. Oh Nanak, in all souls that be this heavenly power rings. (Janam M1, Sakhi P 19)

He creates Himself and knows Himself. He separates the earth and the skies. He spreads the canopy of the heavens. He upholds the skies without pillars. He makes the Shabd His insignia. He creates the sun and moon and illumines them by His own light. (Malar Var M1, 1279-6)

Not only the creation, but dissolution also is in Him. He also recreates the world, following a dissolution.

Creation and dissolution are from the Shabd. Recreation is also from the Shabd. (Majh M3, 117-8)

The Hindu Scriptures say that the Shabd is the attribute of ether, or the very life breath of it.

It follows therefore, that it is even more subtle and more pervasive than ether. If we think seriously, we find the Shabd even where Nature and Soul unite, because in union there is motion and sound. However, the Shabd extends beyond this and includes something more.

The Lord Himself has been described as the Shabd in form:

Your Shabd pervades everywhere. Whatever You wish, comes to pass. (Asa M4, 448-10)

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The founders of all religions regard the Lord as Shabd-incarnate. The oldest accepted religion of the world – the Vedic religion – also sings its praises. It is said in the Sam Veda:

The Shabd is Brahm. Silence is Brahm. The Primal Sound is Brahm.

Muslim Saints also consider the Shabd to be the Creator of the universe. Shamas-i-Tabriz says that all the universe was created out of Shabd and that Light came out of it.

The universe was manifested out of the Divine Sound; from It came into being the Light.

Hazrat Abdur Razzak Kasi says,

The Primal Name is the source of all names. It sustains all things. It is a river, and all living beings are its waves. Only he who belongs to our fold or is a perfect adept can grasp the meaning of this great truth.

The Primal Name is the source of all things. The Name is a river and creatures are its waves. He who knows this belongs to our brotherhood. (Abdur Razzak Kas)

The Shabd Cannot Be Spoken or Written

The inner Shabd is super-conscious and infinite. It can neither be heard by the outer ears nor spoken, nor can it be written. It is the unwritten law and the unspoken language. It is beyond speech or writing and is in an unmanifest language. It is independent, but everything is sustained by It. It pervades everything. It can be experienced only by the soul. The consciousness or soul merges into the super-consciousness, Shabd. The Gurus in the Line of Guru Nanak describe It as the true Word or Shabd which

is imperishable.

Through the True Word one realizes the truth. Through the True Word one sings the praises of the Lord. (Prabhati M1, 1342-8)

The Gurbani says that one should give up all cleverness, and should devote oneself to the True Word and merge in It.

He who contemplates on the feet of the Master gives up all cleverness. He meditates on the True Word. (Sri Rag M5, 51-2)

Oh friend, sing the praises of the Lord. Always love the True Word. (Basant M5, 1192-14)

It cannot be comprehended by the gross senses. It is seen without eyes and heard without ears. (Majh Var M1, 139-2)

It is to be seen without the outer eyes and is to be heard without the outer ears. Writing about the Shabd Maulana Rumi says:

He may be a Turk, a Kurd, a Parsi or an Arab, but he experiences that Sound without ears or lips.

The Rishis in the Upanishades have described It as Pranav – that which can be heard by the soul. In other words, it is one that does not need the tongue or the lips or the palate to sing it. It is singing by itself.

Kabir Sahib says that the Shabd is formless, that It cannot be uttered by the tongue, and that It can be realized only by the inner self.

Everyone talks about the Shabd, but it is formless. It cannot be spoken. The soul alone can realize It.

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Hazrat Bahu in describing the Shabd also says that the tongue is powerless to speak of the Kalma (Word) which is the same thing. It cannot express It.

One recites the word orally, he does not do it with the heart. When it is recited with the heart, the tongue cannot express it.

He again says that the Master has taught us a lesson which is learned without being taught, and which is heard without closing the ears.

My Master and Guide has taught me the lesson that is being heard without being recited. Without closing the ears, It is heard without any effort.

Maulana Rumi describes it beautifully saying:

Oh Lord, lead me to the region where your Word is ringing without words, by itself. Oh God, show me that region where the letterless Word is resounding.

All Religions Teach the Practice of the Shabd

There is mention of the Shabd in all the religious Scriptures. The Hindus describe this Divine Sound as Shabd (Audible God) and as Ashabd (Silent God), or Nad, sound which created the entire universe. The ancient Rishis or sages sang its praises. They called the practice of its melody Shruti, which means that which was heard or is heard. This practice was taught by the Master to his disciple and was then passed on from heart to heart. The Rishis whose teachings are recorded in the Chhandogya and Mundak Upanishads called it 'Udgit' (the song of the Heavenly Regions) or Pranav (OM). This means that Udgit is not a song heard by the senses, but is the Celestial Song heard

with the ears of the soul in singing which the tongue, lips and palate are not used.

In the sixth chapter of the Maitri Upanishad, it is mentioned that for contemplation there are two Brahm, one Shabd Brahm (Audible God) and the second, Ashabd Brahm (Silent God). Ashabd Brahm becomes manifest by contemplating on the Shabd Brahm.

It is again said,

Close the ears with your thumbs and hear the seven kinds of sounds within you. Beyond these sounds the seeker merges in the Silent Brahm or the Unmanifested Brahm. Those who have tasted this honey have passed beyond the differences of castes and creeds.

In the Hindu Scripture named 'Yogsandhya', it is said that a Yogi should close his ears with his thumbs and should hear the eternal melody, concentrating his mind on it until he permanently gains the state of Turyapad (the Second Region). This Shabd is of ten kinds. After passing through and beyond it, the Yogis merge in the Unmanifest Sound.

Mention is made of the emanation of Nad or the Divine Sound from the void of Brahm in the sixth verse of the seventeenth chapter and the third verse of the nineteenth chapter of the Chhandogya Upanishad. It is mentioned therein that Rishi Angras revealed this secret to Krishna, the son of Devki.

Guru Amar Das says in the Adi Granth that Prahlad was redeemed through the Shabd.

He looks after His devotees throughout the ages, Prahlad the devotee knew no prayer or oblation, and, yet he was united with the

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Lord through Shabd. (Bhairon M3, 1133-14)

In spite of his being in the power of others, a seeker is attached to this yoga because of practice during his previous birth, and he crosses the Shabd Brahm. (Gita 6: 44)

A Yogi with a truly pure mind, by means of practice through various births, gains perfection and a high state. (Gita 6:45)

In verse 31 of the Nad Bindu Upanishad, it is written.

He should sit in Sidhasan and do the Vaishnavi Yoga Practice. He should then hear the Sound from the right side.

A detailed account of how Shabd should be heard is also given in the Yogsandhya.

There is an inimitable song of praise for the Shabd in the Rig Veda, in the Vakambarni Sukt and in the 30th Sukt of the Atharva Veda. In the Hanso Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, it is said that Nad or the Divine Sound is experienced by a person who does millions of repetitions. Ten kinds of sounds are mentioned, and it is said that nine of these should be given up and the tenth, which is akin to the thundering of the clouds, should be practiced because Par Brahm, the Ruler of the Third Region, is realized through it.

In the Hatha Yoga Pradeepka the Anhat Shabd or Unstruck Music is highly praised in a large number of verses.

In the Vedas, the Divine Sound is called Nad (inner Music) or Akashvani (sound from the sky). In Buddhist Scriptures it is referred to as sonorous Light.

The ancient Greek philosophers also mention this

Shabd. Socrates states that he heard within him a sound which took him to indescribable spiritual regions. Plato also mentions it. Pythagoras called it the "Music of the Spheres". It is called Logos (the Word) in Greek.

The Sound which emanates from the silence is called the Word. All things manifested from It. In the Chinese Scriptures, it is called "Tao", meaning the Way or the Word. The Prophet Zoroaster of Ancient Persia while mentioning six spiritual powers referred to one other power called Sharosha. This word comes from the Sanskrit root "Sh" which means the power of the Lord which can be heard. It is like the word 'Shabd' which is used by the Saints of India.

In the Zend Avesta, the book of Zoroaster, there is a prayer which says: Oh Mazda (Lord)! Send Sharosha to him whom you love.

Kabir, all the ten Gurus from Guru Nanak onwards, Dadu Sahib, Jagjiwan Sahib, Tulsi Sahib, Darya Sahib, Baba Lal Das, Paltu Sahib and many other Indian Saints or True Masters have taught the practice of listening to the Shabd. The Christian Bible calls it the Word. It says:

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. (St. John 1:1)

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the Word of our God shall stand for ever. (St. Luke8:11)

Madame Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, described the Divine Sound as the Voice of the Silence. In the Masonic Order this Logos is described as the

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Lost Word, which is sought after by every Masonic Master. But it can be had only from the Saints or True Masters of the Word.

It is mentioned in the Holy Quran that God said,

Be, and it was.

In other words, the Shabd appeared and the whole of the Universe came into being. The Persian Sufis have called it Wadan, the Divine Sound. They say:

If he had not thought of manifesting; there would have been no Sound or world.

In other words, if the unmanifest had not desired to manifest Himself, there would have been no creative Sound or Power and the world would not have come into being.

The Sufi Saint, Hazrat Inayat Khan, who had access to the spiritual regions, describes the Sound as the Divine Music. He says everything manifested from It and is Its manifestation. In the writings of the Indian Saints it is also clear that all universes and regions were created by the Shabd. The Udgit or Celestial Song is resounding in all. Hazrat Sahib clearly called it Sot-e- Sarmadi, or the Voice of God.

Muslim Saints have called the inner Music – Kalma-e-Il-lahi, Voice of God, and Nada-e-Asmani, Celestial Sound. Its practice is known as ‘Sultan-ul-Azkar, King of Repe-titions, Sot-e-Sarmadi, Voice of God, Sot-e-Nasira, Voice of the Lord, Kalma-e-Illahi, Voice of God, Ism-e-Azam, Greatest Name, Kalma-e-Majid, Holy Word, and Kalma-e-Haq, Voice of Truth, or that which is heard within. Its

practice has been known to a number of sects of the Persian Sufis. There are many references in this context in the writings of Muslim Saints.

Oh brave one, bring down the skies to your feet. Listen to the Voice of Silence from the skies. (Maulana Rumi)

The world is filled with the Divine Sound, open the portals of your ears; listen to the Eternal Sound; It is beyond the reach of dissolution. (Niaz Shah)

The Sound is coming from the Divine Home. Why are you entangled in the snares of the world? (Hafiz)

Take the cotton of doubt out of your ears, so that you may hear the Celestial Sound. This is a Divine Message. What is the Divine Message except hearing the Heavenly Sound within. (Maulana Rumi)

The Prophet said about the Voice of God, It comes to my ears as do the ordinary sounds. But God has placed a seal on your ears, you hear not the Voice of God.

It is said of Prophet Mohammed that he heard the Eternal Sound, Awaz-i-Mustaqim, or Anhad Shabd for fifteen years.

When Mohammed reached the age of 40 years, the signs of his having received the revelation began to appear. According to tradition, he used to hear the Celestial Sound for fifteen years before he received the revelation. He often had divine dreams, and he saw different lights seven years before the revelation. Two years before, he went to the cave at Hara and practiced there for a month. (Ikhtab-ul-Anwar by Hazrat Maulvi Sheikh Mohamed Akram Sabri P. 106)

It is again stated on page 106 of the same book that the

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Prophet practiced listening to the Sound for six years and that Abdul Qadir Jilani practiced listening to the Sound for twelve years in the cave at Hara.

According to tradition, Hazrat Shah Mir Lahori said that it had been stated by Abdul Qadir Jilani that the Prophet spent six years in the cave of Hara in listening to the Sound and that he had himself spent twelve years in that sacred cave doing the same thing.

The Sikh Gurus other Saints, clearly mention the Shabd (Sound). Guru Nanak Sahib says:

Your ears hear not, your mind is devoid of wisdom, and you know not Shabd nor poise. The egotistical man loses the merit of human birth; and knows naught without the Master. (Bhairon M1, 1126-4)

Guru Amar Das has stated:

They who know not the Shabd are blind and deaf. Oh! Why did they come into the world? They taste not the divine essence, and thus waste their lives. They are cast into the womb again and again. (Sorath M3,601-7)

Cherish the Guru's Shabd, oh ignorant one, for redemption and wisdom both come from it. (Bihagra Var M4, 550-4)

There is no company except that of the Master. Without Shabd no one can cross the ocean. (Maru M3, 1068-14)

It is clear from the above references that Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others knew of the Shabd, or Divine Sound, although they did not describe it in detail. Hindu sages and others have given some description of the Eternal Sound pervading in 'Anda' (Astral Region) and Brahmand (the Causal Region). The Saints of all religions,

however, have described the Sound or Shabd of higher regions also.

The Principle of the Divine Sound

What is this Sound or Melody? What is its nature? Some say that when two things strike against each other, sound is created. Others say that where there is motion, there is sound. Of course, sound is generated by collision and by motion, but the melody referred to by Saints is superior. This melody sustains the universe and is the distinguishing mark of spirituality.

Saints say that the entire universe was created by means of Sound. Muslims say that the word 'Kun' brought the whole world into being. Christians also maintain that the world was created by the Word. This Sound or Melody is conscious. It is the very essence of consciousness. The melody is knowledge and is also the medium for the manifestation of real knowledge.

Know knowledge and contemplation to be the Melody which is indescribable. (Sri Rag M1, 59-8)

This Sound or Melody pervades all. It is even inside stones and wood, as these are made up of atoms and motion is inherent in them. Because of this motion everything constantly undergoes change. The motion itself is the cause of change. In reality, everything is changing. This world changes every hour, every minute and every second.

Every moment, every hour and every day this world changes its condition.

Whether we know it or not, a stone continues to

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change. There is motion in it. Sound is a necessary corollary of motion and, therefore, a stone is not free from the Sound. Both the bodies that we see and those we do not see are in motion. There is, therefore, Sound in all, and the Sound is the essence of all. Whether full or empty, all are full of His Divine Melody. Look at the drum and see how sound emanates from it.

The Divine Sound fills both the full and the empty. Look at the drum and see how its skin cries out.

This Melody pervades all and is the life and sustenance of all. This current of consciousness is very subtle. It requires equally subtle ears to hear it. A Sufi Saint has very appropriately said:

Wire is dead, wood is dead, and skin is dead, whence comes this Sound of the Friend (God)?

In fact, the Shabd or Divine Sound is the Creator of the Universe. All this manifestation is created by this Sound.

If He had not thought of manifesting, there would have been no Sound or world.

The Beloved is always speaking to you. Alas! You do not listen to Him.

My Beloved is always addressing you. Alas! You listen not to the words of the Ancient One.
(Niaz Shah)

The Prophet says, The Voice of God is resounding in my ears as do ordinary sounds. But God has sealed your ears, so that you may not hear it.

The Prophet said about the Voice of God, It comes to my ears like a

voice. But God has placed a seal on your ears so you hear not His Voice.

This Sound, described as the Voice of God, or the Beloved, or the Friend, is resounding everywhere in the world. Hafiz Sahib says:

All the seven regions are resounding with this Sound. But fools do not hear It, for the Sound is subtle.

This Sound is resounding in the seven regions but the unwise cannot understand It. This Sound is pure and independent. It is not sustained by anything else. Here in this material region, Maya and mind predominate and the Sound is intermixed with them. The Sound can be realized in the forehead in the Sushmana, the Royal Vein, under the direction of a Guru. The practice of hearing the heavenly Sound is necessary to gain knowledge of the soul. One should listen to the Divine Sound, which is called by the Muslims Saints, Sout-e-Sarmadi, Eternal Sound or Naghma-e-Yazdani, Song of God, and thus reach the region where the never-ending Sound of the Beloved is resounding, having descended from the higher regions. Maulana Rumi says:

Seek the Sound that never ceases. Seek the Sun that never sets.

Worldly people do not know of this Sound. When one goes within after receiving instructions from a Master, who is adept in the practice of the Sound, one hears hundreds of sounds, while those sitting near him hear nothing.

He hears within him hundreds of sounds; those sitting near him do not hear any. (Maulana Rumi)

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These melodies are not imaginary. Those who have practiced the path of the Sound Current, in any age, have described the Melody in similar terms. Even today the ignorant children and new seekers who keep the company of Saints, hear It and bear witness to its existence as an experienced fact.

There is mention of the melodies of the Shabd in the Upanishads. In the beginning of the practice there are loud sounds. They go on increasing and are heard in a subtle form. The sounds in the beginning are those of the sea, thunder clouds, drums, running-water brooks, the bell or the conch-shell horn. (Nad Bindu Upanishad of Rig Veda – P.33-34)

In the book called Bhakti-Sagar, Saint Charandas has mentioned ten different kinds of sounds, such as the chirping of sparrows and the cricket, the tinkling of small bells, the ringing of big bells, the conch shell, the bagpipe, the cymbals, the reed, the small drum, the flute and the roaring of lions.

In the Hathyog Pradeepika, there is also mention of ten similar sounds such as those of the humming of bees, anklet bells, the conch shell, the bell, the cymbals, the flute, the kettle drum, the small drum, the reed and the roaring of lions.

On page ninety-eight of the Sar Bachan, also there is mention of ten sounds heard in Sahasdal Kanwal (the Thousand-Petalled Lotus):

The sounds of conch shells and bells come aloud. The wonderful music of the vina and the reed resounds. The sounds of cymbals, drums and kingri are heard. The sounds of drums and tambourine rattle. The nectar rains

in thousands of showers; the skies revolve like a wheel.

Madam Blavatsky writes in “The Voice of the Silence” as under:

The first (sound) is like the nightingale’s sweet voice, chanting a song of parting to its mate. The second comes as the sound of the silver cymbals of the Dhyanis awaking the twinkling stars. The next is as the plaintive melodies of the ocean spirit imprisoned in its shell. And this is followed by the chant of the Vina. The fifth like the sound of the bamboo flute, shrills in their ears. It changes into a trumpet blast. The last vibrates like the dull rumbling of thunder clouds.

Amir Khusro has also mentioned these sounds, describing them as follows:

The first is the humming of bees, the second is the ringing of bells, the third is the sound of the conch shell. The fourth that of a big bell. The fifth is the sound of the bell (tall), the sixth is the sound of the flute. The seventh is the sound of the kettle drum, the eighth the sound of the small drum. The ninth is the sound of the clarinet, the tenth is the sound of the roaring of a lion.

The ceaseless music is of ten kinds,

The Yogi becomes engrossed in them, and the mind and senses fall away. When the ceaseless music begins to ring, the thieves from the body slink away. The Grace of the Master is upon him. Khusro has merged in the Divine Music.

These are the sounds at the preliminary stages. The real sounds are those of the bell and conch shell, which are related to the higher regions.

Nobody knows where the home of the Beloved is; but from that region comes the Sound of bells. (Hafiz)

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There is Divine Music and Melody in the Shabd:

The melody of bliss and balance comes from the true inner Sound. The mind is attuned to the truth, and the devotee enshrines in his mind the unfathomable invisible Naam. (Sarang M3, 1234-8)

Why do we not hear this Sound?

This Sound is resounding all the time. Why then do we not hear it? The reason is that waves are constantly arising in our minds and we are full of self hood and pride. We cannot, therefore enjoy the Sound nor do we love the Name of God.

The mind is entrapped in a whirlpool, the ego is greatly inflated. Such a one is not attuned to the Shabd. Nor does he cherish the Lord's Name. (Sarang Var M3, 1247-14)

Maulana Rumi also says that your ears cannot hear the Divine Melody because sins have deadened and defiled the sensitivity of your ears.

You do not hear the melodies with your ears. The sensitivity of your ears has been defiled by the sins. (Maulana Rumi)

This inner Melody is the Name of the Lord. It is the form of the Lord which pervades the Universe.

The Guru's Word or the Lord's Name is the panacea for all ills. (Basant M1, 1189-7)

This melody is also called the Bani (Voice of God) which has existed throughout all the four ages.

Truth rings throughout the four ages, and Truth is what it proclaims. (Sri Rag M2, 35-9)

The Voice is present everywhere and has been described as Shabd or Nam. It is very sweet and loving.

Through the Word, the Name tastes sweet. This is how the Word is known age after age. (Sorath M2, 602-13)

Alas! Man remains always in the bondage of the body and its entanglements. Being trapped in gross matter, he does not hear the most subtle Sound of the Lord.

Alas! You remain imprisoned in the body and do not listen to the sacred Divine Music. It is always calling the soul to return to its True Home. A Sound is coming from the Eternal Abode to call you back. (Tulsi Sahib)

This Sound is not within the reach of the physical ears, but everyone has the faculty of hearing it within. For this it is necessary to open the inner ears and this can be done by following the directions of the Master.

Those who have not gone within and who are still engrossed in the worldly sciences are ignorant of this Divine Melody. The physical sciences may not be able to prove it, but whatever has been stated above is a fact and can be actually experienced by practice behind the eyes by a seeker by going within the laboratory of the Saints.

How Can We Hear This Sound?

If our ears cease to hear the outer sounds and our eyes cease to see the outer sights, then we can hear the call of the Lord. When in this way our thoughts cease to wander out, we begin to hear the inner Melodies and to relish the celestial joy. And then the secrets of the Lord begin to be revealed to us.

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Which is the Place Where the Shabd is Heard?

There are ten doors of the body, nine are outer and one is inner.

The fort of the body has nine doors. The tenth is kept secret. The secret door will not open. Only the Shabd of the Master can open it. (Ramkali Var M3, 954-13)

So long as the soul wanders in the outer nine doors, it is being robbed of its birth-right. It is not able to see the precious inner treasure. There is, however, the tenth door, where the Heavenly Music is heard.

Oh damsel fair, you searched in all the nine doors, but did not find the precious treasure. Oh Kabir! The nine doors hold it not; it is in the tenth door. (Kabir, Gauri 339-13)

Guru Ram Das also says that one should turn the attention of the soul away from the nine doors and, after controlling the senses and the wandering mind, should take the soul to the tenth door from which a path leads upwards to the Original Home. The Unstruck Music is resounding there day and night, but this can only be heard by following Gurumat, the Master's directions.

He who closes the nine doors and stills his wandering mind, enters through the tenth door his Original Home. Hears he day and night the Unstruck Music through the Guru's instructions. (Majh M3, 124-13)

Guru Nanak lucidly explains that this Shabd transcends Ida, Pingla and Sushmana (inner places concentrated on by yogis) and can be heard only through the Grace of the Master.

He knows Ida, Pingla and Sushmana. He sees for himself the

unseeable. Oh Nanak! The True Master takes one beyond them, He merges him in the Sound. (Ramkali M1, 944-18)

So far as mind, Maya and matter are concerned, the Shabd works in coordination with them. Beyond them it is both subtle and pure.

The Sound is Independent of the Ten Vital Forces (Pranas).

The Sidhas (Yogis) asked Guru Nanak:

Where is the home of the Shabd, through which is one ferried across the sea of existence? The air is said to be of ten kinds which one of these sustains it? (Ramkali M1, 944-9)

Guru Nanak replied:

The Shabd is inside us. It is invisible; wherever I look, I find It. The air issues from the void. The Shabd is not sustained by anything. (Ramkali M1, 944-12)

The Shabd is within us. It is invisible. Wherever I look, I see It. The air comes from the void, but the Shabd is not sustained by anything. Unless we turn inwards and rise beyond Sushmana (the Royal Vein), we cannot hear It. We can contact the Shabd only in the human body.

By purifying the mind one crosses this world. This is done by reflecting on the quintessence of the self. They who serve the Master enjoy peace, and Shabd pervades their inner being. (Ramkali M1, 908-2)

If one searches the township of the body through the Shabd, one gains the nine treasures of Naam. (Ramkali M2, 910-1)

The human body is like a radio receiving-set for listen-

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ing to the Shabd. When we tune in a radio set, we begin to hear a sound. Similarly, when the Master (Satguru) tunes us inside, we become fit to hear the Divine Music. Then, by regulating this set, we hear various kinds of sound.

Sound and Light

Two things namely, Sound and Light serve as guides in the World. These are also called Kalam, (Sound) and Noor (Light). These are the two paths by following which one progresses on the path of spirituality. Both are fruitful. They are related to the practice of listening to the inner Sound and seeing the inner Light. Each has its own place. There is Light inside us and it contains Sound within it. True devotion springs from contact with this Light and Sound:

When the mind was attuned to the Shabd, it became detached and dispassionate. There appeared Light within and from It emanated the Heavenly Sound which made me a devotee of the True Lord. (Sorath M1, 634-12)

The Sound and the Light, in reality, are one. Vibrations up to a certain extent produce sound; but if their frequency is increased several-fold, they change into Light. This Sound is the real and basic life-force which sustains the entire universe. This is the Light that lights our dark homes or bodies. It is, however, imperceptible to the physical eyes.

That thing is beyond the domain of perception. (Gauri M5, 205-3)

Without the Sound there is darkness inside. One perceives not the Reality. One is not rid of coming and going. (Majh M3, 124-13)

It lights not only us, but the whole world.

The world is dark without the Shabd. The entire world is lighted by it. (Sarang Var M4, 1250-4)

This Light is within all of us. Christ also mentions that this Light lights all. It does so without any distinction, be one a Hindu, a Muslim or a Christian.

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of man. And the Light shineth in darkness—that was the True Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

St. Augustine has also described the appearance of this Light within him thus:

I entered even into my inward self, Thou being my guide, and able I was; for Thou wert become my helper. And I entered and beheld with the eye of my soul (such as it was), above the same eye of my soul above my mind, the Light Unchangeable. Not this ordinary light which all flesh may look upon, nor as it were a greater of the same kind, as though the brightness of this should be manifold brighter, and with its greatness take up all space. Not such was the Light, but other yea, far other from all these. He that knows the Truth knows what that Light is, and he that knows it, knows Eternity. (St. Augustine)

Kabir Sahib says that without the Shabd the soul is blind and does not find the way, so it wanders hither and thither.

Blind is the soul without the Shabd. Oh! Where can it go? It finds not the door of the Shabd, so wanders to and fro.

Zoroaster also mentions the Light and even now Parsees worship the outside fire.

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All the great souls whether of the East or the West, who went inside and had access to the inner regions, have mentioned the Sound and the Light. The soul is imprisoned in the cage of the mind and the body. Both Light and Sound are within us. The Sound and Light are related to the two faculties of the soul namely Surat, (hearing) and Nirat (seeing). Surat hears and Nirat sees. In ascending upward through the spiritual regions, Nirat leads and Surat follows.

Light is Faster than Sound

After the maturing of the Surat (the soul's power of hearing) and of Nirat (the soul's power of seeing) the soul is freed from the bondage of the body and rises to the higher regions. It then gains freedom from birth and death. Reference is made to this fact in the Sar Bachan.

I will follow the lead of Nirat and reach Sat Lok.

In the beginning the Sound alone is manifest. The Light appears later. In practice also, we first rely upon the Sound, although we begin with Simran (repetition) and Dhyān (contemplation). Their function is to prepare the ground for hearing the Sound. Simran and Dhyān have their own functions, but they merely act as pilots or advance-guards for the bridegroom – the Shabd which alone really counts.

Simran is the key to the practice of listening to the Sound. During his practice the seeker comes across regions in which he is surrounded by effulgent Light. For crossing the brilliance of this Light, the Sound is the guide. There are some regions where it is complete darkness, like Maha Sun, the Great Void. There also the Name given by the Master is the only guide. In these regions, the Sound is

the only true pathfinder or guide. It is just like a traveler trying to find his way to a habitation when he is lost in a lonely jungle and enveloped in thick darkness, by following the barking of a dog. The Sound helps the blind seeker within in similar circumstances. This is the superiority of the path of the Sound Current.

Shabd is the Truth

Guru Nanak has described Shabd as Truth. This is because it never perishes.

It is true from the beginning and has been true through the ages. It is true in the present and shall be true hereafter, oh Nanak.

Guru Nanak says:

He is One, and the Shabd is His insignia. He can be realized through a Perfect Master. (Basant M1, 1188-14)

Both Guru Amar Das and Guru Arjan Dev support this:

He who loves the Truth, Loves the True Word too. (Sri Rag M2, 33-17)

Listen to me, my friend and comrade; the Master has blest me with the Initiation of the True Shabd. (Vadhans M5, 576—18)

Shabd is Nectar

The Gurbani also describes the Shabd as Nectar – the Nectar that makes us immortal. This power is possessed only by the Shabd. The Shabd of the Guru is that Nectar, the drinking of which rids us of all our cravings and merges us in the True Lord.

The Guru's Word is the Nectar; he who drinks it quenches his

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*thirst. The mind is dyed in Truth, and it merges with the Truth.
(Sri Rag M3, 35-8)*

The whole world is senseless without the Shabd and human life is being wasted. The Shabd alone is Nectar which is realized only by a devotee.

Without the Word is the whole world senseless, and wastes away the opportunity of life. Nanak! The Word is the only Nectar, and only a true devotee finds it. (Sorath Var M4, 644-6)

The Nectar is overflowing within us but egotistic persons do not enjoy it. They are like the musk deer, which has musk in its navel but wanders about searching for it, being ignorant of its presence within its body.

The Nectar fills the house, but vain persons know it not. The deer knows not the musk; it wanders in delusion. (Sorath Var M3, 644-2)

The pool of Nectar is within us. The soul of a man can gain possession of this Nectar through the Shabd and drink it.

Within you is the well filled with Nectar, draw it out through Shabd and drink it. (M 3 Vadhans 570-18)

The Shabd is the True Treasure

The Gurbani says that the best of all practices is the practice of listening to the Shabd. This is acceptable to the Lord and leads to salvation.

*The practice of listening to the Shabd is the true spiritual practice.
(Majh M3, 114-10)*

The practice of the Guru's Shabd is the true practice. (Prabhati

M1, 1344-19)

No other spiritual practice can lead us to Reality. Man is entangled in the darkness of worldly attachments. Guru Nanak says:

In this world the practice of (listening to) the Shabd is the only true deed. Without the Shabd one is enveloped in ignorance. (Prabhati M1, 1342-10)

In this Iron Age only devotion to the Shabd is fruitful in developing spirituality.

In the Iron Age know the greatness of the Shabd. By devotion to It pride is removed. (Asa M3, 424-1)

Man can attain salvation only by means of the Shabd. Through It alone man turns from glass into gold and is transformed from poison into nectar.

By listening to the Sound, glass turns into gold, and poison becomes nectar when the Naam given by the Master is practiced. (Sawayya M4, 1399-10)

In this way, one achieves the mission of his life.

Fruitful is the life of a god-man who is attuned to the True Word. The Lord illumines his inner self and he abides in peace. (Suhi M3, 755-4)

Shabd is the Lord's Law and Name

Various names have been used to describe the power of the Lord. Among these are Shabd, Law and Name.

He who obeys His Law is acceptable to Him. Through the Guru's Word he is blest with the insignia of His Name. (M 3 Basant 1175-

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6)

Shabd is the Highest Essence

The Shabd of the Master is the essence of sweetness and it is realized within.

*Very sweet is the Guru's Word; this Nectar I find inside myself.
(Prabhathi M1, 1331-16)*

Shabd is Inexhaustible

The Shabd has no end. Its supply is inexhaustible.

He to whom He is kind lacks nothing. Oh Nanak, Shabd is inexhaustible, however much one may spend. (Shalok M5, 1426-2)

The Guru's Shabd is limitless. It has no end. It is beyond the reach of Kal.

You are the Friend, the Wise, the One who unites. Through the Guru's Word I praise You. But there is no end to Your praise. Kal cannot reach where the Lord's Name abides. (Sri Rag M1, 55-16)

Shabd is All-Pervading

The Shabd is within us. It exists in all the Four Ages and is all-pervading.

Oh Avdhu, in all the Four Ages men devoted themselves to the Sound and became attuned to It. (Ramkali M1, 908-8)

It is everywhere. Everything is full of the Sound. It is the form of the Lord. It is not far away from us. It hears and sees everything.

Oh mind, think not the Lord is afar. His presence is always near.

He hears and sees all. And He is contained in the Word. (Asa M3, 429-1)

The Shabd is the Lord's Law which pervades everywhere and is within all.

Your Law pervades on all the four directions. Your Name pervades even the four sides of the under-world. The Shabd pervades everywhere. We meet You through Your infinite Grace. (Malar M1, 1275-13)

Shabd is Found Within the Body

The Shabd or Naam is heard and realized by research within the human body.

If one searches the township of the body, through the Shabd, one gains the nine treasures of Naam. (Ramkali M3, 910-13)

It is by turning inwards and purifying the mind that the Lord is found.

By purifying the mind one crosses this world. This is done by reflecting on the quintessence of the self. They who serve the Master enjoy peace, and the Shabd pervades their inner self. (Ramkali M1, 908-2)

Guru Nanak, telling us about the location of the Shabd, says that it can be heard beyond Ida, Pingla and Sushmana, through the Grace of the Master.

He knows Ida, Pingla and Sushmana. He sees for himself the Unseeable. Oh Nanak, the True Master takes him beyond them, He merges him in the Sound. (Ramkali M1, 944-18)

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How is Shabd Realized?

Through the Grace of the Lord. He alone realizes the Sound on whom the Lord showers His Grace. The Shabd then manifests within him.

When He showers His Grace, the Shabd abides in the heart, and one is rid of all doubts. Body, mind and speech become pure, and the Name dwells in the mind. (Ramkali M1, 944-13)

He alone realizes Him whom the Lord unites with Himself. One is then attuned to the True One singing day and night the Guru's Word. (Malar M3, 1259-8)

For the one to whom the Lord is kind, the Shabd is coined in the mint of Truth, and he alone meditates upon it.

The Shabd is coined in the mint of Truth. Those on whom He showers His Grace receive it. (Jap Ji, 8-9)

Through Satsang and the Satguru. When the Lord is kind, we meet a Master who connects our soul with the Sound.

By the Lord's Grace is the True Guru met, and then alone He joins our soul with the Word. (Majh M3, I10-1)

This boon can be had only through the Satguru and His Satsang.

He is One and the Shabd is His insignia. He can be realized through a Perfect Master. (Basant M1, 1188-15)

The Perfect Master enables us to hear the Shabd. The three attributes are overcome, and one attains the fourth state. (Gauri M3, 231-7)

The beneficent Master makes us hear Shabd, which stills the wanderlust of the mind. (Gauri M3, 232-6)

The Master is Himself the Shabd or the Word made flesh. He alone can manifest the Shabd. The Shabd is a boon from the Master. The Master makes It dwell in our hearts. It is impossible for anyone else to manifest It.

The Shabd of the Guru can be bestowed only by Him. It cannot be manifested by anyone else. (Sarang Var M4, 1249-8)

The Sound of Shabd is an unspoken language which is constantly emanating from the mouth of the Lord without being uttered. The Master also gives this Shabd to His disciples in the like manner, without using the tongue. Maulana Rumi says: The Master behaves in the same manner as God. He teaches the disciples without speaking.

The Master points to this indescribable and formless Shabd and makes the disciple turn inward. With His power, He then connects the disciple with Shabd.

The Shabd can be had by giving up pride of knowledge, caste and creed, and by sitting at the feet of the Master:

In order to gain this wealth we have to give up pride of knowledge, and to take shelter at the feet of a Master.

Give up pretense to knowledge and devoutness; drink the wine from the divine cup.

Do not let the feelings of 'I-ness', wealth, knowledge, caste, creed or nobility of family or glory come near you. All these lead to stopping of the Sound. Put on the adorn-

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ment of humility and listen to the Sound, and obtain bliss from its intoxicating powers and sweetness.

If seed is sown in a field which is not prepared, or if it is sown out of season, it does not bear fruit. Similarly, so long as the mind is not rid of its cravings and has not become pure, it does not cease its wandering or running about. The mind becomes pure only through devotion to the Shabd. So long as the mind is divided, there is no success. We neither realize the Shabd, nor see the Lord. So long as the mind is wandering and there is pride and egotism, the Shabd is not heard and there is no love for Naam. Therefore, it is far more necessary to rid the mind of inner uncleanness than to remove outer impurities.

What is Devotion to Shabd?

Devotion to the Shabd consists in turning inward and listening one-pointedly to its Melody.

The Sound is subtle, and unless we ourselves become subtle, we cannot hear it. The Shabd is the cause of consciousness. Our soul is a particle of the Lord, and the Lord pervades the whole universe in the form of the Shabd. To connect the soul with the Shabd is to connect the soul with the Lord.

By realizing the Shabd, the Lord is realized and one's service is fruitful. (Sri Rag M3, 27-9)

In order to be connected with the Sound, the soul should be devoid of all worldly coverings. Unless we meet a Saint, who is an adept in the practice of the Shabd and obtain the boon of the Shabd from Him, the soul which is entangled in the fetters of the mind and the matter, cannot gain release and return to its Original Home.

Shabd is Realized Only By a Rare Devotee

Everyone desires to see the Lord, but it is only a rare soul that can realize Him through the Shabd.

How many there are who crave for Your vision. But it is only a rare one to whom You are revealed through the Guru's Shabd. (Basant M1, 1188-12)

The human body is the temple of the Lord. The Shabd is inside it and can be easily realized. It is the birthright of all. Whether one is rich or poor, literate or illiterate, belonging to one country or religion or another, all can realize the Shabd by receiving initiation from a Perfect Master. After becoming a devotee, we can easily practice listening to the Sound and this practice quickly bears fruit.

The Lord's temple is also the Lord's shop, embellished with the Word, and therein is sold the Lord's Name and it is through the Guru that one obtains it. (Prabhati M3, 1346-12)

Without the Shabd is the whole world senseless, and wastes away the opportunity of life. The Shabd is the only Nectar, and through the Guru it is received. (Sorath Var M4, 644-5)

The self-centered man cannot recognize the Shabd because of the restlessness of his mind. He is, therefore, deprived of its taste.

The restless mind knows not the way. The egocentric is not pure in mind and hears not the Word. (Asa M1, 415-3)

The self-centered know not the Name. Without the Name they lose honor. They are torn by duality, and love not the taste of the Word. (Sri Rag M3, 28-9)

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The man of riches is blind and deaf and remains entangled in darkness and doubts, for he does not hear the Shabd.

The favored of Mammon are blind and deaf, they can never be attuned to the Heavenly Harmony. (Gauri Var M4, 313-18)

What Does Shabd Do Within?

The Shabd is conscious and consciousness. It is a wave of the ocean of the Lord and man is a particle of His Being. He is related to Him as a part is related to the whole. The Lord is the ocean of super-consciousness, and Shabd is its wave. The soul is a drop of this ocean. The wave of super-consciousness or Shabd attracts the conscious soul towards it and absorbs it. Until the soul, with the help of the Shabd, rises to its Original Home, it cannot achieve salvation. The melody of the Shabd is ringing within us. When the soul is connected with it, it becomes fit to rise from the finite towards the infinite.

The connection between the soul and the Divine Sound is a natural one. There is form and melody in the Shabd and through these the mind becomes still. The soul then becomes absorbed in the Sound and merges in the Lord. The Shabd emanates from the Supreme Lord and through it the soul realizes the Lord. By practicing breath control, we can reach the place of origin of the vital force in the body – the chid akash – but no further. The Gurbani tells us that the Lord is eternal and can be realized only through the practice of listening to the Divine Sound.

My Master is eternal. He can be seen through the practice of the Sound. (Gujri Var M3, 509-5)

It is only by realizing the Shabd that one meets the True Lord.

On realizing the Shabd, the Lord is realized. One's service is then fruitful. (Sri Rag M3, 27-9)

Inside of man is the Shabd whereby the Lord can be met. (Sarang Var M4, 1250-3)

The Shabd is the only path that leads us to our Original Home. It is the ship that ferries the soul across the ocean of Existence and takes him in the lap of the Lord.

The Supreme Lord, the soul and the Shabd are a Holy Trinity. The One Lord exists in all the three forms. The soul has no separate existence from the timeless Being. It is a particle of Him.

Oh Kabir, the soul is a particle of the Lord. (Kabir, Gond 871-10)

In spite of this relationship – that of a particle to the whole – every soul considers itself to be a separate entity.

The Kingdom of Sach Khand is within us, but it cannot be entered without knowing the proper way. We should go within. The way to do this is the practice of listening to the Shabd. It is only by this practice that we can obtain release from the mind and Maya, pain and pleasure, duality and birth and death.

The Shabd is the conscious melody-current of the Lord. It is His form, and It creates and sustains the entire universe. The Shabd is the seed of the entire creation. Whatever is in the seed is also in the tree which springs from it. Everything is within that Eternity. Whatever is manifested in time and space merges in It, and the origin of every-

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thing is in the Shabd.

The effect is a form of the cause. The Shabd is the cause. The entire creation is Its effect. What is not in the cause cannot be found in the effect. If a ray of the sun falls on a clean mirror, the entire sun can be seen in it. If our mind is entirely clean and there is not even an iota of egotism in it, then the reflection of the Lord can be seen in it. The rays of the sun emanate from the sun and are not different from it. Cause is always present in its effect. Similarly, the attributes of the Lord are not different from those of the soul.

The true Shabd is Dhun-atmik which means that it cannot be spoken or written. It is resounding within us. It is the same Shabd through which the world was manifested. There is no other method, except the practice of listening to this Sound, of obtaining release from the woe and misery of the world and the cycle of birth and death. This method is the highest and the purest of all methods. One who practices it, also obtains the benefits that accrue from all other spiritual practices. You should seek a holy man who is an adept in the practice of the Sound Current and learn it from him. By its practice you will attain salvation and will be freed from the bondage of Maya. When the inner ground is clean, the Shabd will be heard. But where the Shabd comes from is not known.

Shamas-i-Tabriz says about it as follows:

A strange sound was heard; It was not from inside or outside. It was not from the left or right, nor from behind or front. It was not from above or below, nor from East or West. It was not from water or air, nor from fire, earth or ether. You may ask where it comes from; it comes from the direction in which you search. You may ask which direction to face. Face the way from which the King comes. That direction where the parched fish remains alive by getting wa-

ter. That direction from which the hand of Moses appeared like the moon. That direction which ripens the fruits. That direction which turns stones into pearls. The unbeliever turns in that direction in the hour of need. When he feels pain here, he goes in that direction. It is not proper to discuss this, for even the unbelievers would give up unbelief on hearing about it.

Yes! This sound is coming from the direction towards which the soul has to go. Without It the soul wanders in the dark.

Blind is the soul without the Shabd. Oh! Where can it go? It finds not the door that leads to the Lord's Name, and so it wanders to and fro. (Kabir)

All the Saints have asserted that this Shabd, which is heard inside, is the means for gaining release from the world. It cannot be had, however, until a seeker is instructed by a holy man who is an adept, and he then withdraws his attention from the nine portals of the body and fixes it on the spot behind the two eyes. This Shabd takes the soul to its Original Home.

A man obtains a new life through the Shabd. Jesus Christ also refers to the new life given by the Word or Holy Spirit but this has been forgotten by our Christian brothers of today. In this very connection St. John says:

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; but it is the spirit of man which is born of the spirit.

He also clearly speaks about a new life which begins after hearing the Word.

The wind bloweth where it listeth (wisheth) and thou hearest the Sound thereof; but cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.

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Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven. Marvel not that I say unto you, ye must be born again.

Whenever the Saints come to the world, they emphasize the importance of being born again through the Shabd.

When the Master, at the time of initiation, connects us with the Shabd, we are born again. Guru Nanak has hinted at this in his talk to Yogis:

By being made to be born again by the Master, my comings and goings ceased. (Ramkali M1, 940-2)

The Shabd takes us out of the darkness of matter, cleans us of our accumulated dross and gives us a new life. By the practice of the Shabd, we are rid of this pot of the body and we see a wonderful universe without the use of our eyes.

By contemplating on the Guru's Word the thread of my breath was cleansed. I entered my Original Home and drank the Lord's Nectar. I saw a wonderful universe without using my eyes. (Nat M4, 983-6)

Unless we realize the Shabd we cannot reach the Court of the Lord.

Time for Practice of Naam Through Shabd

The best time for the practice of Naam or the Name of God through the Shabd is the early morning hours, when the mind is one-pointed.

He who contemplates the Naam through the Shabd; and does so in

the early morning, giving up attachment to the world; says Nanak, the slave of the Lord's slaves He wins; while the world loses. (Prabhati M1, 1330-2)

Benefits of Practice of Shabd

The practice of listening to the Shabd brings a number of beneficial results. The Shabd is a storehouse of power. It is the essence of wisdom. Those who are connected with It and are sustained by It are true sons of the Lord. The Shabd cuts all the bonds of the soul and leads to its salvation. It is the Bread of Life which descends from Sach Khand (the True and Imperishable Region). Those who partake of It, become immortal and attain everlasting life. Those who engage in the practice of the Shabd need no outer light like that of a lamp or the sun or moon, for the Light of lights appears within them.

The Mind is controlled by the Shabd and is rid of lust and anger:

The mind is not controlled by millions of other efforts. It is very difficult to subdue it. It cannot be conquered by outer practices such as recitals and austerities, rites and rituals, rules of hygiene discipline, pilgrimages, fasts or alms-giving and charities. It is very hard to overcome the mind. In the Ramayana, the sage Vashisht says to Lord Rama thus:

If someone should say that he had lifted up the Himalayas, even though it is impossible, I would believe him for a moment. If he should say that he has drunk the whole of the ocean, even though it is impossible, I would believe him. But if he should say that he has controlled the mind, I would not believe him.

Just as a spark sets fire to a heap of hay and reduces

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it to ashes in a moment, so also are the stored sanskaras (tendencies) created by karmas of previous births burnt up in a trice by listening to the Shabd. Just as a deer is enraptured by the sound of a drum or a moth, seeing a bright light, sacrifices itself, similarly does one attain bliss on hearing the Celestial Music of the inner Shabd.

The mind is fond of pleasure, but it gives up its ramblings when it gets delight of the inner Shabd.

The mouse-like mind is incapacitated by drinking the mercury of the Name of the Lord.

There is no other way to still the mind except by listening to the divine Sound.

The mind is not stilled without the Guru's Word. (Asa M1, 415-8)

The mind is kept absorbed in the Shabd. This is the most pious deed one can do. (Ramkali M1, 908-5)

Through the practice of the Shabd the turbulent waves of the mind subside.

The Shabd calms the waves of the mind; it then easily merges in the Shabd. (Sarang M3, 1233-13)

Without realization of the Shabd the mind continues to rove sometimes in the skies and sometimes in the nether-lands.

So long as the mind does not realize the Word, one moment it flies to the skies, and the next it sinks to the underworlds. (Prabhati M1, 1345-13)

By listening to the Sound all worldly bonds and exter-

nal attractions are removed. The mind gives up its base desires, and one conquers the five enemies – lust, anger, attachment, greed and pride. When the soul gains release from these passions, it soars upward to the spiritual regions.

Becoming fear-free with the eternal Lord in his mind, he plunged the spear of Guru's Word into his heart, he shattered the citadel of the five – Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment and Ego. (Swayyya M3, 1396-3)

It is by praising the Name thru the Guru's Word that one is dyed in detachment. He conquers the five enemies. Fruitful is such a song. (Shalok M5, 1425-1)

According to Kabir Sahib, he then becomes engrossed in contemplation of the Lord.

He burns the five sins and is attuned to the Lord. (Kabir, 1366-14)

The Shabd is a remedy for the disease of egotism:

The entire world is suffering from the disease of egotism and cannot get rid of it without the Shabb.

All the world is suffering from egotism. It cannot be cured save through the Word. (Bhairon M3, 1130-7)

Egotism is an incurable disease, but the Lord has placed its remedy within man. If the Lord bestows His Grace, then alone can one practice the Shabd as directed by the Master and destroy egotism.

This ego is a chronic disease, which yet can cure itself with ease, when Grace from Lord descends. Through Guru's Word the soul ascends, from self thus gets release. (Asa Var M1, 466-18)

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The Guru's Word is the only antidote for the poison of egotism. (Bhairon M3, 1133-12).

Oh Nanak! The Shabd burns away egotism. (Basant M1, 1189-2)

Shams-i-Tabriz also says that release from egotism can only be gained by the practice of the Shabd.

When you hear the sound of the drum, He releases you from egotism and envy. You suddenly hear the call of love, and it releases you from the miseries of life.

Happiness and Peace are gained through Shabd:

All the world is running about in search of happiness and peace. The bodily pleasures are momentary and are ever-changing. Whatever pleasure is felt through the senses is due to the attention of our mind being concentrated on the objects that give rise to the pleasure. That alone is our own pleasure, which is felt as a result of stilling the mind. The sense pleasures are like a dog that crunches a bone. Its mouth bleeds and it enjoys the taste of its own blood but thinks that the enjoyment is from the bone.

The soul is conscious. How can it ever derive pleasure from unconscious things? It can be really happy only on uniting with super-consciousness. The Shabd of the Master is a current of super-consciousness. Whenever the soul touches It, it experiences true happiness.

The Guru's Word leads to joy and peace. The devotee of God is never in pain. (Asa M3, 361-4)

There is coolness in the Shabd that makes both body and mind very peaceful.

Within me rage the fires of passion, bless me with Guru's Word that I am cooled. My body and mind are immensely comforted, and rid of my maladies, I sleep in peace. (Kalyan M4, 1326-1)

It appears as if those who practice the Shabd drink the ocean of coolness.

He who contemplates on the Guru's Word, becomes an ocean of coolness. His egotism is killed, and release is obtained. (Malar M1, 1275-2)

When the soul contacts the Shabd it is comforted and merging in the Lord it attains bliss.

In the meeting of the Soul with the Shabd is peace. Imbued with the Lord one is in bliss. (Sri Rag M1, 62-4)

By the practice of listening to the Shabd, pure eternal bliss, which is imperishable, is obtained.

Attuned only to the Shabd, one abides in bliss day and night. (M 4 Malar 1265-8)

He who meditates on the Guru's Word obtains great bliss. Blessed is the ever happy bride who is filled with the love of her Lord. (Asa M5, 370-16)

Many other benefits result from the practice of the Shabd. Desires, hopes, cravings, attachments and delusions are destroyed.

The fire of desires is quenched by the Shabd which washes off the sense of duality the natural way. (Gauri M1, 222-15)

The Shabd burns away all our hopes and desires, and one dwells on and repeats only the Lord's Name. (Asa M1, 413-19)

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The Shabd burns all attachment and delusion; it makes one dear to the Master, and one's body and mind are in bloom. (Basant M3, 1173-18)

A man is never alone when he realizes the Shabd. Whether he is at home or anywhere else, his Lord, with His Divine Music, is always with him and is calling him back to his original Home. By practicing the Shabd, all diseases, vices and sins are removed; lust, anger and the other passions do not get a foothold; one becomes very pure and completely detached. Shabd is the support of life and death. The fear of death is banished. At the time of death the devotee discards his body just as one casts aside old clothes. Through the power of the Shabd one is freed from the cycle of birth and death. The misery caused by Kal and the fear of death end.

The difficulties of the inner path are resolved; the karmas of millions of births are destroyed and one crosses the ocean of worldly existence.

By the practice of the Sound, Light appears within and the lotus of the heart blossoms. One realizes his true Self and attains the state of dying while living. He transcends the domain of the three attributes and time. He goes into trance in the void, and the tenth door opens. He learns the sign of the Lord's door. He is dyed in the hue of the Lord, and true devotion and divine bliss arise within him. He is honored in the Court of the Lord. He attains salvation and realizes the most blissful state.

He then dwells in his original Home and is absorbed in Truth. He realizes the Lord and becomes happy here and hereafter.

Those people who are without the Shabd are in a piti-

able condition. They continue the round of the cycle of eighty-four. They are beset with doubts and suffer privations at the hands of the king of death every time they die. They forever remain miserable and helpless.

The waves of the ocean of Shabd are surging in each one of us. Those who drink of its waters are no longer troubled by thirst or hunger and gain eternal life. This was the Water of Life that Christ offered to the woman of Sychar at the well so that by drinking it she might quench her thirst forever. It has also been described as the Bread of Life, by eating which one's hunger is fully satisfied. The Shabd is that medicine which is the panacea for all ills.

The Name is the panacea for all our diseases. (Gauri M5, 274-18)

The Gurbani says that if we do not search for the Shabd and our inner eye is not opened and if we do not hear with our inner ear the true voice of God, what use is our human life?

The Timeless (Anhad) Shabd

The Shabd is of two kinds – ahad and anhad. Ahad is the Shabd or sound which is produced by striking two objects against each other. All outer sounds fall in this category. Anhad is that which is free from this limitation and is independent. The Muslim holy men who call it Anhad, say that it is a continuous Sound which is not perishable.

Listen to the unending Sound, It is free and unending. (Niaz Shah)

As its beginning and end are without limit, It is called Anhad (without limit). The Supreme Lord is silence. He is the ruler of the entire universe. Shabd is unmanifest there.

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He is the Lord of all places. His Shabd rings there. (M5 Sorath 621-12)

The Lord is without form. He manifests as Unending Sound.

Anhad has no form, no sign; It is a subtle Sound from the Immaculate One. (M1 Asa 351-2)

There is Light in It and melody springs from it.

In the cave of equipoise have I my seat, and rings there the luminous and unending music. (M5 Asa 370-15)

The melody of Anhad (Unending Sound) rings loudly. My mind is filled with the essence of the Lord. (M1 Ram Kali 879-7)

This melody of Anhad resounds all the time without a break.

Within him rings the Anhad Shabd, and he is then imbued with God's Essence. (M4 Jetsari 698-3)

The Anhad Shabd is ringing day and night. (M1 Ram Kali 904-7)

The melody of Anhad is very blissful and is beyond description.

Myriads of blissful melodies of Shabd continue ceaselessly, of whose delight there is no limit, no end. (M5 Sarang 1236-11)

Many kinds of melodies are resounding at the door of the Master.

It rids us of the woes of myriads of births, and we hear the Anhad Shabd ringing at His Court. (M5 Bhairon 1137-10)

O! What is the sign of the Lord's Abode? There rings the Anhad Melody. (Beni Ji Ram Kali 974-7)

This Anhad Shabd is resounding in the sky of every mind.

The Anhad (Unstruck Music) is ringing at His door. The Name of the Lord is abiding in every heart. (M5 Vadhans 578-14)

The devotee abides in heaven. He looks upon all alike, for he is dyed in the Unstruck Melody. (M1 Ram Kali 907-7)

When the soul withdraws from the nine doors of the body and enters the tenth door, it can hear the Anhad Music.

He who closes the nine doors and stills his wandering mind, enters he through the tenth door his Original Home. Hears he day and night the Unstruck Music through the Guru's instructions. (M3 Majh 124-12)

When I closed the doors of my body, I heard the Anhad Music. (Kabir, Sorath 656-10)

Bhai Gurdas Ji also describes the Anhad Shabd.

The soul is absorbed in the Shabd. It becomes satisfied on hearing the Melody. (Var 19 Pauri 8)

I realized the Anhad Music when my soul abided in the Shabd. (Var 19 Pauri 21)

The Anhad Shabd is perfect knowledge and contemplation. It is a recital of God's Name. One gets salvation by listening to It.

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One listens to recitals about the Lord. One gets perfect knowledge and contemplation. The Anhad breaks all the worldly bonds. By its melody the devotee realizes the Lord. (M5 Suhi 783-12)

The unending music is wonderful. It cannot be obtained by our own mental processes or activities. It can only be had as a result of the Grace of the Master. It is the supreme gift of a Perfect Master.

The melodious unending Music is heard only by following the directions of the Master. (M1 Sri Rag 21-2)

The unending Music is wonderfully pleasing; It is the supreme gift of a Perfect Master. (M5 Bhairon 1143-6)

O Nanak, he who has a Perfect Master hears the Unending Music. (M5 Asa 393-16)

This music is the means of uniting the soul with the Lord and when it manifests itself, the soul enjoys the bliss of the Lord.

The Unstruck Music resounds at my True Home. I sit on the same bed with my Lord. O Nanak, I have found the Lord. He is my spouse and I live in peace. (M5 Gauri247-18)

It is only a Gurmukh who can hear this Music. It cannot be heard by an egotistic person.

Lo, the Lord has manifested His wonder, and I hear the Unstruck Melody of the Word. The self-willed have strayed from the path. To God oriented ones the mystery is revealed. The Creator produces the cause that causes all of this. (M3 Bhairon 1154-2)

Through the practice of listening to this Music, all sins, impurities and afflictions are removed. The pains of many births are eliminated and one gains bliss. Doubts and fears

are destroyed. One enjoys heavenly bliss and dwells in his Original Home. The souls of God-men leave their bodies and become absorbed in the Unending Music. This Music is the gift of the Lord. If it is so ordained, one gets it through the Master.

The Five Sounds (Shabds)

There are numerous Anhad Shabds. They manifest within, with the Grace of the Master.

Myriads of blissful melodies of Shabd continue ceaselessly, of whose delight there is no limit, no end. (M5 Sarang 1236-11)

Bhai Gurdas says:

Many were bewildered on hearing the Sound of the Unending Music within themselves. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 13 Pauri 4)

Of these numerous Sounds, five are the genuine ones. The Gurbani speaks of these five Sounds.

By following the Master, the five Sounds ring within. By a great good fortune one hears them. (Bhai Gurdas, Var Kama; M 4 1315-18)

The Unstruck Melody of the Five Sounds rings within me, and I live ever in God. Oh absolute, formless and dispassionate one, this is how Kabir performs Your worship. (Kabir, Parbhathi 1350-13)

The five pure Sounds are played. Banners are waved and conch shells are blown. (Beni, Ram Kali 974-18)

The Lord is described by the Gurus as 'Panch Shabdi' (One who has five Sounds).

The Lord of the Five Sounds came; and the happy marriage was

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celebrated. (M1 Suhi 735-15)

The Five Sounds emanate from the Lord and are the means of attaining Him.

They contemplate on the Master of the Five Sounds. (Jap Ji 3-13)

Bhai Gurdas says that after transcending the five elements of the material world – earth, water, fire, air and ether – five Sounds are heard.

On transcending the five elements, one is welcomed by five beautiful Sounds. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 29 Pauri 6)

These five Sounds are however heard through the faculty of the soul and only by a Gurmukh. He unites with the Lord through them:

He follows the directions of the Master, his soul hears the five Sounds. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 6 Pauri 18)

He is the Supreme Lord. The five thunderous Sounds are His insignia. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 7 Pauri 5)

All the Saints have taught their disciples to listen to the Five Sounds. Hafiz Sahib has described them as five melodies.

Be silent and hear the five Sounds coming from the sky. The sky lies beyond the six centers of the body and the seventh heaven.

Shams-i-Tabriz also taught the observance of these five Sounds. He says:

Every day the five melodies are being played at the door of the Lord. If we hear the beating of that drum, we are freed from envy and egotism.

He again says that if a man were to transcend the six centers of the body and reach the seventh sky, he would hear the five Sounds resounding there.

One hears the Five Melodies in the seventh sky when he strikes his tent and leaves the six regions.

This Shabd or Sound is really one. In the lower parts of the creation, where the proportion of mind and Maya is greater and the Shabd creates the regions of subtle and gross matter, its melody or Sound Principle changes. Since there are five primary regions in the creation, this one Shabd appears to be five. There are two Shabds up to Trikuti; two from Trikuti to Satlok; and the fifth one is in Satlok. These five Sounds become perfect there. By the practice of listening to them according to the directions of a perfect Adept, the soul becomes one with the five Sounds and unites with the Lord from whom they emanate. Guru Amardas says:

The highest good is gained through the Grace of the Master, when the Merciful One plays the Five Melodies. (M3 Bhairon 1128-17)

The melody of the Five Sounds is resounding within every human being. He who merges his soul in melody and ascends to the sky hears the Five Sounds.

Where praises of the Lord and the Creator are sung, there the melody of the Five Sounds resounds. (M4 Sarang 1201-3)

The Masters say that the melody of these Shabds is heard in the forehead.

I was Your servant in my previous birth; how can I deny You now? At Your door rings the Melody of Equipoise, and on my forehead is

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inscribed Your stamp. (Kabir, Ram Kali 969-19)

Where exactly is this Sound in the forehead? It is present between the two eyebrows, in the so-called Royal Vein, through which it is heard.

Seated in the home of Sushmana (Royal Vein), one hears this Melody; attuned to the state of the desireless void. (M1 Malar Var 1291-2)

The God-intoxicated Muslim faqirs called this place Mehrab (arch) in Persian. The Vein has also been described as the Shah Rag or (great Royal Vein). Khwaja Hafiz Shirazi writes:

While bowed in heartfelt prayer, when I remembered You it happened that a sound came from the arch.

Bulleh Shah says, Allah is nearer than the Royal Vein.

In the Holy Quran also it is written:

I am nearer than the Royal Vein.

The devotee who practices listening to the Shabd gains a twofold benefit from its Music or Sound. Firstly, he experiences the Truth as taught by the Master. In the second place, he recognizes the Music or Sound and by its harmonies recognizes the region he is in. These different harmonies are like milestones on the road which save the traveler from wandering astray.

The path of the Five Sounds can be learned only from a Master who is an adept in the practice of the Sound and who has himself merged in it. The ability to hear the Sound can be had only by following His directions.

By following the Master the Five sounds ring within me; by great good fortune only one hears the unending Music. (Var Kama M4 1315-18)

The Sound that is heard in each region is made plain at the time of initiation by the Master. After this, as the disciple continues to practice and ascends through the higher regions, he sees everything himself with his own inner eyes. It is only as a result of great good fortune that the Five Melodies play in this body and such a body is really blessed.

In that fortunate home ring the Five Melodies, after the Lord has manifested His power. (M3 Ram Kali 917-12)

These five Shabds are heard only by those whom the Lord wishes to hear them. The ability to hear them does not lie in the power of man.

The melody of the Five Shabds is wonderful; the Lord Himself makes it heard. (M1 Maru 1040-4)

These five Sounds are unceasing, perfect and all pervading.

The Five Sounds resound without a break, and are unending and blissful. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 3 Pauri 16) The Five Shabds are perfect. The unending Music is wonderfully blissful. (M5 Ram Kali 888-17) The unending Music is all-pervading. (Kabir, Ram Kali 971-7)

All these five Shabds combine to form one perfect Shabd. The mind can be stilled by It, and all the three gunas (qualities) are removed and one becomes free from birth and death and enjoys bliss.

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When the soul meditates in the company of Saints, all the Five Shabds then become one. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 6 Pauri 10)

The One Shabd is as dear to me as life, It frees us from rebirth. (M1 Bilawal 795-14)

He obtains everlasting bliss by merging with the One Shabd. (M4 Malar 1265-8)

When the three gunas are silenced, one is in communion with the One Word. (M3 Sri Rag 66-6)

Those who have become attuned with the One Shabd are indeed blessed.

Blessed are those who listen to the harmony of the One Shabd. (M1 Ram Kali 879-4)

The Inner Music

The Lord is the Shabd in form and various kinds of unending Music are always resounding at His door.

By good fortune the Lord is my spouse. The unending Music plays at His Court. (M5 Bilawal 846-7)

The creation came into being through the Shabd. In it there are several regions. In these regions Shabds, which are special to each region, are heard. The Saints have given details of all the sounds. In the Gurbani also there is a pointed reference to them.

We find that bells are rung in Hindu temples. They are also tolled in Christian churches. In the Sikh Gurdwaras shell horns, conch and bells are used, and drums are beaten even today. By research, it can be learned that the outer musical instruments are imitations of the inner ones.

Ponder deeply and you will find that Hindu temples have domes and a bell hangs in the middle. Whoever enters the temple rings the bell. In the human head, which also is like a dome, a devotee hears the Shabd at the seat of the soul. In the same manner, Christian churches have high steeples in which a bell is hung. These are based on the shape of the nose. In the human body at the root of the nose, when the soul is concentrated at a place between the two eyebrows, one hears the sound of the bell. Khwaja Hafiz of Iran said of this bell:

Nobody knows where the home of the Beloved is, but there is a region where the sound of the bell is always ringing. (Hafiz)

The Gurbani also says:

You hear the ringing of His bells in all the four directions. (M5 Asa 393-8)

Bells are also found in Buddhist temples. The ringing of bells, in fact, is mentioned in the Scriptures of all the religions. The fact is, that when one goes within the body, the temple of the living God, one hears a sound which is like the ringing of a bell. Similarly, various other sounds are heard in the inner regions. Of these, five Sounds are the principal ones. These inner Sounds are inter-related. After receiving instructions from an adept in the Sound-Current technique and carrying out spiritual practices, one can reach the region from where the melody of the Five Sounds is emanating. This is the abode of the Supreme Lord. The musical sounds are, in a way, milestones on the way that leads to the country of our Lord and which tell us how far we have come. Bhai Gurdas mentions the inner Music in his verses:

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The soul played the music of the conch shell horn. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 20 Pauri 11)

When the unending Music is played on the horn, the Light appears. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 22 Pauri 13)

Oh! Hear the ringing of the bells, the unending Music divine, beyond the tenth door. (Kabir 29)

Those who enjoy a natural trance and see the inner Light, contemplate on the unending Melody of the ringing of the bell. (Kabir 222)

Khwaja Hafiz also mentions these inner musical sounds. He says:

Oh! Listen to the singers in the garden. How harmoniously they play, on harp, lute, guitar, pipe, flute and reed.

He mentions many different sounds ranging from the chirping of sparrows to the music of the harp, lute, guitar, pipe, flute, and so on.

By listening to the Melody of the inner music, the soul is elevated. The secret of this can be obtained from a Master. A disciple becomes a Gurmukh by listening to this Music and gains access to his Original Home.

Outer Music and Dance

Musical instruments are widely used in spiritual assemblies. All religions give them a special importance. Yogis use them, and so also do Muslims. Music is extensively used by Hindus, Sikhs and Christians. Wherever sadhus gather, they use musical instruments. People sing hymns with instrumental accompaniments and go into ecstasy over their beautiful melodies and harmonies. The mind

becomes enraptured with this outer music but it does not become conscious nor is it awakened.

One dances in myriads of ways; the mind, however, remains deaf and blind. For whom is all this dancing done? (M3 Asa 364-14)

In the first place, some people have made a profession of religious singing and dancing.

Some dance to music to earn their bread, and fall to the ground again and again. (M1 Asa Var 465-8)

One ties bells to his feet, and for earning his bread dances before God. He performs fasts and the six kinds of actions; observes religious disciplines to impress the temple visitors. He sings the words with his tongue, but his mind does not sing of the Lord. (M5 Maru 1003-5)

There is greed in the minds of such persons and their delusions and doubts are, therefore, not removed. No Light appears within them, nor do they know the Reality.

In the second place, such singers always remain engrossed in practicing their tunes and correcting them. If you ask them, you will find that many are worried lest they break their voice or the melody so that they continue to impress their audience. They do not even pronounce the words correctly. It is a mere show for them.

The Yogi strikes the string with his hand, but the vina produces no melody. (M4 Asa 368-1)

The audience, moreover, can also understand the hymns only if they are already familiar with them. Otherwise, they do not understand their spiritual import, and know only the tunes and their melody. The Saints do not

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accept this form of worship. They point out that outer music does not lead to contemplation. Truth is not realized. Egotism is not lessened even a little bit, and one gets no real or lasting peace.

By listening to this vina one does not obtain a composed state of mind; nor does he realize the Truth. By this vina peace is not gained, and pride is not banished. (M3 Ram Kali 908-16)

The time wasted in correcting the tunes and rhythms and in practicing them could, with greater profit, be spent on the practice of the Name, according to the directions of the Master.

Why should I search for anklet bells and play on a stringed instrument when the time between coming and going is so short? Why not cherish the Name? Why arrange the five or seven notes to produce some melody? Wasted is the time it takes to select and memorize a melody. My mind sings the praises of the Lord. Why should one dance and stretch out one's hands and feet? (M4 Asa 368-11)

To raise one's hand in ecstasy, or to cry, or to beat the body in an excess of grief, or to dance – all these are merely external expressions. The attention is not taken inside. The outer sound can help one in gathering the scattered attention; but it takes the heart to a center which has no settled place of its own. The outer music is a trap that makes us forget ourselves and the Lord.

Beethoven, the great composer, said,

Music is the mediator between the spiritual and sensual life.

By listening to the outer music we find ourselves entangled in an imaginary world created by the player or the singer, but the inner attachment to the world is not broken

and cravings are not destroyed. The Gurbani throws particular light on this point and tells us that even though we are enchanted by outer sounds and are attracted by them, even though the whole world is enchanted by beautiful outer music, one who listens to it remains within the domain of the three gunas and wastes one's life. Without the true and all-pervading inner music one always remains in misery and ever suffers at the hands of the billows of Maya.

The world indulges in strife, and is swayed by music. Abiding in the three attributes it comes and goes. Without the Lord's Name one comes to pain. (M1 Ram Kali 905-6)

The Shabd rids one of the waves of Maya. (M3 Maru 1049-6)

The Saints have, for this reason, not advised the practice of listening to outer religious music and dancing and being swayed by them. They have instead laid stress on the inner love of the Lord.

Some dance to the tinkling of their ankle bells, others fast, wear rosaries and observe disciplines; some anoint their foreheads with sandal paste, but I, the poor one, contemplate on the Lord. (M5 Ram Kali 913-3)

Muslim holy men have also stressed the necessity of giving up external music and relying on the internal ancient melody.

Remove the cotton of doubt from your ears, so that you may hear the Celestial Music.

O brave one! Bring down the sky to your feet; listen to the Voice of Silence from the skies. Alas! You remain imprisoned in the bodily prison, and do not listen to the sacred Divine Music. (Maulvi Rum)

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Bhai Gurdas in his hymns says in this connection that so long as one remains immersed in external music, the true voice or melody of the Unending Music will not be heard.

As long as you are engrossed in external music, you will not hear the Unending Music. Bhai Gurdas, Kavit, Savayye, 312

When one hears the external music, one becomes intoxicated like a deer which is trapped. It cannot then be said that he knows the secret of the inner Music.

By listening to the external music, one becomes trapped like a deer. He becomes happy-minded, but knows not the secret of the inner Sound. (Bhai Gurdas, Kavit, Savayye, 412)

By transcending the external music, the devotee becomes merged in the unending Celestial Music.

On transcending the external music, one merges with the Unstruck Music. (Bhai Gurdas: Kavit Savayye, 11)

We transcend the three gunas by becoming absorbed in the inner Music. The Divine Music breaks our worldly fetters and we become truly pure. We float like a lotus on the waves of Maya, and like a duck living in water fly away with dry wings.

In the Gurbani the external music has been called poisonous music or poisonous sound by which one gets afflicted with the venom of Maya.

The tongue and the eyes are the snares of Kal, by hearing the poisonous music the ears are poisoned. Without the inner music we are led astray day and night. (M1 Gauri 227-10)

One is pleased by the sound of external music. The mind however, is indifferent to Music in praise of the Lord. (M5 Suhi 738-16)

The Saints have clearly stated that one should give up external music and remember the Lord, so that one may be honored in His Court.

Give up external music and remember the Lord, so that you may be honored in His Court. Oh Nanak, the Gurmukh meditates on Brahm (God); and God's Grace rids the mind of pride. (M4 Bilawal Var 849-7)

The external music is the trumpet of Maya. The egotistical people become engrossed in it.

What is the power in the man-made music? It is all the false trumpeting of Maya. (M5 Gauri 178-2)

According to the teachings of the Saints, one should become absorbed in the melodies of the Name. Only the singing by one who really knows Him is fruitful. All else is useless.

The singing by him, who has faith in Him, alone is fruitful; he obtains honor in His Court. (M4 Suhi 734-15)

The Gurbani says that it is the rhythm and the dance of the Name or Shabd that banishes Maya and worldly attachment. All other music and rhythms are futile.

Let the mind dance strengthening its devotion, and keep the measure as Shabd wills; this is the true dance by which one loses love of the Maya. (M3 Majh 121-18)

The mind sings the song of Maya; it hears external musk for many ages. Without the Name the mind remains deluded. (M1 Asa 414-

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The true music is that of the inner Sound, which is played without hands and feet. It is beyond the seven harmonies of the outer music and through it the Truth is realized.

It is played without hands or feet. One is really blessed when one realizes this Shabd. (M1 Asa 412-10)

The Gurbani says that the melodies of the unending Music, which lead to salvation, can only be obtained from Saints by a rare devotee.

Your devotee sings Your praises and dances. He plays the unending music on the rebeck and tambourine, accompanied by cymbals and ankle-bells. He washes the feet of holy men and places the dust of their feet on his forehead. He surrenders body and mind to the Master and obtains the true wealth. He who listens with faith is freed from birth and death. Oh Nanak, an awakened devotee is freed from hell by such a dance. (M5 Asa 381-11)

Some Saints also used external music. They used it for gathering seekers and delivering their discourses, because there is a great attraction in it. But these Saints then turned the attention of the devotees to the inner Music by means of the outer music.

CHAPTER 10. ACTION WITHOUT DESIRE

What Is Action (Karma)?

Before we are able to understand the doctrine or the principle of desireless “action”, we must understand what really is meant by the word action. Action means something done. Before you do anything, there is a desire, an intention or an urge in your mind. The desire is first formed within the mind, and then it is executed outside. A simple example will make this clear:

A person got it into his head that he wished to kill another person. This constituted his intention or internal action. In order to execute or fulfil the desire, he took up a weapon and killed the man. This was the external execution of that internal action. The internal action emits certain currents (the effects are in one’s aura even if one does not execute the action externally), so that it makes a deep impression not only on his mind but also causes a disturbance in the environment around him.

We should therefore keep careful watch over our mind and consider how we can attain the state of desireless action. The teachings of the Saints and those contained in our religious Scriptures enable us to make the proper choice.

Action plays a great part in spiritual matters. A man has a physical body, but he acts through his mind. What-

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ever mental attitude one has, becomes manifested in action. "Thought is the keynote of our success", was said by the great philosopher, Emerson. Therefore, the actions of a person are governed by his thoughts. And good or bad actions are the results of the same degree of good or bad thoughts which he entertains.

Consequently, a person becomes a good person or a bad one as a result of his good or bad actions. And all this is done in accordance with one's own desires. Actions, therefore, mold our lives in virtuous or evil directions so long as we perform such actions with desire.

All religions have laid great emphasis on desireless actions. The Bhagavad Gita, or the Song of the Lord, is replete with teachings of desirelessness or desireless action. It says:

In this world one should take refuge in God after renouncing all desires and all actions arising there from.

Hindu philosophy also teaches that in order to attain salvation it is necessary to get rid of all desires and the fruits of all worldly actions caused by such desires. The same teaching of karmaless action is contained in all holy books.

In Chapter 6, Verse 29 of the Bhagavad Gita we find:

The aim of human life is that a man should put his mind to yogic action. He should have fraternal thoughts for all fellow beings and should consider himself to be present in all, while everything pervades in him.

Chapter 18, Verse 51, Lord Krishna says:

Oh Arjuna, under the influence of your ego you believe that you should not fight. This idea of yours is fallacious, because the action which you do not wish to perform, you will have to do under the compulsion of your nature.

It is most difficult to understand the basic principles of Karma Yog. You will find two viewpoints: One is that an action can only be performed through intention or desire, and without these no action can be executed (because whenever a person acts, it is difficult for him to get rid of the thought of reward or punishment). If, therefore, a person wishes to perform a desireless action, he can only do so by complete detachment from the world.

The Gita also says that it is not possible to give up the outer actions so long as the internal desires are not killed. Actually, a true Sanyasi (Anchorite) is one who has renounced all his desires. So long as a man has not achieved such a state of desirelessness, he should act and leave the results of all his actions in the hands of his Almighty Father. In that way he will not be subject to the consequences of his actions. In addition to this, he should engage himself in spiritual practice according to the instructions of a Perfect Master, because when he has made some progress on the Spiritual Path, his karmas will begin to disappear.

If it were necessary to renounce everything in this world in order to obtain the state of desirelessness, it would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for everyone to be able to do so. Very few indeed would be able to achieve it, and all praise would be due them.

At the moment, however, we have to consider how the large majority of people who regard such renunciation as beyond their reach, should achieve desireless karma. For such persons it is necessary to perform all action in the

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Name of God.

To obtain release from the fetters of karma, it would be necessary for such persons to engage in spiritual practice according to the instructions of a Perfect Master and to inculcate in themselves the spirit of devotion to the Lord and the Master.

Actually, all actions that are performed under the influence of the ego – whether good or bad – are equally responsible for the ties of attachment which bind an individual to this world. Even in the Gita it is stated that good and bad actions are equally responsible for binding a person. The fetters may be of iron or may be of gold, but both have the same effect of binding. Good actions may temporarily give us a reward in heaven, and bad actions may bring us the punishment of hell, but the bondage of transmigration remains. So long as a person considers himself to be the doer, he is weighed down by the shackles of karma.

A person who renounces all desires and the fruits of all his actions, becomes independent of all actions and their results.

Oh Arjun, one whose mind has no thought that 'I am doing it' and whose mind is not engrossed in worldly attachments and worldly desires, such a person – even if he should kill everybody – does not kill anybody and is not bound by the result of his action. (Gita, Chapter 18, Verse 17)

To say,

I am action-less is easy, but to be able to achieve this state is most difficult.

Oh Arjuna, renounce all self-interest and consider reward and punishment alike. Engage yourself in spiritual practice and then perform the action. Such action is free from effect, and you should perform all your actions in this manner. (Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 49)

A person who attains this state of mind is free from both sin and virtue. You should, oh Arjuna, always act in such a manner, because it is this type of action, which is called 'Karma Yog', the science of Karmaless (Re-action-less) Action. (Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 50)

Those persons who do karmas (actions) in this manner are freed from the ties of transmigration and attain the highest form of Salvation. (Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 51)

Then Arjuna asks:

Oh Lord, if you hold that detachment of mind is superior to karma, then why do you throw me into the whirlpool of actions?

Lord Krishna replies:

Man does not become karmaless (without action) by simply renouncing actions or by not doing them, because a man cannot live even for a second without doing some action. The mental currents create actions in man at all times. One who forcibly suppresses his physical self from performing actions is deceiving himself, for his mind cannot be restrained permanently in this manner. Therefore, that person is really great who conquers his mind by withdrawing it from worldly desires and thus acts with disinterest as far as the fruit of action is concerned, but interested in serving the Lord only. He performs his prescribed duties as indicated in his moral or religious code, because to act is far better than not to act. The body is given to us for the purpose of action, both internal and external. (Gita, Chapter 3, Verses 1, 4, 6, 7, 8)

Action is inherent in the mind and in the body. So long

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as the mind is not conquered, it is difficult, if not impossible, to be karmaless. Mind is restless. It is impossible to make it motionless even for a second. Therefore, it is impossible for anyone to be free from mental or physical action.

We have to act for the benefit of our own body and for the benefit of others. Otherwise, we would be a burden on society. Therefore, it is essential for human beings to act. History reveals that Saints have always practiced and approved of such actions. To remain “action-less” while acting is the main puzzle which must be clearly understood.

A person who has conquered his mind will be able to control his physical actions. One who is free from attachment and hatred is a genuinely karmaless person. The Gita lays great emphasis on the ideal of surrendering oneself to the Lord in order to become action-less.

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you give, whatever you worship, whatever penances you perform, Oh Arjuna, surrender them all to me, because by doing so you will be free from the consequences of actions (you will be action-less) and, traversing the path of renunciation, you will attain liberation and will merge in me. (Gita, Chapter 9, Verses 17, 18)

Surrendering Everything to the Lord

This is the first step towards the path of devotion because if everything is surrendered to Him in all humility, we are released from the load of karmas and become worthy of realizing Him within. But so long as the record of karmas is not obliterated internally by destroying our ego, we cannot go beyond the three gunas (qualities), and consequently cannot become actionsless. Actions are pure

only if performed without any desire for reward. And one who performs his actions in this manner is action-less even while acting. Such a person achieves God-Realization.

How can we attain this re-actionless state? How can a person be released from the bondage of attachment? How can the cycle of births and deaths, which is the necessary consequence of our actions, be made to cease? And who can understand the enigma of 're-actionless action' even while acting? All these questions are answered in the Scriptures by a simple reply to the effect that these things can be understood only if one becomes a Gurmukh.

What is a Gurmukh? - one who surrenders himself to a Guru (Master); that is, one who lovingly and implicitly follows the instructions of a Guru. The Guru bestows the gift of Naam, by the practice of which one goes beyond the reach of the three gunas (qualities), burns away his ego, and attains the true state of actionlessness. Thus, by the Grace of the Master, the load of karmas is lightened.

Karma or action, is of three kinds: Sanchit, Pralabdh and Kriyaman. Sanchit is the store karma; Pralabdh is the fate karma; and Kriyaman is the fruit karma. Store karmas are the results of actions of past lives, which have not yet been paid for nor assigned. Fate karmas constitute that portion of the results of actions in past lives which have been allotted to our present life, and on account of which this human body has been given to us, that is, for undergoing the results of good and bad karmas according to our fate. Kriyaman constitutes the new karmas resulting from actions which we perform in this life. In other words, while undergoing our destiny (fate karmas) we are daily incurring new karmas as well, the results of which will be undergone in the next life as fate, or part as fate and part

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as Sanchit, in some future life.

Our own actions are responsible for the good and the evil, the pleasure and the pain that we undergo, as well as for our being born into this world in a high or a low species. As ye sow, so shall ye reap. We are happy as a result of good actions, because we must bear the fruit of our own actions in thought, word and deed.

One cannot escape the result of his actions by performing them in secret. The consequences of such actions have to be borne some time or other. It is therefore clear that whatever weal or woe, joy or sorrow we experience, it is all due to our own actions, and we should not blame anyone else for it. How can a person hope to achieve good results out of bad actions? Anyone who does so is laboring under a mistaken idea.

Dhrita-rashtra (a king who was blind from birth) was once asked to what action in a past life he ascribed his blindness. He replied that he could see as far back as all the actions of his past one hundred lives, and in all these lives there was no act which could have resulted in his blindness. Lord Krishna then granted him his own inner vision for the purpose of seeing beyond his last one hundred lives. Only then did Dhrita-rashtra find that in well over a hundred lives back he had performed a bad deed for which he was born blind in this life.

What can one do about the store of karmas lying latent through hundreds of past lives? The cycle of karmas is constantly on the move, and the results of our actions are brought forth and have to be paid for even after hundreds and thousands of lives.

The ocean of karmas is fathomless. It is almost impos-

sible to obliterate all the store karmas. But when we meet a true Master, He clears the accounts of all our karmas by inculcating in us the spirit of doing actions without any thought of reward. When we do our spiritual practice according to the instructions of the Master and surrender ourselves completely to Him, we cheerfully undergo our fate karmas and create no new karmas to be undergone in a future life. The store karmas are gradually destroyed by the practice of Naam or Shabd. Sometimes the Master helps us in bearing the load of our fate karmas so that what might have been a fatal stab becomes a pinprick, with the result that we undergo our karmas without much pain or mental anguish.

In this manner all our karmas are eventually liquidated by the Grace of the Master. At last we are relieved of the load of karmas and achieve salvation by crossing the ocean of life. Only while living in this world and doing desireless actions do we become 'action-less'.

CHAPTER 11. PREVIOUS ACTIONS (KAR-MAS)

In India almost all religions and communities, namely, Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, and others, believe that a person undergoes pain or pleasure as a result of his own previous actions, and he bears the consequences of the actions performed in his present life, in the future.

Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans do not believe in the transmigration of the soul, nor in the Law of Karma. They believe that God is the Creator and the Lord of the entire universe. Just as a potter makes a pot or unmakes it at his will and the pot has no say in the matter, so is it up to God either to grant salvation to His creatures or to keep them all in ignorance. It is also their belief that since God is independent, nobody has the right or power to interfere with His actions nor does anybody know about His doings. These matters are beyond human ken and would best be left alone.

But the Saints in India have very clearly indicated the pros and cons of the Law of Karma. It is a theory of cause and effect, which operates throughout the universe. Emerson and other philosophers, and also professors of physics, have called it the Law of Compensation.

As ye sow, so shall ye reap.

Whatever a person speaks has a two-fold effect. One is

the action, and the other is the reaction. The reaction re-sounds in and near the speaker and creates the same type of thought-currents in his environment. Thus whatever thoughts – virtuous or wicked – emanate from him, they engender their exact resonance. This is an inviolable and unrelenting law, which operates in connection with both animate and inanimate objects alike. It cannot be erased.

Karma is also a process of working out one's credits and debits. If we take from somebody, we have to give to him in return, and under this principle fate karmas are formed; and by this our ups and downs in life can be explained. Pleasure and pain, poverty and riches, sickness and health, taking and giving, are all the result of such actions and have to be paid for. If one is not able to pay off in this life, he will have to do so in some future life.

A person dies but the scroll of his actions does not perish. The account of all such deeds is imprinted upon the soul which, after death, is still enveloped in an astral body. The soul leaves the body at death, but the accounts remain with it until they are cleared.

In Hindu philosophy this is known as Awagawan or Ghaursi, meaning the coming and going into the eighty-four lakh species of life. The Mohammedans call it 'Tanasukh'. Saints of all communities have accepted and preached the principle of transmigration. Shamas-i-Tabriz, a Muslim Saint, says:

I have grown a number of times as a blade of grass, and I have seen the eighty-four sides of life.

Shamas-i-Tabriz also says:

We live in this universe, and in various births we wear different

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garbs. Sometimes we come into one specie and sometimes into another, but we are all a part of the Creator. In other words, we came into this world and we left this world hundreds and thousands of times, because this universe is a workshop with exits and entrances.

Again:

Oh man, apart from my present parents, I have had nine fathers and have seen fourteen mothers. I have also seen myself happy in the devotion of my Lord. Even now, I have flown away from my real Abode. Oh my sons, I have lived in the seventh heaven with gods for many ages. If I were to tell you the entire story of my births and deaths, I would say that I appeared in seventy different species. And if you were to inquire from me the story of my past lives, then I would say that I have grown a number of times as a vegetable.

Further:

Transmigration is simply the coming of the soul into different species to enable it to carry out its allotted task according to its own karma. The soul emerges from the great ocean of life and returns to it. It is a drop from this ocean and assumes a human form, after which it goes back and merges itself into its Original Home.

Maulana Rumi says:

The Negative Power has created a vast web of transmigration, which is woven around three gunas, and in that net actions with their reactions play a very prominent part.

Tulsi Das says:

As is the action, so is the reward.

We are all bound down by our fate karmas. Many peo-

ple are good, and they perform good actions because of their fate karmas. Others are bad and perform bad actions on account of their fate karmas. They are all powerless to do otherwise. Even if an opportunity to do a good deed comes their way, they ignore it. They do not feel the necessity of the Master and the Lord.

Satsang is essential for spiritual progress. Good as well as bad persons are influenced by Satsang and make progress because of it, each according to the three gunas (qualities) predominant in him.

No specie below the human form is free to act. But human beings have freedom of action, consistent with their fate karmas. They can therefore take advantage of the power of freedom of action to a certain extent.

But the question arises as to how can one do it? By attending Satsang and by fully imbibing its teachings, we are able to gain freedom from some of our karmas. However, the shackles of our karmas, or the results of our own actions, are very strong. Even incarnations (gods and goddesses) are not free from them.

The Law of Transmigration is irrevocable, and the results of good or bad actions are borne even by Brahma himself.

In the time of Kabir Sahib, the great Sage, Ramanand, who was aware of all his previous lives, knew that since in a previous life he had impaled a rabbit on his spear and dragged it for some distance, he was to pay for that deed in his present life. It so happened that the same rabbit came back to this world as a human being and was a Minister to the King at the time. Whenever Ramanand thought of the dire consequences of his previous action, he would

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tremble and become unhappy. One day Kabir Sahib asked Ramanand the reason for his anguish. Ramanand then spoke out his heart and related the whole story of the previous life, as well as the fact that he was to die by being impaled on the spear of the Minister and dragged through the streets until the last breath of his life.

Kabir Sahib assured Ramanand that he would help him and then went to the house of the Minister and remained waiting outside his gate. One day the Minister asked Kabir the reason for his squatting there day after day, and Kabir Sahib narrated the whole story to him.

The Minister was also an evolved soul and had knowledge of this incident in a previous life. He assured Kabir Sahib that although it was not possible for him to remit the punishment of death for Ramanand, he would not have him dragged. When Ramanand was told about this, he heaved a sigh of relief. History tells us that in due course the country was invaded by Sikandar Lodi, and while Ramanand was sitting at his window, he was shot dead by the Minister during the attack on the city.

The principle of the karmic law, or action and reaction, has been described in the Adi Granth Sahib in terms of Palabdh or Fate karmas. It has been said that we are all helpless in the face of our fate karmas. Whatever a man does as a result of his Pralabdh, he does under the influence of his fate karmas. Such is the irrevocable law of the Negative Power.

Man performs such actions as have been imprinted on his forehead, as a result of his actions in previous lives, and he cannot evade them. (Adi Granth, Maru 5, 1102-17)

Guru Amar Das Ji has also said:

God Himself forces His creatures into destined paths of karmas (fruits of previous action) over which they have no control and which cannot be effaced. Whatever is destined to take place, must take place. (Adi Granth, Sorath 3, 601-9.)

We have to meet certain people, we have to part from others. This meeting and parting is also in conformity with the Law of Karma. It is on this basis that the functions in and of this world are performed. (Adi Granth, Jap Ji, 6-19)

It is also as a result of previous actions that we incarnate as human beings or as lower species. All this, as well as our meeting and parting, is in accordance with our fate karmas. Whatever has been ordained will be performed by us. But from Satsang we get solace and sustenance. We meet a Master only if we are destined to do so. It is through His noble company alone that we receive the Elixir of Naam and attain God-Realization.

Our inner eye is shut, and we have imprisoned ourselves behind high and thick walls. We make ourselves subject to the dictates of our own mind rather than to the advice of the Saints. If we are destined to meet a Master, we do meet him, surrender ourselves to him and follow His Path. We repeat the Holy Names and we love Him. As a result, we behold the Light of Naam within.

If your fate karmas justify meeting a Master, then alone we meet Him, and following the Path, we worship at His Feet and gain more merit than by going on the pilgrimage of sixty-eight holy places. (Adi Granth, Mah 1,147-13)

Only if it is in our fate do we get to a Master, do we accept Him as a Master, do we surrender ourselves completely to His Will, and also does He unite our souls with the Audible Life Stream. (Adi Granth, Suhu 3,757-2)

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We are powerless to change our destiny. Whatever is destined to our fate must happen. We shall meet the Master and remember the Lord only if we are destined to do so. People who follow the dictates of the mind have worldly thoughts and objects dominating them. And those who follow the dictates of a Master have the predisposition for God-Realization imprinted on their minds.

The cycle of transmigration is dreadful and it is beyond the comprehension of human intellect. The possibility of escape from fear of death is in the hands of the Supreme Creator, Sat Nam. The individual is incapable of breaking these fetters of karmas. Freedom from them lies in the hands of God, and by the Grace of the Lord alone are the shackles broken, for not even a small leaf can move without His Will. (Adi Granth, Mah 1, 59-16)

By our fate karmas do we move about in this world; undergo pleasure and pain; incarnate into different lives, take to slander and become arrogant and devoid of love and devotion. Consequently, we fail to achieve our only goal in this life, which is God-Realization. (Adi Granth Sahib, Sukhmani, Mah 5, 280-13)

There are people who are not destined to meet a Master in this life on account of their fate karmas. Such people would not care to meet a Master, even if He were in their very midst. As a result of such an attitude and on account of their fate karmas, they continue their wandering in the cycle of births and deaths in various species.

Fate karmas are the result of actions in our past lives, as is repeatedly and vividly brought out in the Adi Granth Sahib. Our fate is imprinted on our foreheads through these previous karmas.

What is really meant by “past karmas”? The Scriptures tell us that God gives us a physical body – either in the hu-

man form or in that of a lower specie – and we come into this world in order to reap the fruits of an allotted portion of our past karmas. In whatever manner He wishes us to do this task, we do exactly that way, because that is the way it is written in our fate.

Nobody can escape one's destiny or fate. God alone is free and He manages the whole world by His Command. (Adi Granth, Suhi Mah 4 736-3; Sorth Mah 1, 8, 59-8-19)

We understand that innumerable souls are living in Sat Lok – the region of Pure Spirit, free from dissolution, and also in the lower regions which are subject to dissolution. What was the previous karma or action, as a result of which these souls were placed in one region or the other? How did these regions come into existence? When were they created? The answers to all these questions are beyond the limits of time and space, and it is not possible for anybody to find them. We can only, in all humility, ask Him who is the Creator of this universe and who sent the souls into these regions. God is beyond causality, the law of cause and effect; therefore we cannot comprehend Him.

Hafiz says:

You should think only of the bliss which you get from the Nam of your Master, and should pay no attention to the secrets of this universe nor of the regions beyond, for all this is beyond the ken of intellect.

If one is in a house that is on fire, he will first think of the quickest way of getting out of it before enquiring as to who set the house on fire and when it was set on fire. The answers to these questions can be determined after he has escaped from the burning house. In the same manner, we can find the answers to these questions after we have

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achieved our goal. The only thought that should occupy us at present is how to terminate this bondage and attachment.

Then why should we ask, "Why is this Path?" "Why is that Goal?" "How and when were this Goal and this Path made?" All this will be solved automatically when we reach our destination. At present, the only possible answer to all these questions that arise in the mind is that God created all this out of His own Free Will.

Whatever actions are performed by the souls that have been sent to the regions of dissolution, their fruit will constitute their fate, written in indelible letters by the pen of our Lord God. And by that fate the souls have been sent into the upper or lower regions. It has become their destiny as a result of actions performed in their previous lives. It can be said with certainty that the souls which descended into the regions of dissolution and then ascended to the highest regions by the Grace of God, are superior to the souls residing in the upper regions.

The Scriptures of the Muslims and the Christians have stated that God has created man superior to all gods and goddesses, who must bow before him. This is a concession that He has granted to the souls that degenerated from Him into the human form.

Action is in the hands of the one who performs it, but the Grace and the Blessing of God are the right of only a few, gained through His Mercy alone. It is no doubt true that human beings have freedom of action to a certain extent, but the key of such actions is in His Hands. And so long as we do not have His Grace, we poor mortals have no power to achieve anything, less so to realize Him.

It follows therefore that the Originator and the root of all actions is God Himself, and He cannot be realized by our own efforts alone. We can realize Him only within ourselves by the Grace of a Master. Grain is ground when put between the two parts of a grindstone, except the few grains that fall into the central shaft and thus are saved from being ground into flour. Similarly, we are saved from the cycle of births and deaths if we cling to God and enjoy His Grace and Blessing.

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BOOK 2

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BOOK 2

CHAPTER 1. THE LORD

What is God?

Is there any such Being in reality? What is the power that enlivens this universe and makes it carry on according to a plan? Is that power conscious or inert? If it is really inert, how then are the sun, the moon and the stars all revolving according to law? How are we related to that power? Whence did this universe originate, when did it come into being and how did such a thing happen? Such questions always face every individual. Book after book has been written on the subject. Many a man has had his day here and has departed. Many are still pondering over these questions but they remain ever fresh.

Centuries have passed in wrangling over the hows and whys of philosophy. But the discussion about God is still where it was in the beginning.

The mind of man is capable of great flights of imagination but the doubts it does not shed.

The subject of God is not comprehended, and man continues to wander in the dense forest of his intellect.

There are theists and atheists. According to the latter,

the existence of God is a mere fabrication of the timid. It is just a device to hide their cowardice, and a prop to lean on. Because God is not visible either with telescopes or microscopes the atheists say that He can have no existence. Both the believers who believe in a God about whom they have heard or read, and the non-believers, are unhappy.

Khwaja Hafiz has gone to the extent of saying:

Talk of Wine and the Singer, delve not into the mysteries of the world; no one has solved, nor will ever solve this riddle through reasoning.

Talk of the Master and his Name (the Wine) alone. Do not delve into the secret of the universe, for no one has up till now solved this riddle, nor will anyone ever do so by means of intellect and reasoning alone.

All these questions are within the limits of time and space and the sphere of Maya (delusion). There is no answer to them; but in spite of all this they persist in the mind. People often say that if God-realization is so difficult, why should we strive for it. The answer to this question is that just as a hungry man cannot live without food, similarly we cannot live without the Lord.

St. Augustine has said:

Thou, Oh! God, hast made us unto Thyself, and the heart of man is ever restless until it rests in Thee.

People remember God for a variety of reasons. Lord Krishna, in the Bhagvad Gita (the Song Celestial), has said:

Four categories of persons pray to the Lord, namely, the sufferers, the pleasure-seekers, the devotees and the wise: the sufferers for the

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alleviation of their suffering, the pleasure-seekers for the gratification of their pleasures, the devotees for the attainment of knowledge, and the wise for the realization of His beatitude.

The reply of Perfect Saints to questions concerning whence this universe originated, and when and how, is that we should approach the Creator Himself for the answer. Those who have realized Him have annihilated their self. They have gone beyond the limits of time and space and the spheres of cause and effect.

Oh mind, visit the place where you can see the Beloved; give up this world so that you may see the other world.

Rise above your body so that you may see the Sustainer of all. Get out of this world so that you may see the world above.

He, the Lord, is true. His creation is true. He Himself knows His design and purpose. (Gauri M5, Sukhmani 284-19)

The created one cannot know the design of the Creator; Oh Nanak, that alone happens which He Wills. (Gauri M5, Sukhmani 285-1)

On realizing Him these questions are automatically answered.

These interesting topics can be discussed at leisure when we reach the destination. At our present stage only those questions are necessary which relate to the path leading to Him. If you wish to know here and now, enquire of those who have reached the spiritual regions where the Lord is manifest. God cannot be known by reasoning, the reading of books and philosophical discussions. Doubtless, through them we can get an idea of His Reality and the existence of His power. But in order to re-

alize Him as a fact we will need to experiment in the laboratories of the Saints and experience Him for ourselves. Some scientists say there is no proof of His existence. They do not even feel the necessity of believing in Him.

A study of ancient history and religious Scriptures shows that the ancient people worshipped the forces of nature such as the moon, the sun and so forth in order to strengthen their belief in God. They also coined different names for Him and as a result the world has become entangled in the cobwebs of these names.

Saints and holy men do not involve us in the verbiage of these names but tell us that no name can describe Him and that there is no use in quarreling over the different names. All of them are His names. We call water 'eau' in French, 'hudor' in Greek, 'ma' in Arabic, 'jal' in Hindi, 'water' in English and so on. It makes little difference if we use any of these terms. But our thirst can only be quenched when we get the actual water itself. Guru Nanak says:

What can poor Nanak say? All are praising the same One. Nanak lives at the feet of all. He praises all Your names. (Rag Basant M1, 1168-14)

Guru Gobind Singh has mentioned more than a thousand names of the Lord in the Jaap Sahib. He, however, emphasizes the necessity of understanding the real significance of the names, and advises that one should go beyond them and realize the "Named One" who is the object of all of them.

As has been mentioned before, correct information about God can only be had from those who have realized Him in the transcendent regions, for their knowledge is

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not merely a matter of imagination nor has it been gathered from religious Scriptures or hearsay. They have seen Him with their own eyes. They have, by expanding and illuminating their consciousness, experienced Him and have made others experience Him. Even today they can make the seekers after God realize Him.

Where is God?

Ignorant persons think that God lives beyond the skies or beneath the depth of the oceans. Great souls realize Him in their hearts, and Perfect Saints see Him everywhere, both within and without. Saints and holy men say that He pervades the entire universe and that the universe is in Him.

The world is the abode of the True One. He dwells in it. (Asa Var M2, 463-13)

This universe is His body in which He dwells. He pervades every atom in the same way as the soul pervades every pore of the body and is enabling it to function. The body is reduced to dust when the soul leaves it. Similarly, this universe is destroyed when He withdraws His power from it. The Akash (Ether) from which this universe is made and the Prana (Life Energy) which runs it, are powers created by the Lord. He is the Creator, the Sustainer and the Destroyer of the entire universe.

God is Beyond Mind and Intellect

The infinite Universe of universes and worlds is before our eyes. But there is present behind it an indescribable power which is running the entire "show". Even those who do not admit the reality of religion and say that man cannot know God's nature and form, do not deny the

existence of this Supreme Power. The well-known philosopher, Herbert Spencer, came to the conclusion that Reality is neither known nor can it be known by anyone. He wanted to discover the Reality through intellect and reasoning. But Reality is beyond the reach of the mind and the senses. His conclusion, therefore, that the Reality is not conceivable by the mind and the senses, was inevitable. Every phenomenon of the world can be explained by reason, but in so far as access to spiritual regions is concerned, reason is useless. Spencer had, however, to admit the existence of Reality and in the January, 1884 issue of the monthly magazine "Nineteenth Century", he wrote as follows about the ultimate cause of this Universe.

There is an eternal and immortal power and everything has manifested from the same.

The German philosopher Kant became impatient and gave up even thinking about the Unknowable Reality. John Stuart Mill, in "Three Essays on Religion", says that whatever experience tells us about the First Cause and what we understand by the word 'Cause' is that the primal and immanent essence that pervades all causes is nothing but force. These learned men are of the view that this universe originated from an Indescribable Force and that that Force is eternal and immortal.

In the Brihadarnayak Upanishad, Rishis say:

Reality is beyond the reach of any possible description in terms of form and matter, nor can it be described in these terms. Just as it is impossible to extract oil from sand or to quench thirst with wine, similarly it is useless even to conceive that Brahm (the Lord) can be known through learning.

In this Upanishad there is a short aphorism "Ned Neti"

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(Not this, not this). It is repeated four times. Its meaning is that what is described is not Brahm or the Lord. Or in other words, what is beyond name and form is Brahm. As He is without qualities and indescribable, He is not a subject for these eyes, nor can mind and speech have access to Him.

Guru Nanak also says that He is beyond the realm of thought:

He cannot be conceived however hard one may think.

He is the Power and is All-Pervading

This primal force is eternal and immortal. What is the proof that there is only one power and that this world was not created as a result of the interaction of more than one force? It may suffice to refer to the view of John Stuart Mill that this force is really one and is homogeneous and is present in this universe in a certain quantity which neither increases nor decreases. This force is all-pervading and is running the entire great Universe of universes.

The lovers are many but the Beloved is one. Religions and creeds are different, but all have the same object.

In all the religious Scriptures He is not described as confined to any one race, religion or community. He is described as “the Lord of all universes.” It is stated that all things have emanated from Him. He pervades everywhere. No place or thing whether sentient or insentient is without His Light.

Our Lord or Father is one. We are all His sons. Thus we are all brothers. These eyes of flesh cannot see Him. The eyes with which He can be seen are different and to see

Him they have to be opened or awakened.

*Oh Nanak, those eyes with which He can be seen are different.
(Maru Var M5, 1100-1)*

Shamas-i-Tabriz, the great thirteenth century Persian Saint, says:

You should see Him with your own eyes, you should hear His voice with your own ears. One should see the Lord with one's inner eyes and hear Him with one's inner ears.

This Power is Conscious and Not Inert

This power is conscious and not inert. What is the nature of this power? Is it a blind force? Or is it related to any conscious being? If it is accepted that life originated from inert power, then it would mean that conscious power has originated from inert force. In the Encyclopedia Britannica, writing on Biology, Huxley has stated that the characteristics of a conscious being make it distinct from all other matter. According to the knowledge that we possess at present, it is not known how life originated from matter. It is stated at another place,

The answer to the query as to how life originated, is that we know nothing about it.

According to the laws of logic the same qualities that exist in the original can be found in that which is created out of it, in the process of evolution. For example, heat applied to water produces steam. There is nothing in the steam which is not to be found already in water and heat. Therefore, if there was no consciousness present in the creative originating power, then from where has consciousness come into this universe?

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It can be said that it is not necessary that the resultant should have the qualities of the original. For example, lime and turmeric are not red in color, yet if the two are mixed together, red color results. By mixing five or six ingredients we can produce a medicine. The fact is that by chemical analysis we can separate the ingredients of any particular substance, but can we in a similar manner produce consciousness from inert matter, or can we obtain matter by analyzing consciousness into its ingredients, or can the mixing of particular atoms of the body in particular proportions result in producing life? This is impossible. We should, like Huxley, admit humbly that we know nothing in this respect.

The well-known American philosopher Will Durant, in his book "The Mansions of Philosophy" states:

In the heart of matter, giving it form and power, is something not material, possessed of its own spontaneity and life; and this subtle, hidden and yet always revealed vitality is the final essence of everything that we know.

What is this essence? This is the omnipotence of the Lord, which is beyond the reach of mind and intellect, as has already been mentioned. The resultant can have different qualities from the ingredients, but its essential nature cannot be different from that of its cause. By mixing lime and turmeric another color can be produced, but the essence of the reality does not change.

Similarly, if there had been no consciousness in the Original Cause, then there would be no consciousness in the universe. There is another difference between the conscious and the inert. A conscious being feels its consciousness itself, while in the case of an inert being, its existence

is felt by others only. It is only the conscious being who feels the existence of the inert.

Consciousness is for the conscious being himself, and the existence of the inert is for others.

The qualities of the resultant are in accordance with the qualities of the cause. Consciousness can only come from consciousness. The soul is a particle of the Over-Lord (God).

Oh Kabir, It (soul) is a particle of the Lord. (Kabir, Rag Gond, 871-10)

The powers that exist in the soul also exist in the Lord. The soul is consciousness and the Lord is the storehouse of consciousness. The soul is capable of thinking, and the Lord is an ocean of thoughts. The soul has intelligence and knowledge, and the Lord is the embodiment of knowledge and the treasure-house of intelligence. The soul is full of love, and the Lord is the source of all love. We are made in His image. Every particle is a part of the whole, and so are we.

There is little difference between the views of the sages Ramanuja and Shankaracharya. The followers of Shankaracharya call their system Advait (monism) and the followers of Ramanuja call their system Vashisat Advait (qualified monism). Shankaracharya said,

All is consciousness. It is one (there is nothing except it).

Ramanuja also admits that there is nothing besides consciousness but says that it has two aspects, one conscious and one inert. If God were without these two aspects, he says, then the inert and the conscious would not have

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manifested in the universe. The two are one like the two joined parts of a pea.

This has been so explained in the Upanishads also. The real substance in the beginning was like a pea, the two parts of which were joined together. When difference developed between the two parts, the one became Purusha (conscious being) and the other, Prakriti (matter). By their interplay the universe came into being. The real substance is consciousness. Consciousness was generated by consciousness.

What is God and What is Our Relationship With Him?

The Lord is the great storehouse of consciousness. He is the embodiment of reason and the treasure-house of intelligence. He is the repository of love and compassion. We are parts of Him. He is the whole. The essence of which our souls is made, its fountain source, is called the Lord. If we are a drop of consciousness, He is the Ocean of Consciousness. We are a ray of the essence of consciousness and He is the sun of the essence of consciousness. Every particle is a part of the whole. Our real substance is a part of that whole which is called the Lord.

The Scriptures also proclaim that son is the soul of father. Just as a tree produces seeds and a seed grows into a tree, similarly all beings spring from God. All living beings are of the same essence as the Lord. They are His children. Just as a child is a part of the flesh of the mother, it lives in her womb and is brought up there, similarly we are born in God, are brought up in Him, and are connected with Him in the same way as a child is with the mother. In fact he is never separate from her.

The mother's connection with the child is natural. He may be unwise or ignorant, but the mother takes care of him. In fact, she is obliged to do so. A mother is never neglectful of her child. Because of her genuine love, she cannot be indifferent to him.

We have an even stronger connection with the Lord. We are particles of the Lord. The relationship between us and the Lord is that of a part to the whole. There is no distinction between the ocean and its waves. There is no difference between the sun and its rays. The Lord is never unmindful of us even for a moment. He is always looking after us. We have never been separated from Him. He is always with us and always pervades our entire being.

*You are a mighty river. I am a fish. How can I know Your limits?
(Sri Rag M1, 25-6)*

If we become childlike, the Lord Himself watches over us. But when we grow in our intellect and begin to reason and ruminate, then we feel unhappy. If we turn to Him and hold fast to His garment, live in the world but not let go our hold of Him, as a child does with his mother, we will be happy. Beg of Him, eat and drink and cry out,

Oh mother! I am Yours, whether dutiful or otherwise. I am in Your lap. Where else could I go if I left You?

This should, however, be said with love, truth and simplicity. There should be no cleverness about it. The waywardness of upright children is forgiven. The Lord also relishes love, simplicity and faith.

The simple realize the Lord. (Kabir, Gauri, 324-15)

Continue to be children of God. Do not surrender the

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rights of your precious patrimony. Know the Lord as immanent and conscious. Remember Him as a living entity. Have devotion. He is both with and without qualities and is also beyond them. He who is with form is the formless One also.

Oh Nanak, He is gross as well as subtle. (Gauri M5, Sukh 281-18)

He appears to His devotees in various forms. Just as in the ocean icebergs are formed owing to extreme cold, similarly, owing to the intensity and magnetism of devotion the formless appears with form but with the rising of the sun of knowledge the iceberg (form) dissolves into formless water.

Some say He is formless, others say He is with form. Some regard Him as father, others as mother or friend or husband. You may remember Him in any role or relationship. There need be no dispute about it. They all mean the same thing although in different words. Create love for Him in your heart.

The prophet Moses once went into a jungle. He found there a shepherd sitting and remembering God.

Oh Lord, he was saying, If You had been a child I would have fed You with milk.

I would have combed Your hair and would have clothed You with woolen garments. He was wholly engrossed in contemplation of the Lord in this fashion. Moses said to him, "You are an infidel." On hearing this the shepherd was taken aback and cried bitterly. He said,

Oh Lord, I have not been courteous to You. Oh! What shall I do? Thereafter the prophet Moses went his way. Later when he went

into a trance and met the Lord he was told:

Oh Moses! The learned ones' ways of devotion are different from those whose hearts and souls are consumed in love's fire. You have been sent to unite and not to separate. The united one you have broken away from me. (Maulana Rumi)

Meanwhile the shepherd while still crying, also went into a trance. And lo! God appeared to him and encouragingly said to him,

I will drink your milk. I will put on your clothes and eat whatever you offer me.

Presently, Moses went to the shepherd and said to him,

Please forgive me for what I said. God is very pleased with you.

At this the shepherd replied,

Oh Moses, the One who came to you has visited me also.

Remember Him with innocent love.

God as Visualized by the Saints

Do the Saints believe in monotheism or dualism or trinity? Saints do not believe in duality or trinity. They look upon monotheism from a realistic point of view. Does the mere belief in 'One' amount to monotheism? If the matter is examined carefully then the belief in 'One' leads to a conception of trinity.

The thing to be conceived
The person who conceives;and
The belief.

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Where there is a conception of three, monotheism cannot exist. He who tries to establish monotheism by reasoning, in fact demolishes it.

To reason out monotheism is to kill it. (Shamas-i-Tabriz)

If there is one and only one, there can be no dialogue by the one. A dialogue can only take place if there are two. One would then talk, taste or smell the other. If there is only one, who will hear or smell or taste or say? The Saints have, therefore, drawn attention to the One Reality.

Kabir says:

If I say one, He is not so. If I say two, it would be blasphemy. He is what He is, says Kabir after profound thought.

If He is said to be one, then He is not the only one; for the word 'one' cannot be used unless there are two entities. If they are said to be two, both become limited and localized. Whether we use the words Rehman (Merciful) and Shaitan (Devil), or Dayal (Merciful) and Kal (Negative Power) both are limited. This leads to variation in principle.

Mind, speech and intellect have no place here. When He was hidden in Himself He was neither one nor two. He had no form or attributes. Exactly what He was cannot be described. The hidden One can only be described when He becomes manifest. In the unmanifested state He was inconceivable, unknowable, and nameless. He was neither the Doer nor the nature, nor the Creator. There was neither Creator nor the creature, nor even the creation. This state can be realized to a certain extent in deep sleep. The Saints have made this state (nameless) as their ideal.

The Gurus have described the Supreme Lord or the nameless Being as Wad Purush (Great Lord), Soami (Lord), Khasam (Owner), Adi Niranjan (Immaculate One), and Nirankar (Formless One).

You are all-pervading. What shall I say; hear You my Master. You are the Great All-Wise. (Sri Rag M5, 51-13)

You are the Great Lord; You are Unperceivable and Invisible; in our search we find You unfathomable. You are yonder of the yond; and You alone know Yourself. (Kanara M4, 1296-7)

Sing the praises of the Lord; you will have all your wishes fulfilled. Nanak remembered the Lord; He was redeemed. (Bilawal M5, 848-15)

He is the Lord of myriads of universes, the Sustainer of all life. He takes care of all and supports all; but the universe acknowledges not His beneficence. (Sorath M5, 612-6)

You are my shield, oh Lord, so I think not of any other; and I remain carefree leaning on Your Name. (Ramkali M5, 884-4)

Sublime and most high is the Lord's Court, unfathomable and beyond thought. Says Nanak, it is through the Lord's Name that one is blest with Glory. (Maru M5, 1003-14)

Oh, our infinite Lord, You who are from the beginning of the beginning, oh, our primal Lord, our Immaculate One, I reflect on how to be attuned to You, oh, embodiment of Truth. (Maru M1, 1023-11)

He is beginning less and an Immaculate One: He is without any attributes. He pervades all and yet He is separate from all. (Maru M5, 1075-13)

Tulsi Sahib also described Him as the Lord and by origin of all.

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Oh Lord! You are the origin of all.

The Saints say that the Lord's abode is very beautiful and is a resting place for the devotees. The Saints wholly and solely depend upon Him.

The Lord's abode is beautiful; in it abide the devotees. They live in this hope. (Sri Rag M5, 80-19)

The Lord's station is also called Hari Rai (Lord of Lords) and Maha Dayal (Most Merciful) in the Gurubani.

He is the sustainer of the world, most beneficent, most wise and most merciful is He. (Gauri M5, Chhand 249-7)

That great Lord is invisible, infinite, imperceptible and most wonderful. He is self-existent and self-luminous.

You are the merciful Lord. You are not subject to death. You are indescribable. You are unknowable and wonderful. (Mam M1, 1038-15)

He is invisible, infinite and unfathomable. He is beyond death and deeds. He is self-existent, unborn and without caste. He is beyond attachment or delusion. (Sorath M1, 597-5)

The Lord is beyond time and timelessness, high and separate. All the creation is under His orders, yet He is not the doer. He is beyond form and formlessness. He is omnipresent and the sustainer of all; creator, immovable, all-powerful, imperishable, redeemer of sinners, unknowable, inaccessible, without beginning, eternal and pure consciousness. He is everlasting, invulnerable, a storehouse of knowledge and nectar, without attributes, kind to devotees, self-existent, apart from all, an ocean of sweetness and is omnipresent. He is the embodiment

of Shabd, the Holy Spirit or the Sound Current, and His Name sustains all. The Name has the qualities of the named One. His abode is described by the Gurus as Nijghar (Own Home), Nishchal Dham (Immovable Abode), and Param Pad (Supreme Abode). He partakes both of time and timelessness and form and formlessness. Whatever is seen is His manifestation.

Guru Nanak has described Him in Jap Ji as follows:

The One, of form the Primal Sound (Om), of name the eternal True, of being the Creator, without fear, without enmity, Timeless existence, Unborn, Self-existent with the Grace of the Master.

It is impossible to describe that great Lord, who is nameless, ever-existent, the immaculate one, and without attributes. He is beyond mind and speech. He cannot be understood or known by intellect and imagination. He is experienced by the soul only when the mind and intellect are stilled. He has been described as 'One'. This is a clue to His form. Ancient sages have described Him as OM. By contemplating upon the component letters of OM, the gods Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh (Shiva), the powers of creation, sustenance and destruction were conceived, and the foundation of the Hindu trinity was laid. The Gurus however, take the figure 1 or the word One to represent that existence which is beyond description and utterance. He who is One and who has no partner. The placing of the figure 1 before OM shows that One does not refer to the trinity. The One is considered superior to all because when the timeless One conceived the idea of creation, there emanated from Him a sound which resembled the sound of Om. Muslim holy men describe this sound as 'Ho' and say that from it the universe was created.

It is His Dhun-atmik Naam (Unutterable or Inexpress-

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ible Word). Uniting ourselves with it is the means by which we may meet the Lord.

Onkar is the form in which the infinite Creator Himself manifested. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 37, Pauri-2)

Bhai Gurdas again says:

The Absolute One manifests, the Figure I is His manifestation. It makes me sit near Him. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 3, Pauri-15)

The One grew and Onkar took form. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 6, Pauri-4)

The One grew and Onkar took various forms. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 18 Pauri-1)

The self-born is One; there was motion in Him, and it produced Onkar. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 22, Pauri-1)

That One is inconceivable. Know Him to be the Reality. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 22, Pauri-14)

All this creation has come out of Ekankar (One). He who understands the secret of "I" thereby becomes the Creator and the Lord.

Know the secret of the One. Become the Creator and the Lord. (Ramkali M1, 930-18)

The secret of "I" is revealed in those pure hearts whose bodies become motionless, whose minds and senses are stilled, and whose attention (Surat) and sight (Nirat) become one-pointed. In other words, when the mind and intellect become calm, salvation is the result.

He who serves the One becomes emancipated. His comings and goings cease. (Ramkali M1, 930-12)

*The Gurmukh attains the One. But such a one is rarely found.
(Ramkali M1, 930-15)*

*He who knows the One to be One, He knows all, both here and
hereafter. (Gauri M4, 281-11)*

Sat Naam (True Name of God) is that truth which does not perish in the three periods of time (past, present and future). It is always true and does not change. It is the Personal Name of the Lord.

The fifth Guru in the line of Guru Nanak has said:

*The tongue utters Your definitive Name. Sat Naam is Your age-old
Original Name. (Maru M5, 1083-12)*

All other names are definitive ones which describe some quality or virtue, as for example He is called the Creator because He creates, or the Merciful Lord because He showers mercy.

To understand Sat, commonly translated as Truth, is very difficult. It is different from truth and untruth. Truth and untruth are a pair of opposites and receive light from each other. The Gurus, however, speak of that Sat which is self-luminous and self-sufficient. Both truth and untruth do not exist there. It is that Sat which sustains both the truth and the untruth. The Guru Granth Sahib has clearly stated:

*True, True, True is He, nay, not one is separate from True Purush.
(Gauri M5, 250-17)*

This Sat is experienced when the mind and senses are stilled and he who gets this experience knows the Creator.

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*To him who knows Him all is Truth. Oh Nanak, He alone is True.
(Gauri M5, 285-8)*

*He who believes in God as Truth in his heart, knows the essence of
the Creator, the Cause of causes. (Gauri M5,285-9)*

According to the dictionary the word Naam (Name) comes from a Sanskrit root meaning 'known, deterministic and definitive.' The word by which we call a person or thing in order to distinguish him or it from others is called its name. But in Guru Granth Sahib by Naam(Name) means that all-pervading power which governs all universes and regions, which is the fountain-head of all knowledge and contemplation, and which sustains all. Guru Arjan sings praises of this Naam as follows:

*Naam sustains all knowledge and contemplation. Naam sustains
all skies and underworlds. Naam pervades all the worlds. (Gauri
M5, 284-12)*

The Lord manifests Himself as Naam. Sat is a wave of that eternal existence. The soul gets connected with it and enjoys its bliss. The Lord is one; but when it reveals itself, it is realized as Sat Naam (True Name). The soul experiences it by uniting with its definite and indivisible existence. This is neither a matter of talk nor of mere imagination. Saints and seers experience it and they admit that they do so. There is no room for doubt in the matter.

The Supreme Lord (Karta Purush) is the Creator of the universes. In the external world, one makes an article from some material, but He requires no help or aid from any quarter for creating the universe. He is the Supreme Being of all and is capable of doing everything. He creates all out of His own Being. Therefore, He is the real Creator.

Some believe that this universe came into being of itself. But others believe in God, soul and matter as three primary entities which are interdependent. They may be eternal within their respective spheres. The Saints, however, say that all have been created by the One and that He is the Cause and Creator of all. In the external world, a potter is dependent upon clay for making his pottery wares. But the One does not have to depend on anything in order to be a Creator. All are created by Him. He Himself is the Creator. He creates the universe by His Will. He is all-powerful and can do everything. In the mundane world the three powers, Brahma (Creator), Vishnu (Sustainer), and Mahesh (Shiva) (Destroyer) rely on His Will for their working.

Therefore, it is necessary to give up the created and serve the Creator. He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of all.

*You know not that One. You mistake the created for the Creator.
(Bhai Gurdas, Var 15, Pauri-7)*

Fearless (Nirbhai) – That One is without fear because He is the most powerful being and creator of all. Everything else has been created by Him. They are not His equals and so He has no fear. No god or goddess or incarnation can be His equal.

*Oh Nanak, He is fearless and absolute. He created all other beings.
(Asa Var M1, 464-16)*

By contemplating on Him, the devotees also become fearless. Give up fear and live fearlessly, merge in Him who created you. (Gauri M5, 285-10)

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Without enmity (Nirvair): He could have feelings of enmity only if He had others like Him. But when He Himself is the warp and woof of the universe, then against whom can He feel enmity? Those who praise that One become devoid of enmity and hatred. Their hearts become calm. If anyone entertains feelings of enmity towards them, the waves of his hatred striking against their pure hearts return to the sender making him even more miserable.

He is always without enmity. However sinful you may be, give up pride and do not be afraid of taking shelter with Him. Do not consider Him a dreadful being. He is the embodiment of love. He is free from all defects.

Timeless Being: He is deathless. He is beyond the reach of time and death. Time has three components: past present and future. The entire universe is confined within these limits. All take birth, grow and die within them. That One is, however, beyond the sphere of time. He is immortal, unborn and eternal, for He is without beginning or end. When the “past” and “future” do not exist in Him, how can He have any “present”? He is always the same. He is beyond time, space and matter. All are subject to Kal, the Negative Power, but He is Akal, timeless.

*You are the destroyer of Kal. You are the destroyer of Maha Kal.
You are the deathless One. (Patshahi 10)*

Such a description might lead one to doubt the existence of such a Being. The Gurus say He is a Muni or Being or Existence. He gives light to all and can be called ‘Wajud’ in Persian or ‘Being’ in English.

Unborn – Ajuni: When we give Him a form, we get an idea of His being subject to birth and death. In order to remove this doubt, He is described by the Gurus as Un-

born Ajuni. He is never conceived in a womb. He who is free from conception and birth is also free from death. By worshipping the birthless, one can also attain the state of birthlessness.

Self-existent – Sebham: He is self-existent. He is self-manifested and does not have to depend for His existence on anyone. He is without a cause. All receive light from Him, but He is self-conscious and self-effulgent.

Grace of Master – Guru Parsadi: The word Guru comes from the root Gri which means Shabd (Sound). He who gives the Shabd is the Master. Parsadi means that which is obtained through Grace. Gur Parsadi means that the above mentioned aspect of the Lord can only be experienced through the Grace of the Master. The Grace of the Master is the means of obtaining it.

One can gain union with the Omnipotent Lord by repetition of Holy Names, by faith, by service, by Satsang, and it can be obtained by the practice of Shabd the Holy Spirit, Word or Sound Current, as enjoined by the Master.

This union is obtained by a very fortunate devotee only and that too only if it is ordained. The Lord can be realized only by controlling the mind. Mere performance of good deeds, austerities, pilgrimages and holy baths leads nowhere.

Supreme bliss can be had by contemplating on the Lord or by remembering Him. Egotism is annihilated and the accumulated sins of past births are wiped out. One acquires miraculous powers and receives honor in the Court of the Lord. All his wishes are fulfilled. Fear of death is banished and salvation is gained. Inner Light, tranquility and the blossoming of the lotus of the heart are experi-

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enced. Merging the spark in the Flame, man transcends the cycle of birth and death and no longer returns to the world of phenomena.

The Lord of Lords (Hari Rai)

The Gurus have mentioned Hari Rai a number of times. Hari here does not mean any God or incarnation.. Hari refers to the Supreme Lord and Nameless Being. Just as it has been mentioned in connection with 'Ekankar' (the One), the Lord (Hari) is One. Similarly, it is true that there is no difference between Hari Rai, Soami and Anami Purush (the Nameless Highest Diety). One should praise Ekankar the One and take shelter with Hari Rai (the Lord of Lords).

Praise the One, the One Lord; contemplate on Him. Praise the virtues of Gobind and Gopal; take shelter with Hari Rai. (Gauri M5, 296-12)

He is a vast reservoir of Nectar, inaccessible, infinite, redeemer of sinners, refuge of devotees, compassionate, and knower of all hearts. He is the emancipator of the Saints, and his abode is the highest abode or the original abode. He has myriads of names, but His value cannot be assessed on the basis of these names. These names are not adequate to describe Him.

The Names of the Lord are infinite; He is unknowable. But the wise considered His virtues; they could not evaluate Him. (Kalyan M4, 1319-3)

He is, therefore, also called the Nameless Being. Maulana Rumi has said:

I begin with the name of Him who has no name. Call Him by any

name and He will respond. (Maulana Rumi)

His law is written large everywhere. No one can defy it. He is watching over all. He can be realized only by a rare fortunate soul. Only a true devotee, but not an egoist, can meet Him.

Hari Rai can be realized through the Grace of the Master, by rendering service to Him, and keeping His company. On realizing Har Rai, one gets inner Light. One's wishes are fulfilled. One obtains bliss and is freed forever from the cycle of birth and death.

The Immaculate One (Adi Niranjan)

The Gurus use at places the words Adi Niranjan to describe the Lord. Adi Niranjan is the Lord, the Supreme Master, ageless and boundless.

He is from the very beginning, He has existed through the ages, He has no limits; He is immaculate. Such is our Lord. (Maru M1, 1023-11)

He is formless. The entire universe was created by His Will. He pervades all. He has no caste or color.

He is beginningless and immaculate; He is without any attributes. He pervades all and yet He is separate from all. (Maru M5, 1075-13)

At the abode of Adi Niranjan there is neither sun nor moon. Nor can we call it darkness nor light. He is engrossed in His own bliss.

There is no sun or moon; Adi Niranjan rests in bliss. (Kabir, Bhai-ron, 1162-14)

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He is pure and has no partner. To meet Him one has to make the Lord dwell in one's heart. Then alone will the love for Lord be awakened.

Those who have received school and college education know that this earth, with the moon and the planets, is revolving round the sun. The sun, like other solar systems, is revolving round another luminous entity, far brighter than itself. Similarly, this three-tiered universe, with its Lord, is revolving around that Sat Purush (True Being) and that Niranjan (the Immaculate One) in its turn is going round its source, the Adi Niranjan. The Adi Niranjan (the Eternal Immaculate One) is beyond time and timelessness, form and formlessness. Adi Niranjan and Hari Rai are the names of the same Supreme Lord.

Ekankar – The One

Adi Niranjan (the Immaculate One) is actionless. He is separate from all. Whenever He wishes to create, He does so through His representative, Ekankar, (The One) or Sat Purush, (True Being). The Lord as the One is manifesting in manifold ways.

The Master, our Creator, pervades the earth, the waters and the inter space; though manifests He in myriads of ways! (Gauri M5, 296-12)

Bhai Gurdas says that the Absolute, who is Adi Niranjan (the Immaculate One) or the Lord, assumed the form of Ekankar (the One) and created all the innumerable universes by His Will.

The Formless One took the form of that One. He took the form of Onkar and created all. (Bhai Gurdas, Var 39, Pauri-2)

This deathless death too is the creation of the Lord, to annihilate the world of form. (Kabir, Maru, 1104-7)

There are two forces at work in nature. One is Kal (Time or the Negative Power), or Maha Kal (the great Negative Power). And the other is Akal (Timeless). Both were created by the Lord to unfold and develop the creation. The Lord or the Absolute manifested as Sat Purush (True Being) or Akal Purush (Timeless One) and unfolded the universe. The region of Ekankar is beyond the reach of dissolution and grand dissolution. The Saints aim at attaining this region-of- no-return. The Tenth Guru in the line of Guru Nanak says:

You are the destroyer of Kal and Maha Kal. You are the deathless one.

Those who have access to Sat Purush or Ekankar are called Saints. Guru Nanak and His successors have called them Satgurus or True Spiritual Teachers.

Those who realize the True One are called Satgurus. (Gauri M5, 286-12)

When the soul merges in that One or realizes Him, it becomes fit to reach the Lord's abode. Ekankar or Sat Purush gives the soul His own essence and enables it to see the Lord's abode.

The Immaculate One is pure; there is no one like Him. When that One dwells in the heart, egoism and pride vanish. (Maru M1, 1034-2)

There are millions of Brahm-Loks, or higher regions that work under the governance of Brahms who represent

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the Ekankar and carry out His Orders and revolve around Him, being taken care of and sustained by Him. Saints obey the True Being. The Brahms have no control over the Saints. Saints by initiating persons into the mystery of the Name of God, take them direct to Sat Purush. Ekankar is different from the Onkar of the Vedas. Onkar is the ruler of the three worlds, and his domains extend up to and include Trikuti, the second spiritual region. Ekankar is Akal Purush or Sat Purush (the True God). He is beyond Kal, the Negative Power. Kal merely supports this creation; but Ekankar is all pervading and is the ruler of all the five regions. Ekankar can be realized through a True Master by remaining in His company. Attaining Him, doubts, perversions, delusions and egotism are destroyed. The mind comes under control and one swims across the ocean of phenomena.

The Lord God (Ram Rai, Sat Purush)

Ram Rai, Akal Purush (Timeless Lord), Sat Naam (True Name) and Sat Purush (True God) are names of the same Being. The Gurus give Sat Purush the name of Ekankar also. Ram Rai pervades all hearts. He is the reflection and image of the Lord. It is only through Him that the Nameless Lord can be attained. In the beginning the Lord was unmanifest. He then became manifest.

Sat means unchangeable permanence. The being that does not exist is hidden. To become manifested is to exist. That invisible, unknowable and unmanifested Being assumed form. That Being came to be known as Sat Purush, Akal Purush or Ekankar. The Lord, after assuming this form, unfolds His creation in various ways and sustains it. The word Ram has been used at several places in the Adi Granth. It does not point to any incarnation. It means Sat Purush (True Being) or Nirankar (the Absolute). Kabir Sahib has explicitly dwelt upon it as follows:

There are four Rams in this world. Three of them pertain to the world; the fourth Ram is the Real One. Dwell upon Him. One Ram lived in the house of Dashrath, one Ram dwells in every heart. One Ram is the creator of this universe. One Ram is distinct from the three attributes.(Kabir)

The first Ram, known as Ram Chandra, was the son of King Dashratha. The second Ram is the mind, which abides in every heart. The third Ram is Kal, the Negative Power, who has created the three worlds or the three attributes. The fourth Ram is different from these and is free from the three attributes. Everyone contemplates on the three worlds, but never does anyone discover the secret of the fourth one.

All contemplate on the three worlds. They do not know the secret of the fourth one. (Kabir)

All the world is engrossed in love for the three attributes. But without Sat Naam one remains in delusion. Without Sat Naam how can one ever cross the ocean of existence!

In the worship of the three attributes is the entire world deluded. Says Kabir, how can anyone get across the ocean of this world without True Name? (Kabir)

This Ram is in reality the same as Sat Naam or Sat Purush. This is the fifth region which is hinted at and which is the goal of the disciple.

Kal or Dharam Rai (Lord of Judgment) is acting under the orders of Akal Purush, Ram Rai or Sat Purush. The Saints, who are incarnations of Sat Purush, are also working in this world.

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Their duty is to take souls back to the lap of Sat Purush in the highest heavens.

Ram Rai is invisible. He is attained through Satsang, Satguru and attunement with the Divine Music. Everlasting bliss is obtained by union with Him. It is difficult to attain this state without prior knowledge of Brahm. He is met when one has attained the state of tranquility. By acquiring this one gets rid of all troubles. The angel of death dares not come near and one becomes fearless. Ram Rai pervades every heart and is a reflection of the Lord.

The Immaculate One (Niranjan)

The word Niranjan is made up of the two words Nir (without) plus Anjan (Maya). It means a being who is free from Maya (Illusion). The extent of Maya is very wide. In the gross regions it is called Maya. In the subtle or causal regions it is known as Prakriti (Matter). It predominates in all regions below Sach Khand, which is the highest region. Niranjan is a being who is beyond the limits of Maya. Dissolutions and grand dissolutions cannot reach Him. There are several references to Niranjan in the Adi Granth. In some places it is used as a substitute for Hari and Nirankar. It is pointed out in the Scriptures that when nothing existed the Immaculate Absolute (Niranjan Nirankar) was there. He had no form or color.

What was He doing when all this was not? The formless Immaculate One was all in all. (M5 Gauri 216-2)

You are the self-existent, formless Immaculate Lord. They who contemplate upon You are truly rid of all their sufferings. (M4 Gauri Var 301-8)

The Lord is all by Himself. He is the Immaculate Being. The Lord unites us with Himself. Everything that He wills comes to pass. (M4 Vadhans 573-10)

He is ever the same and has been so from the beginning of time. He is fearless and Supreme.

He does not increase or decrease. He is the timeless Immaculate One. (Kabir, Gauri 343-10)

Oh Nanak, he who knows the secret knows Him to be the Primal Being, the Immaculate One. (M3 Bhairo 1129-4)

Seldom it is that one hungers for the Immaculate One. Oh Nanak, rarely does one get this food. (M3 Ram Kali Var 949-3)

Niranjan has been described as invisible, unfathomable, inaccessible and limitless. He is also called Hari (God) and Sat Purush (True Being or Lord).

He abides both here and hereafter. How can we find Him? He is the invisible, immaculate Lord. Of Himself He unites us with Himself. (M3 Gauri 162-19)

The Name is immaculate, invisible, unknowable, the Master made us realize it. (M 3 Vadhans 585-9)

Serve the Eternal, Immaculate Lord. He is the Creator. (M1 Majh Var 138-8)

Oh my beloved! All contemplate on You. You are the Eternally True and Immaculate Being. (M4 Kanara 1313-12)

Niranjan and Ekankar are the same

You are the inner-knower, the blesser of all life; on seeing You one is intoxicated with bliss. You are the Supreme Being, Immaculate

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and Fearless, and pervade both the land and the sea. (M5 Ram Kali 916-4)

In describing the abode of Niranjan, mention is made of Param Hansas (very high and pure souls) and unlimited Light. Kankan (the One) dwells there. Innumerable pure souls are there who have pure bodies and who live on the food of the Lord's Name.

The Lord's Immaculate Name is the pure food which the devotees, swan-like, taste, and see the infinite light of Truth, and wherever they see, they see the One, the Absolute Lord. (M1 Gauri 227-15)

They accept sufferings as nectar, and do not suffer again. (M1 Mam 1034-16)

The word Niranjan is used for the Being who rules the subtle regions.

He knows the ruler of the black lotus to be Niranjan; with the Grace of the Lord he realizes the Shabd. (M1 Maru 1040-7)

The Name of the Lord (Niranjan) pervades all. It is reverberating in every heart in the form of Shabd Dhun (the Divine Melody of Sound).

The Melody of the Divine Balancing Power comes to us through the True Shabd. The mind is attuned to the Truth. The devotee then enshrines in his mind the unfathomable invisible Name of God. (M3 Sarang 1234-7)

Niranjan is the essence of the Lord's Name and is the Nectar of Celestial Bliss. Niranjan is Shabd in form. The Name and the Named are one. In other words the Name of Niranjan has the same attributes as Niranjan Himself. The Gurus mention both interchangeably. He is the source of the five Shabds or Celestial Sounds. Only the devotees

and Saints can realize Him. He is beyond Brahm and it is only through His Grace that one can give devotion to Him.

Niranjan is realized by devotees through the Grace of the Guru and His company. When one goes beyond delusion, attachment and egotism, when one dies while living, when one goes into Sunn (the perfect void) or Samadhi (spiritual ecstasy) one experiences Him. By merging in the Anhad Shabd (Unending Music) one realizes the Lord.

One is rid of fear and merges in Bliss. One is purged of ego and imbued with the Eternal Lord. One knows the reality of Maya and the Immaculate One, the King of all. (M1 Maru 1040-4)

Through the Grace of the Master, a disciple, while still surrounded by Maya, realizes the Immaculate One and his Light merges in the Eternal Flame.

Environed by Maya, he attains the Immaculate One and merges his Light in the Flame. (M3 Majh 112-11)

By attaining to Niranjan, the mind is controlled. The fear of death is banished and Light (soul) merges in the Flame (the Lord). True knowledge and the highest spiritual stage are gained. The Third Eye is awakened and one is enabled to return to his Original Home. Besides, several other advantages also accrue to the disciple. It is only through the Immaculate One that one can realize the Supreme Lord or the nameless Being. The true devotee is one who has realized Niranjan.

The Omnipresent

The Lord is the Creator of the entire universe. He does not have to depend on anyone for this purpose. He has

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created everything by His own Will. Thus have innumerable universes come into being.

Through one Word did He create the entire universe, and myriads of rivers (of life), came into being. (Jap Ji, 3-17)

He projected everything by His own Will and He Himself pervades the entire creation. He is manifest in all things.

You created the universe through Your Will, and creating it you pervade it. You work through all, and thus manifest Your immanence. (Maru M5, 1095-6)

He is the doer, responsible both for the creation of the universe and the process of creating it. He is Himself the creation. There is nothing else beside Him. He is both the cause and the effect.

Without the Lord there is naught else. He is both the Creator and the Cause. (Gauri M5, 189-8)

All this creation is the unfolding of the One only. There is no one except Him. He is Himself the warp and the woof.

Oh Master of all life, You motivate all. Nanak sees You pervading everything where can he see another. (Gauri M5, 292-17)

All is the Lord, without Him is naught else.. As upon one thread are strung hundreds of pearls, so is the Lord woven into the warp of the world. (Namdev, Asa 485-3)

Where is the Lord? After creating the world, He is not apart from it. He is the Supreme Being. He dwells in the creation and pervades it. He is immortal and omnipresent. There is no need to seek Him in wildernesses. The need is

to awaken the inner eye that can see Him.

Why do you wander, oh brother? He is omnipresent and is pervading everywhere. (Dev M5, Gandhari 535-6)

Without actual personal experience it is difficult to understand this fact. We can, of course, make out something by using some illustrations. He is for example, pervading and resounding everywhere like the waves of a powerful radio station. Those whose minds have become subtle and who have attuned themselves to Him, hear Him and see His glory. As fire exists in wood and butter in milk, so does the Lord pervade everywhere.

As fire is locked in the wood, and butter in milk, so does the Lord pervade all creatures and His Light illumines high and low. (Sorath M5, 617-3)

Butter is in milk but we cannot see it. We even doubt this fact and argue that puris (unleavened cake) can be fried in butter but not in milk and halwa (pudding) can be prepared from butter and not from milk. But if someone prepares in our presence curd from milk and then churns it and takes out butter, we are convinced that milk, in fact, contains butter. Similarly, the Lord pervades everything, high or low and Saints through spiritual practices actually show Him to us.

The Lord's Naam is pearls, rubies and diamonds. The Master shows us that it is such a great treasure. (Ramkali M4, 880-16)

He is all-pervading, as is the ether. Just as there is ether both inside and outside a pitcher and the ether is not affected by the breaking of the pitcher, similarly the Lord pervades everywhere and is not affected by Dissolution.

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In thousands of pitchers is confined the same ether. The ether is not affected when a pitcher breaks. (Suhi M5, 736-12)

We can understand the omnipresence and all-pervading quality of the Lord to some extent by using the example of the sun. When the sun rises, its rays radiate in all directions and light the entire world, but the bats cannot see it. Similarly, the Lord pervades every particle and every heart, but owing to our outward or centrifugal tendencies we cannot see Him.

As the rays of the sun light every corner, so does God permeate every being. (Basant M4, 1177-14)

He pervades all the heavens and helps both the nether-lands and upper realms.

The One Lord pervades everywhere, He is in heavens, hells, nether-worlds and upper realms. (Gauri M5, 207-6)

The Lord permeates all the fourteen regions and the four corners. He fills all the worlds, He dwells in all the ten directions. His glory is manifest on the earth and the skies. Sea, land, forests, mountains and nether-lands are all His dwelling places. The Lord dwells not only in the gross regions, but in the subtle ones also.

He is in the fourteen worlds and the four corners; His perfect glory shines in all lands. He fills all the ten directions; He is seen on the earth as well as in the skies. The Merciful Lord dwells everywhere, in the sea, land, the mountains and the underworlds. He is in the gross as well as in the subtle. Oh Nanak, a true devotee sees Him everywhere. (Gauri M5, 299-16)

The tenth Guru in the line of Guru Nanak says that His light pervades both the earth and the skies. He is always

the same. He does not increase or decrease. He suffers no rise or fall. He does not have the changeable nature of human beings. He is eternal. He dwells in all, and all exist in Him. His effulgence cannot be measured. It is also mentioned in the Bible that we all live, move, walk and exist in Him.

There is one Light that shines in the universe, which undergoes no increase or decrease, nor has any ebb or flow, which has no rise or fall, which remains the same forever. Such an effulgence illumines the dweller and the dwelling. (Akal Ustat)

He is the True Lord. He is Supreme. In forests, seas, lands, nay in everything, is reflected the glory of the Compassionate One. His radiance fills the entire world. Heaven and earth remember His Name.

The Merciful One pervades all, forests, mountains, seas and lands. He shines in His glory. His Name resounds everywhere. (Akal Ustat)

The tenth Sikh Guru has sung the praises of the all-per-vading Lord in a brilliant way:

God is in the water, God is on the land. God is in the heart, God is in the forest. God is in the mountain, God is in the cave. God is on the earth, God is in the heavens. God is here, God is there. God is in space, God is in time. God is invisible, God is without creed. God is without sin, God is without enmity. God is deathless, God is shelterless. God is impenetrable, God is indissoluble. God is not moved by charms or spells. God has His own Light, He cannot be moved by incantations. God is without caste, God is without lineage. God is without friends, God has no mother. God feels no physical or mental suffering. God is without doubt, God is without Karmas. God is invincible, God is fearless. God is unbreakable, God is indissoluble. God cannot be punished, God is radiant. God is transcendent, God is inscrutable. God is unconquerable, God is

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imperishable.

Repeat God's Name; establish God's Name in your heart; do penance to God and repeat His Name. Oh God, You are in the water, You are on the land. You are in the river, You are in the sea. You are in the tree, You are in its leaves. You are in the earth, You are in the firmament. Your Name is repeated again and again. Your Name is fixed in man's heart. You are space, You are time. You are the occupant, You are the dwelling. You are unborn, You are fearless. You are impalpable, You are indestructible. You are continence, You are fast. You are deliverer, You are adviser. You alone are, You alone are. (Tav Prasad-Laghu, Naraj Chhand)

It is also stated in the Psalms that there is no place without Him.

Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me. (Psalms 139-7 to10)

Guru Arjan says that the Lord is always with us. Where can we run away from Him? We can get release only when He forgives us and then alone can we gain salvation.

Oh my mind, the Lord is always with you. Oh! How can you escape His presence? The Lord Himself forgives. He Himself redeems all. (Gauri M5, 170-4)

No place is without Him. He is with us both within and without. He is the beginning, the middle and the end.

The all-pervading Lord is everywhere. Without Him there is naught. He is with us, both inside and outside oh Nanak, why say that He is far away? (Gauri M5, 259-17)

On seeing Him one gets peace. There is no one as great as He. He is the beginning, the middle and the end. He pervades the land, the sea and the outer space. (Suhī M5, 784-15)

He is not far from us. He abides in the inner recesses of our heart. He is not separate from us. Wherever one looks, one feels His presence.

Do not consider the True One to be afar off; He is within us. Whenever I look I find Him. How can I evaluate Him? (Asa M1, 421-6)

It is said in the Yajur Ved:

He is omnipresent. He is the warp and the woof of the entire universe. (Yajur Ved, 32-8)

That One working through Maya assumes wonderful forms. From One He becomes many and unfolds the universe. He pervades the seas and the lands.

The Lord and Creator pervades all, earth, sea and outer space. Oh Nanak, He is Ekankar – the One, that One is manifest in all. (Gaurī M5, 296-11)

It is said in the Atharva Ved:

The Light is one, but it shines in diverse ways. (Atharva Ved, 13-3-17)

It is also mentioned in the Yajur Ved:

The Lord is omnipresent. He is present inside all. (Yajur Fed, 23-4)

He is manifest in many forms . He pervades all, whether formless or with form; whether with qualities or without qualities; and whether manifest or unmanifest. All

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originate from Him and are His different forms.

He is the Absolute as well as the relative One. He has bewitched all by His power. (Gauri M5, 287-17)

He is the relative One. He is the Absolute and Formless, He is the void and the trance. Oh Nanak, He creates all. He meditates on Himself. (Gauri M5, 290-16)

All the creation can be divided into four categories:

The Egg-Born –Andaj

The Womb-Born, from a foetus –Jeraj

The Moisture-Born, or sweat-born –Setaj

The Seed-Born, or earth-born –Utthuj

He pervades all these beings as well as the sea and land. Wherever you look, He is to be found there.

He created the egg-born and the fetus-born. He created also the sweat-born and the earth-born. I see His glory in all. He pervades all. (Sorath M1, 596-16)

You pervade all beings, be they in sea, land or outer space. Oh Nanak! The Master sends His Grace, and one gets the bliss of the Lord. (Bhairon M1, 1127-17)

Oh Lord! You are the omnipresent Light in the universe. (Yajur Ved 5-35)

This universe is the dwelling place of the Lord. (Yajur Ved 40-1)

He pervades all and is yet detached. He is free from all bondage.

The Master has removed all doubts. Oh Nanak, sing the praises of the Lord. He is the fountainhead of all virtues. He is omnipresent

but detached. He pervades all. (Sorath M5, 617-5)

Those deluded by attachment and Maya think Him to be far away, but He is ever-present. He is with us, both inside and outside. He is so near us that there is nothing nearer than Him. He pervades every heart.

Be not deluded by attachments. Do not consider Him to be afar. Oh Nanak! Why say He is far away? (Gauri M5,210-12)

The all-pervading Lord is everywhere. Without Him there is naught. He is with us, both inside and outside. Oh Nanak! Why say that He is far away? (Gauri M5, 259-17)

He fills the sea, the land and outer space. He pervades all hearts. (Suhi M5, 778-13)

Glory to the Immaculate One. He is both within and without. He abides in all hearts. He pervades all as Truth. (Bhairon M1, 1127-1)

He pervades all beings and regions. He pervades in all directions; both above and below, and He is in every particle of everything.

Just as oil is in the sesame, butter in curd, water in cascade and fire in wood, similarly does the Lord pervade everybody but can be perceived by the soul only by the practice of truth and austerities. (Swetashvatar Upanishad, 1-15)

He Himself is present in the devotee (bhakt) and in the Lord (Bhagwan), in the disciple and in the Guru, in the servant and in the master, in the king and in the subjects. He sustains them all. All the forces of nature emanate from Him and are sustained by Him.

He is the devotee, He is the Master; He pervades both of them. Oh

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Nanak! He pervades all, He is seen everywhere. (Gujri M5, 498-9)

The Lord is One, but He manifests in different forms. He pervades every heart. Oh Ravi Das, He is near. He can be realized if He wills it. (Ravi Das, Sorath, 658-2)

He pervades all and is ever with us. But because we are always engrossed in objects of the world, we cannot see Him. The sun is not to be blamed if the bats cannot see it. The sun is shining equally for all. The Lord is all-pervading. Then why do we not see Him? The reason for this is that the eyes that can see Him are as yet unawakened. Those eyes which can see Him everywhere are different from the physical eyes.

Oh Nanak! Those eyes that can see Him are different. (Maru Var M5, 1100-1)

We can see subtle things only when we ourselves become subtle. The Lord is extremely subtle. Unless we become as subtle as He is, we do not get connected with the Lord. It is a basic principle that the instrument with which we see must be appropriate to the thing to be seen. Our eyes cannot see light that is extremely bright or extremely dim. Similarly, we cannot hear a sound which is either above or below the range of our hearing. Therefore, we have to use various scientific instruments with the help of which we can hear them. Thus, with the help of the instruments we magnify these subtle sounds so that we can hear them. We can see far-off things through a telescope and minute things through a microscope. But this applies only to gross things. To see astral things however it is necessary that our inner eyes become subtle. The Lord is the subtlest of the subtle. To realize Him we have to be equally subtle.

He who is so high knows that Great One. (Jap Ji, 5-10)

The Lord pervades everywhere both inside and outside, but so long as we do not become subtle within and one-pointed and our Inner Eye does not also become equally subtle, we can never see Him. This subtlety can only be gained by inner exercises or by what is described as 'going within' by the Saints as they alone can teach us the correct technique. Some say that the Lord resides in the South, others say that His Abode is in the West; but actually He is everywhere and we should search for Him within ourselves.

Hindus see the Lord in the South; the Muslims see Him in the West. Search for Him in your heart; your heart is His Abode. (Kabir, Prabhati, 1349-12)

All the universe is His form. The disciple, by carrying out spiritual practices as enjoined by the Master, realizes Him in himself.

The world you see is His manifestation. It is the Lord Himself that you see. (Ramkali M3, 922-4)

He pervades everything in the form of the Guru – Shabd (Word).

The Lord pervades all beings, He is the inner-knower of all hearts. He who contemplates on Him, through the Guru's Word, sees the Lord pervade all beings. (Suhi M4, 775-9)

How can one know Him, the One Being who pervades all? The Adi Granth says that only he on whom He shows His Grace to make Himself known alone becomes fit to see Him. It is through the Master that the Inner Eyes that can see the bewitching Lord everywhere are developed and all doubts are banished.

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The Master has shown the Lord. The Lord is captivating. He is present everywhere. He is present in all hearts. (Asa M5, 407-2)

The Lord is in every heart, when one meets a Master, He manifests Himself. (Basant M4, 1177-16)

The Master has removed all doubts. Oh Nanak, sing the praises of the Lord. He is the fountain-head of all virtues. He is omnipresent but detached. He pervades all. (Sorath M4, 617-5)

All are illumined by His Light. All shine because of His refulgence. One begins to see the Light by following the directions of the Master.

All are illumined by His Light. All shine because of His refulgence. The Guru's teachings show the Light. Whatever pleases Him is true worship. (Dhanasri M1, 663-9)

This state, however, is attained only by a few devotees, namely those who are very dear to the Master.

Gross and subtle, both are God. Oh Nanak! Only a devotee knows the Lord. (Gauri M5, 299-18)

What is true knowledge? It is to see the imperishable One pervading all. In the Bhagwat Gita, Lord Krishna says:

That knowledge with which one sees the one indestructible Reality in all beings, the unseparated in the separate, know thou that knowledge as Sattvic (pure). (Bhagwat Gita 18:20)

The Saints, on seeing Him pervading everywhere, are overjoyed.

The One Lord pervades all. Nanak sees Him and is overjoyed.

(*Kanara M5, 1299-16*)

On seeing Him pervading all, no one is our foe, nor are we the foe of anyone. This knowledge, however, can be had only from the Guru. We make friends with all and all become our friends. Hatred is then banished from the heart. In this way, we unite with the Lord.

No one is my foe and I am no one's enemy. The Lord pervades inside; the Master made me realize this. All are our friends and we are friends to them. The feeling of separateness has vanished, and I am united with my King. (Dhanasari M5, 671-7)

Guru Arjan says that when one thinks ill of another he is surrounded by evil. But when one gives up the feeling of mine and thine, no enemy remains. When we begin to differentiate, we suffer, but when we know the one Lord who pervades all, we know the Reality of all things.

When one looks on another as evil, he is encircled by evil on all sides. When he gives up mine and thine, he has no foe left. (Gauri M5, 235-12)

When he considers himself separate from others, he suffers, woe, misery and privations. But if he considers all to be one, he becomes all-wise. (Gauri M5, 235-16)

We should not have feelings of enmity for anyone. We should not upbraid anyone because the Lord pervades all hearts, the sea and the land.

Have feelings of enmity for no one, for the Lord pervades all hearts. That one is present in both the sea and the land. He who sings the praises of the Master is however very rare. (Gauri M5, 259-18)

Who is bad, who is good? The Lord is in all. This is the Truth that the Master reveals. (Asa M1, 353-10)

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He who has found the Lord in every heart has fulfilled his life's mission.

His coming to this world is blessed; He knows the Lord is in all hearts. (Gauri M5, 198-1)

The Carefree One

The Lord is very deep and unfathomable. Everything is His manifestation. Out of Him, Agam Purush, The Inconceivable Lord, Alakh Purush, The Indescribable Lord and Sat Purush, The True Lord, who are the rulers of the imperceptible, the invisible and the true regions respectively, came into existence.

He, the Lord, is very deep and unfathomable, oh Nanak! There is no one to equal the carefree Lord. (Gauri M5,252-11)

All the divine forces are sustained by Him. These are called Beings. The Lord (Hari) is known as the Great Being, Param Purush. Amongst these Beings is Par Brahm who creates worlds (Brahmands) and bodies (Pind), sustains them and destroys them. Millions of worlds are sustained by Him. Each world is being supervised by a Brahm, god. He is the Lord of millions of Brahmands (universes), and is the supporter of all.

He is the Lord of myriads of universes, the sustainer of all beings. He cares for all. The ignorant and unwise however do not know this. (Sorath M5, 612-6)

The Supreme Lord has two aspects. One is Kal, the Negative Power, the creator of the universe and the other, Akal, the Immortal One or Dayal, the Merciful One, who is free from the cares and the worries of the lower worlds.

These Beings have been described before. The Lord creates the universe according to His Will. He sustains and pervades it. All this is from Him and is His manifestation.

The world is the abode of the True One; He dwells in it. (Asa Var M1, 463-13)

He manifested Himself in myriads of waves; no one can know His sport. (Gauri M5, 275-8)

He is governing and administering the affairs of the pure spiritual regions as well as of the universes and the lower worlds, according to His Will. Is this work, the vastness of which it is impossible to conceive and which bewilders us, any burden to Him? Is He busy thinking about it all the time? No! While doing all this He remains fresh as a blossom and in spite of its onerous nature He remains detached. He is unconcerned, independent and unmoved. After creating the universe and taking care of it, He still remains free and ever happy. He has no cares and worries of any sort. He is perpetually in bloom. Guru Nanak says:

The ruler rules in an orderly manner. Oh Nanak! He blooms as unconcernedly as does a flower. (Jap Ji, 2-3)

He is carefree and imperceptible:

He is carefree and imperceptible; contemplate on Him all the twenty-four hours. (Ramkali M5, 896-5)

He is the unfathomable Lord and is all-pervading.

There is one seal of authority and one King. The carefree One is everywhere. His writ runs in all the three worlds. He is the unknowable and unfathomable Lord. (Basant M1, 1188-17)

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He is Truth. He is the redeemer of all our sins and shortcomings.

My beloved is carefree and true. He purges us of our sins and faults. (Majh M3, 112-14)

He is all-powerful. He does what He wishes to. He does not have to depend on anyone. He lacks nothing. He need not consult anyone.

Whatever the Lord does, He does it Himself. He has not to ask anybody; He consults no one. (Bhairon M4, 1135-7)

His orders are absolute. No wisdom or cleverness can stand against Him. Everybody has to give up his self and bow to His Will.

His Will is absolute. No wisdom or argument can stand against it. One should abandon selfhood and take shelter with Him, and accept His Will. (Sarang M4, 1251-1)

If He so wishes, He turns the prince into a pauper and the pauper into a prince. Those who realize Him are accepted unreservedly at His Door.

The great ones He humbles. The humble ones He makes kings. Those who realize Him are accepted by Him. (Prabhati M1, 1329-19)

He humbles the great and raises the humble in an instant. None can fathom the glory of the Lord. (Bilawal M5, 813-10)

As to the indifference of the Lord, Kabir Sahib has the following to say:

He transforms seas into land, land into sea, and sea into mountain.

He raises the humble to the skies and hurls the vain to the ground. He makes the beggar a king and the king a beggar. He does what He likes. There is no way to refuse to accept His Will.

He turns sea into land. He turns hills into valleys. He turns valleys into mountains. From earth He raises some to the skies. Others He hurls from the skies to the earth. He makes the beggar a king. He makes the king a beggar. He makes the fool a wise man. He makes the wise man a fool. Of woman a man is born. Through men women come into being. Says Kabir, I am a sacrifice to the vision of the Beloved of Saints. (Kabir, Saran1252-4)

The Lord is carefree. He is happy to see His Creation. To whomsoever He wills He shows the path. If He does not will it, He does not do so.

Watching all He is pleased. To whom He wills He shows the way. He leads some on this Path. Others He leads astray. (Bihagara M4, 550-13)

If He is bounteous and so wills it, He transforms a heron into a swan. This is nothing extraordinary for Him.

A heron turns into a swan, if Your Bounty so wills. Nanak is the slave of Your slaves; have compassion on him. (Basant M1, 1171-6)

Whether you are a swan or a heron, you are saved only by His Grace. Oh Nanak, if He so wills He turns a crow into a swan. (Sri Rag M4, 91-4)

He is carefree. Only by taking refuge at His Door and asking for His Grace alone one can attain salvation.

Ask not for an account of my deeds; I err every moment. Forgive me my sins. Across the ocean show me the way. (Gauri M5, 261-1)

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Our repetitions and austerities have no merit. It is only through His Grace that one is saved in the end. There is no end to our sins. All our actions lead to bondage. If the Lord in His mercy takes us out of the ocean of misdeeds, then alone we, the sinking stones, can swim across.

As the sea is brimful with water; so are my sins without count. Have pity on me and in Your Grace, let this sinking stone swim across. (Gauri M1, 156-14)

The attainment of the carefree Lord and the release of the Soul depend solely upon His Grace. Those whom he favors, follow Gurmat (teachings of the Saints) and realize the Reality.

Detached and unfathomable is He. He can be known by the Master's Grace alone. (Sri Rag M1, 20-13)

When one meets a Master, then through His Grace, love for the Carefree Lord springs up in the heart.

Carefree is He. Know Him by the Master's Grace. (Gauri M5, 187-18)

Union with Him can be had only by uttering the Unutterable Word.

Praised be the unutterable Lord, He is the carefree True One. He unites us with the Shabd, and we then enjoy its taste. (Maru M1, 1057-4)

It is however, a rare devotee who attains this state in his life and thus he experiences everlasting bliss.

He is in the body, whether you find Him or not. The devotee searches for Him within, and by meeting Him he gains everlasting

peace, and unites with Him. (Maru M3, 1066-13)

The Master is indistinguishable from the Lord. He also is carefree. Praise Him with every breath. All fear is banished by taking refuge in Him.

*Praise Him with every breath. The Master is the carefree Lord.
Take refuge with Him and banish fear. The slanderers are all killed.
They fall to the ground far and near. (Gond M4, 869-15)*

The Lord and the Master are one. He who knows this becomes carefree himself. He becomes a true king and fearless.

He who knows is carefree. He who knows is truly great. He who knows has no fear. He needs no other effort. (M 5 Maru 1074-9)

CHAPTER 2. CONTEMPLATION (DHYAN)

Dhyan is a Sanskrit word derived from the root 'Dhaye' which means to contemplate some form, to remember it, to repeat it, to think about it, and to collect the soul currents at their headquarters. Dhyan connotes both seeing and thinking. To fix the attention at any point is also called Dhyan. This leads to seeing spiritual scenes, Light and Radiance. If these phenomena do not appear, you may take it that Dhyan has not been successful.

Many people claim that they contemplate upon the all-pervading Lord. Omnipresence is a quality of the sky (ether). Its contemplation is that of ether. So long as the inner vision is not awakened, the spiritual scenes are not beheld.

A man cannot live without carrying on some form of contemplation. Whatever vocation one is engaged in, he thinks about it before retiring at night, and forms mental pictures of it. Simran and Dhyan are interdependent. We think of the world and contemplate on its forms, with the result that we come again and again into this world.

The question arises as to what one should think about so that he need not return to this mundane sphere. Kabir Sahib advises:

Undertake such contemplation as will end transmigration.

What is such a Dhyān?

The Sikhs Scriptures state that Dhyān signifies knowing and listening to the Divine Melody. Guru's Shabd (Word) is also known as Dhyān. This Shabd is the Unstruck Music that created the universe. Dhyān is the second step of the spiritual ladder and is born of Simran.

So long as a person has not seen God how can he contemplate upon His form? God is Shabd. He is love. It is a language of silence. He alone attains Him who loves Him. In the first instance, it is essential that we should contact a Master who is Shabd and love incarnate; who has merged himself in the Lord; who is no longer a drop but has become the ocean. Soul is in the Lord, and the Lord is in the soul. Therefore, so long as we do not see the Lord, we should contemplate upon the form of a God-Man.

Whenever we close our eyes, we behold scenes of the world such as family and children, hearth and home, wealth and possessions; we constantly dwell upon the world and its objects with the result that every cell of our mind is immersed in it. It is for this reason that we are firmly tied to the world. We do not know how to contemplate upon the form of the Lord. The one we have to contemplate upon is beyond the three worlds. So long as we do not meet Him, on whom shall we contemplate?

Let us examine the objects of this world to discover what is worthy of our contemplation. The entire world is comprised of the five elements, viz., Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether. Accordingly, everything in this world is divided into five parts.

Those beings that have all the five elements active in

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them. In this category are all human beings.

Those that have four elements, namely, earth, water, fire and air, active in them. This category relates to quadrupeds.

Those that have only three elements, namely, water, fire and air active in them. This is the category of birds.

Those that have two elements, namely fire and air active in them. This category includes reptiles, lizards and the like.

Those that have only one element – water – predominant in them. These are members of the vegetable kingdom.

If a human being, in whom all the five elements are active, were to contemplate on the forms in whom one, two, three, or four elements are present, he would go down to their level, for whatever one contemplates that he becomes. Is it therefore desirable that a man should contemplate on the form of a man? If so, why? We shall explain it by means of an example:

A room contains a number of radio sets. Only those sets that are connected with batteries or an electric current receive the news. Those that are disconnected do not do so. Similarly, only such persons as have opened their inner vision and are in communion with the Lord are the ones worthy of our worship and contemplation.

Therefore, Sikh and other Scriptures emphasize the need of contemplation upon the form of a Master who is one with the Lord. Such a course is conducive to valuable benefits.

God is manifest in the Master because the Master is God in human form. Therefore, the contemplation of the Master is really that of the Lord, and His worship is true service to the Lord.

The highest form of contemplation is that of God, or connecting our consciousness with Shabd, which is God-in Action, and listening to it is contemplation of the person in whom God is manifest. The contemplation of God is impossible, for we have not seen Him. Therefore, we should first contemplate on the form of the Master, because we can see Him and by contemplating upon Him, we are enabled to contact Naam.

The contemplation of the form of the Master may be likened to seeing a glowing bulb, the first perception of which is that of light, seeing which we are oblivious of the glass that holds it.

In the initial stages of Simran, the contemplation of the physical form of the Master is necessary. After that, the disciple contemplates on the Radiant Form of the Master, which remains with him in the spiritual planes. This form subsequently merges in Shabd, its real form.

Theosophists say:

The Master souls have their radiance spread out to extensive spiritual planes.

With the manifestation of the Radiant Form, the disciple's devotion is half complete. When the Refulgent Form appears within, the disciple should fix his attention in it, so much so that he completely merges himself in this form and can no longer distinguish between himself and the

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Master.

I have become You, and You me. I have become a body and You have become my soul, my very life, so much so that none can say we have a separate entity. (Shamas-i-Tabrez)

According to Scriptures dealing with the soul, when the course of contemplation is complete, the disciple, the discipline, and the Deity all merge into one. The worshipped and the worshipper become one, as the caterpillar becomes a butterfly and loses its own identity. Such a state (Fana- fil-Sheikh) is known as merging in the Master.

But the Master has already merged in the Lord (Fana-Fillah), with the result that the disciple also merges into Him. Whatever you dwell upon, that you become.

A peasant called on a certain Saint and the Saint asked him, "Whom do you love?" He answered that he loved his buffalo. Whatever you love, reflection on it stills the mind. Before long his thoughts began to concentrate and, because of dwelling upon the buffalo, he mentally assumed its form. Thereupon the Saint opened the door of the room and asked the peasant to come out through it. The peasant replied. "How can I come out through this small opening? My horns are too wide to pass through it." Such is the power of contemplation!

In the Gita, Lord Krishna says:

The way I am remembered, in the same way I remember. Whoever reflects upon and worships a form with faith, he assumes that form.

Again,

Those who yearn for Me, they come and merge in Me.

In the Kathupanishad, the body of man has been likened to a chariot, of which the senses are the horses. Like unbroken horses they are always running after sense pleasures. The mind is the bridle, and safety lies in pulling and in keeping it under control, which is, however not so easy. The Gita says that the remedy lies in making the mind contemplate upon the form of the Master.

Devote thyself whole-heartedly to Me and take refuge in Me. Collecting the mind in this way, stop its going out and wanderings.

Just as we cannot scale the wall of a fort without the help of a ladder; even so, we cannot reach the Lord without contemplation of the Master. It is concentration that takes us from the physical to the astral, from the astral to the causal, and beyond the causal to the Lord.

The Radiant Form of the Master manifests only in pure and sincere hearts. In an impure heart, it simply cannot reside. Hafiz says:

The pure form of the Beloved can be seen only by pure eyes. Behold Him with pure and keen eyes – as a Muslim scans the sky on the Id-eve. It is not every eye that can behold the Radiant Form of a True Master. It is the privilege of a rare and fortunate few.

The Upanishads as well as the Bhagavad Gita say:

Purity of mind and its cleanliness are regarded as essential prerequisites for contemplation and meditation.

The purity must be both inner and outer. The outer comes first, and later, with practice, comes the inner. Those who are vile and whose mind is restless can never succeed in contemplation, and will suffer pain and priva-

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tion. So long as contemplation on the form of the Master is not achieved, the soul currents cannot collect within.

The contemplative faculty of the soul is called 'Nirat'; that is, the seeing faculty of the soul. The soul has two faculties. One is 'Surat', which means the hearing faculty, and the other is 'Nirat', which means the seeing faculty. So long as the seeing faculty is not developed, mere listening to the Shabd does not bestow the fullest possible benefit. By fixing the attention within, one is able to behold many spiritual regions. So long as the seeing faculty does not develop, the hearing faculty of the soul does not ascend to higher planes. By developing the seeing power of the soul we achieve Dhyān. And it is this alone that leads us to true knowledge.

The power of contemplation is innate and natural. Even the turtles and the swans are known to possess great powers of contemplation. It is said that through contemplation they hatch their distantly laid eggs. Among Hindus, gazing on the rising sun is regarded as a means to contemplation. Some people dwell upon the pictures of ancient Saints. This is contemplation of material and lifeless objects. In Dhyān, one may see pictures with frames, but these cannot lead one upward. Both pictures and idols are lifeless. They cannot draw one upward. Therefore a picture cannot pull us up. He alone can draw us to the spiritual regions who frequents them himself. Contemplation on the form of ancient Saints can do us little good. Most of the pictures of such Saints are not true to life and are mere figments of imagination. Worship of the lifeless is prohibited in the Holy Scriptures.

The pictures of Saints help to keep alive their memory, but they are unable to give us what a living Master can. Tulsi Sahib goes so far as to say:

Even if you should make a picture of the wishing-tree and pray to it a thousand times, you would gain nothing. He further says: If in place of a money-lender, you place his picture in his shop, it can never perform his tasks.

The New York American newspaper dated 30th March, 1933, reports a newly-invented instrument which can determine from a photograph whether the person had died since the portrait was taken. The paper adds, "It detects the movement of 'life waves' or 'Z waves' on a photographic plate, and the stillness of these waves after the death of the subject was reported today by E. S. Shrapness-Smith, an authority on chemistry." He said, "Life, like a radio-station, emits a distinct type of wave. These human waves are transmitted to and fixed in a photographic plate. While the subject of the photograph is alive, the movement of the waves is lively. The moment the person dies, no matter how far distant from the photograph, the life waves cease to emanate from the plate. I am unable to reveal at present just what the instrument consists of, but it is based and depends on: radiation; magnetism; static electricity; and current electricity.

There is nothing psychic or mysterious about it. It is the result of a new application of the laws of science.

This proves that the pictures or photographs of Saints who are not alive today will not help us. Another factor is that most of the pictures of Saints who have long since departed are not exact replicas but are mostly the result of the imagination of the artists who produced them. Besides, the worship of a lifeless thing is prohibited. The pictures or photographs of a Saint certainly remind us of our Master, but they can give us nothing more. It is only the living Master who can bestow His Grace on us.

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Among Muslim Saints many methods are used to develop the seeing faculty of the soul (Nirat). They are called 'Nazri' or 'Basri', namely, relating to eyesight. They term this 'shughal' or practice. The well-known among them are:

Shughal-i-Aftabi – In this the attention is fixed on the rising sun, and it is best done during winter. One gains miraculous powers. Amongst the Hindus, this practice is known as Tratak Dhyana.

Shughal-i-Mansur – In this a person lies flat on his back on the ground, with his face turned up. He relaxes his entire body and fixes his attention within at the eye center. The yogis call it Shavasan.

Shughal-i-Barzakh-i-Akbar – In this, while controlling the breath, the attention is fixed at the Third Eye. Many Muslim Saints practice this method, which was also a favorite with Prophet Mohammed. This is equivalent to contemplation on Trikuti – the second stage in spiritual transport – and is done while sitting in the Padam Asan.

Shughal-i-Barzakh-i-Kabir – In this, the seeing power of the soul is fixed within and without on the form of a Master. As a result of the practice, one is able to achieve certain supernatural powers and also unravel hidden secrets.

Shughal-i-Isme-Zat – In this, the disciple fixes his attention on the Light within and is thus able to merge within himself.

Shughal-i-Iena – In this, a mirror is placed in front of the practitioner. He fixes his attention on the pupils of his own eyes as reflected in the mirror. By gazing steadfastly,

the pupils of his eyes turn inwards and he gains access to Nukta-i-Saveda or the Third Eye.

Shughal-i-Nim-Khwabi – In this, one has to keep his eyes constantly open to avoid sleep. The result is that even in sleep a person remains half awake.

Shughal-i-Basait – In this, the seeing power of the soul (Nirat) has to be collected at the eye focus.

Shughal-i-Mukaman Mahmudan or Shughal-i-Sultanan-Nasira – In this, the eyes are fixed on the tip of the nose, and the attention is then gradually taken to the root of the nose. Ultimately the attention goes within and gains entrance into the spiritual regions. The Yogis call it Chachari Mudra.

The way to perform these practices can only be learned from a Master. If one practices them by oneself, they are dangerous. Of all the practices, Shughal-i-Barzakh-i-Kabir, in which the Master's form is contemplated both within and without, is the best. The Master's form takes the practitioner to inner realms and remains forever with him. The other practices take one up only to the astral region or the causal region, but not beyond them.

In Dhyān-Yog three kinds of contemplation are enumerated:

Asthool(material)

Sukshma (subtle or astral)

Noori (luminous or radiant)

To gaze at the picture of a Master is the asthool or material practice. When the soul currents collect behind the eyes at a point between the two eyebrows and see there

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the light of a lamp, and the seeing power of the soul gets focused on the lamp, the practice is known as Sukshma or the subtle method of contemplation. When the attention is fixed on the Kundalini and it is awakened, the soul currents, leaving the body, collect at the eye focus and the soul, ascending above, rises into the refulgent regions. These constitute the Noori or the Luminous Dhyana. By practicing this one is able to behold his astral body.

All these qualities and benefits accrue through contemplating on the form of a living Master, in body and flesh. The Master lives in the physical world through his physical form. Through the astral form he gains access to the astral regions, and through the causal form he moves in the luminous or causal region. This refulgence is the manifestation of Truth. By contemplating upon it, one attains the highest spiritual development.

Kabir says:

With every breath contemplate upon the form of your Beloved. The gift of the human form is unique. Do not tarry in carrying out this practice.

Khusro, a devoted disciple of his Master said:

Oh you renowned artist of China, look at my Beloved! Either paint an exact replica of His beauty or give up your art.

Just as a small child looks at an object with a fixed gaze without blinking its eyes, so should you accustom yourself to gazing intently at the beautiful face of your Master. Then see how your doubts vanish and how you attract Reality. By practicing this method daily the disciple grows fearless. Were such a person to look at a snake or a lion, the latter would not attack him. The Third Eye of a man

wields immense power. It is the gateway to all the higher spiritual realms. It is through Satsang that this practice can be developed. It is the first step in our travels through the spiritual regions.

In order to obtain spiritual wealth, we have to go to a living Master and contemplate upon His form. In the Sikh Scriptures, it is a living Master and His contemplation that alone are considered really and fully beneficial. The spiritual currents that emanate from Him are surcharged with mind and soul force. Therefore, His company and contemplation enable us to benefit from the waves of spiritual consciousness that radiate from Him. It is for this reason that every Saint has contemplated upon the form of His Master, and that the Saints will continue to do so.

The contemplation of the Master bestows many advantages. Through reflection, the disciple imbibes all the inner qualities and virtues of the Master. The mind of the Master is motionless. By contemplating upon Him, the mind of the disciple also becomes still.

Patanjali says in the Yoga Sutras:

Contemplation of persons who are free of worldly desires bestows stability of mind.

Then, too, remembrance of the Lord dwells in the heart of the Master. He even beholds the refulgence of the Lord. By Simran and Dhyān the disciple begins to remember the Lord automatically and becomes worthy of witnessing the inner scenes. The lovers of the Master's form get tied to the Master. They become oblivious of the body and also of the world.

The Master is free from birth and death. Gurmukhs

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are the devotees of such a Master. One whose attention is fixed on the form of the Master, one who loves naught save the Master – who can ever make such a person return to the world?

On one occasion Maulana Rumi fell ill on account of separation from his Master. Sadruddin, another Saint, came to enquire about his health. He prayed:

May god restore you to health.

At this Maulana Rumi replied:

May health be welcome to you. Between the lover and the beloved, only a thin veil (of this body) remains. Do you not wish that this veil should vanish and the Light should merge in the Refulgent Source?

He further said:

You do not know the king, who is sitting within me. Do not look at my outer face hidden behind hoops of steel.

When Khusro became completely dyed in the hue of his Master, people commenced to taunt him as an idol-worshipper. He said:

People are ignorant of the Reality. They say that Khusro is an idol-worshipper. Let them say so, for I have no concern with the world and its people.

When we see the Radiant Form of the Master within, the soul is able by concentration to maintain a stable position, and begins to listen to the inner music. In this way the Naam current flows and the devotee remains immersed in its enjoyment. The mind then takes to Naam

with fervor.

The more you contemplate, the more you will hear the Sound Current and greater the pull it will exercise on the soul. The Sound Current draws the soul to higher regions, and through contemplation enables it to stay there. Dhyan carries the soul to spiritual regions within. In this way the soul ascends to these regions, but it is the privilege of a rare Gurmukh (true devotee of a Perfect Master). This contemplation is in the inner sky and in consequence the soul, getting rid of sense pleasures, fears and all other fetters, gains access to its real Home.

Simran bestows concentration. Concentration leads to the Radiant Form of the Master. Contemplation enables the soul to stay there, and the Divine Melody is heard.

In this connection Hafiz says:

When I had a glimpse of the handsome and charming face of my Master within, I bowed low and prayed, God be blest that tonight I have been so fortunate.

It is a well-known fact that love beautifies everything it touches. Laila was of dark complexion, but in the love-intoxicated eyes of Manju she was far beyond compare. If you wish to see Laila, see her with the eyes of Manju.

It is true that love makes a beloved charming. But the Master's form is inherently very beautiful. To add full loveliness to it, He does not have to depend upon the imperfect love of human beings, nor does He stand in need of any artificial aids such as colors and perfumes.

The Radiant Form of the Master resides within every true disciple. When the soul withdraws from without and

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goes within, crossing the stars, the sun and the moon, it beholds His Refulgent Form. It is this radiance that bestows light to both the sun and the moon. Whoever goes within sees His Wondrous Form.

We are wonder-struck to hear descriptions of the beautiful physical form of the Master, but if we manifest Him within, we will find Him a thousand-fold more beautiful. By addressing the Lord, Hafiz says:

Oh Beloved, I have heard many a tale about your wondrous beauty; but now that I have beheld you within, I see that you are really a thousand times more wonderful than the tales depict you.

Shut your eyes and you will find nothing but darkness within. This darkness is even more pronounced than a completely moonless night. When the soul, withdrawing from without goes in, there come into view the stars, the sun and the moon. Beyond them appears the Radiant Form of the Master. The Master does not come secretly, but flashes of light emanate from His Radiant Form in such a manner that the soul is irresistibly attracted towards it. In reality, this scene beggars description.

Hafiz has attempted to portray this inner vision, but how can one describe what is indescribable? He says:

The whole night His refulgence filled my heart with Light. What a bold thief He is to come in the darkness, but with what an aura of radiance He comes!

Contemplation of the Master's Form is wondrously rewarding. Those who think of the Master's Form gain honor and glory both here and beyond. All their desires are fulfilled. By merging in the Master they attain God-Realization.

Contemplation and Religion

In contemplation are contained all the formalities of religion. Religion is a unique thing which is helpful in both the worlds. Without adopting it, man cannot be happy. Where religion is held as naught, spirituality fails to grow. Religion is the true fountain-head of life in this world and the next. Without religion one cannot travel a step on the Path of Spirituality (Parmarth). The Scriptures lay emphasis on first strengthening the foundation of religion and thereafter devoting oneself to Naam or Shabd; for without the former, the latter is devoid of benefits. Religion keeps everything in its proper place, in balance and in unison. It opens the inner vision, with the result that one learns the correct value of things. Thus, truth appears as truth, and untruth as untruth.

All prophets and Saints have stressed the need for religion. Lord Krishna mentions in the Gita:

Whenever evil predominates over virtue and religion is on the decline, I incarnate in every age to protect the righteous, to destroy the wicked, and to re-establish religion.

Similarly says Guru Gobind Singh:

Akal (the Timeless) has sent me into this world to lead the people on to the right path and to wean them away from evil.

The word 'dharam' (religion) is derived from the root 'Dhri' which means to imbibe, to be supported by. It is a power which, affording support to the entire universe, keeps it stable. Some say that the world rests on the horns of a bullock. Others, that it is balanced on the forehead of

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'Shesh Nag', the mythical snake. Guru Nanak in the Jap Ji settles the issue by saying:

The world is sustained by religion.

What kind of Dharam sustains the world? One that is born of mercy, and one that keeps the entire universe in a state of equilibrium and free from chaos by means of the tender cord of contentment.

The people who believe in God have their religion in Naam, which sustains everything. As conscious co-workers of Naam, they follow its principles and surrender to His Will. They become attached to religion. They live by religion. They are religion incarnate.

According to the Vishnu Puran, religion has four main tenets:

Sat, which means unchangeable permanence.

Yag, which literally means sacrifice, but esoterically refers to the practice of charity.

Puja, which means worship, good conduct, cleanliness.

Simran, or the repetition of the Holy Names.

Ravi Das and Bhai Gurdas also say the same thing. Bhai Mani Singh, however, has described the four tenets of religion as follows:

Naam, Shabd, or Sound Current.

Charity, which comprises mercy and sacrifice, to think of the good of others, to forgive, to consider everything as belonging to God, and to give it away to God's children.

Snan, which means a bath. Esoterically, it comprises

worship, good conduct and cleanliness; to withdraw the mind from wrong ways such as falsehood, violence and cheating; and to withdraw the intellect from evil thoughts and collect it at the Third Eye.

Gyan or knowledge, which is the achievement of Truth.

Guru Ram Das says:

On contemplation being successfully completed, all the four essentials of religion easily become part of the disciple.

Fruits of Contemplation

Tulsi Sahib, the Saint of Hathras, says:

It is immaterial whether or not a person has been born into this world if he does not contemplate upon the form of his Master.

Without beholding the Resplendent Form of the Master within one can never purify the mind. So long as the Radiant Form does not manifest, we remain ignorant of Gurmat and consequently of the higher planes of true spirituality.

Hafiz says:

Such inner contemplation is a gift from the Master. But it is obtained only when the Lord wills it. The outer learning and contemplation do not lead to God-Realization with the consequence that the soul continues to be tied to this world.

The Sikh Scriptures detail a number of the advantages that accrue from contemplation upon the form of the Master who is God Incarnate. By such contemplation one is freed from the shackles of this world. Then sin, misery

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and fear vanish, and one imbibes purity. The angels of death have nothing to do with such a one, for he attains equanimity and bliss, and gains his real Home. He is given honor and glory in the Court of the Lord. The Light merges in its Source. As a consequence, he has everlasting happiness, true knowledge and Naam. All desires are fulfilled. All impurities are removed. The soul transcends the world of phenomena and wins name and fame both in this world and the next.

CHAPTER 3. DETACHMENT

Discrimination is a prerequisite on the path of spirituality. It distinguishes between truth and untruth. One must understand the distinction between truth and untruth, between the permanent and the impermanent. It is a quality by which one can realize the nature of a thing correctly. It produces detachment.

Absence of attachment is detachment. Attachment is another name for longing or desire for material objects or persons. One becomes detached when he is able to take his attention away from these objects. A person with discrimination knows that this world is impermanent; it is all illusion and subject to dissolution. When detachment is achieved all these worldly objects and relations lose their importance, and all the ties of attachment are automatically loosened.

Detachment may also be described as non-attachment or disinterest in worldly objects. It is the name of the state of the mind in which love for anything in this world or the next vanishes.

When the mind is diverted from worldly objects and relations and is attracted towards a higher aim, that is also detachment; in other words, the mind is removed from the worldly longings and is restless in the feeling of separation from the Lord. The awakening of such love is also

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called detachment.

My mind is diverted (from the world) and I have a desire to have the Darshan of my God. My mind is acutely restless for this. (Adi Granth)

He alone is detached who has risen above attachment and is moving towards meeting the Lord by withdrawing completely from all worldly attractions. The Sikh Scriptures call God a Detached Being because He was never attached to anything, and because such a Being is free from all desire and is never a victim of attachments.

A person appears in this world and then vanishes from sight like a bubble. What happens prior to his birth and after his departure? The desire to know the secrets of this mystery of life arises in the mind of a seeker. In that state, his mind is naturally detached from worldly illusions and he tries to engage himself in a search for a much higher Being. Kabir says:

By thinking how this being came and where it will go, I became detached.

One who is deeply plunged into the world and its attachments can have no detachment. Neither can he achieve the true Detached Being as long as he is involved in the perplexities of life.

When one is in doubt one cannot achieve anything in this world, nor can one meet God. A person should either remain in the world and be firmly attached to his religious beliefs, or he should detach his mind from everything. If he once becomes detached and then again gets involved in the entanglements of the world, he is a most unfortunate person.

There is no advantage in becoming superficially detached by imitating others. Remaining away from Naam and reading Scriptures, going on pilgrimages, or retiring into jungles do not enable one to be attached to real love.

Pundits have been searching for Him in Scriptures. Others become detached and still have desires for bathing in holy waters and going on pilgrimages. Such detached persons even move from one jungle to another in search of Him. Only a rare one from among them is really attached to Him. (Adi Granth)

The Sanskrit word for spirituality means “Supreme Achievement.” One should therefore discriminate between Supreme Achievement and an ordinary benefit. He should follow the path by which he may get the true, pure and highest benefit. He should eliminate everything that is not necessary and should assimilate the Truth.

Man is a soul in human form and his connection with the world is through his body. The human body has been given to enable one to perform certain functions in this world.

The soul, being a particle of God, naturally feels happy when it has knowledge of God. But unfortunately man has followed an entirely different path. Saint Augustine says:

It is the great evil of man to desire to enjoy the things which he ought only to lose, and to lose those which he ought to enjoy.

In fact, everything pertaining to this world should be discarded, and everything pertaining to spirituality should be imbibed. That is real detachment. In order to meet God, one should detach oneself carefully and with

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discrimination. Then alone will he receive the real benefit; that is, he will be able to rise above the cycle of birth and death.

If one acquires detachment of the mind through careful discrimination, he is free from the cycle of birth and death. (Adi Granth)

In order to be truly detached, it is necessary to be detached from everything in this world. And to do this it is not necessary to leave one's home, society or other connections. Saints do not advocate that type of detachment. The real detachment is to detach one's soul and mind from the love of the world and its objects.

The outward detachment of persons, who are detached from the worldly objects indiscriminately and leave them outwardly only, can never bring peace. For then, attachment is still felt in the mind, and that cannot be the foundation of the true inner detachment. Such persons again fall victim to the worldly longings. One should, therefore, live in the world in name only – for mere subsistence – and should fix his soul in Naam, in the Master and in God who are all permanent. (Naam, Master and God are, in fact, one and the same).

Detachment and Renunciation

Detachment and renunciation are entirely distinct and independent of each other. One who is on the path of spirituality need not practice renunciation, but spirituality is not possible without detachment. Renunciation is connected with one's own fate karmas. Raja Janak, Guru Gobin Singh Sahib and many other highly evolved souls are examples of perfect detachment without renunciation. It is written in the Mahabharata that one who has renounced everything and retired into jungles is liable to the effects

of his environment.

When one meets a Perfect Master, then alone will he be able to understand fully the implication and the meaning of true detachment. Then he need not try to run away from the world and leave his household in order to lead a life of detachment.

Oh my mind! If you meet a True Master you need not run out to achieve detachment, because He is the bestower of all gifts and is the treasure of all comforts, and is the Foundation of Elixir, running at all times to take devotees into life everlasting. (Adi Granth)

In the company of a Master, the soul of a disciple imbibes the qualities of God and all other tastes in the world become insipid. The devotee is engaged in worldly pursuits, but within himself he is above their ties because of detachment. He lives in the world but he is not a man of the world. He realizes that God is the highest goal, and he forgets his world in remembrance of Him. So even while living in the world, he cannot forget Him.

The truly detached person knows that one day his own body, his house, his palace and all his worldly property – all attachment – have to be left behind, and nobody knows when this will happen. Therefore, he lives in this world in name only and gives more attention to the purification of his soul, for he does not wish to barter his soul for the sake of this world.

For what is the man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (St. Matthew 16:26, St. Mark 8:36)

Kabir says:

You have lost your soul in order to love the world, but this world

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will not accompany you! You have therefore cut your own feet with an axe, like a thoughtless man. (Adi Granth)

A Master fully imparts the true method of spiritual practice and also teaches the disciple how to live in this world without attachment. Thus the devotee earns his own living and carries on his household life within proper discipline and under set principles. The devotee also listens to the Sound Current and becomes worthy of attaining salvation.

One is able to get the secret of Naam from no one but a True Master, and thereafter all his desires vanish, his mind remains fixed in God and he becomes detached from life (in this world). Oh Nanak! When we meet a True Master all our desires are fulfilled, because we gain salvation even while experiencing the comforts of life. (Adi Granth)

What would happen if one were to leave his hearth and home? The mind would create new ties in a jungle, not only with the surroundings but also with abstract desires. If one cannot be detached there, where else can it be possible? Actually, detachment is not the renunciation of the objects of the world, but is the renouncing of the strong desires by which one is attached to this world.

Even if a man should leave his house, his wife, his children, etc., the evil desires already fixed in his mind would not leave him. The mind will create conditions to ensnare him in worldly ties.

As a householder, he had the ties of his house, his wife and his children; and, in the jungle, the different sects, disciples, masters and other social and institutional connections will take hold of him. In his home he was busy as a householder, but in the jungle he has the additional

headache of living on alms. The whole trouble is with the mind. When it is pure and controlled, then only one really becomes detached.

Who is a Detached Person?

When thoughts about the mysteries of life have a strong hold on the mind of some people, they leave this worldly life, renounce their household and become detached. Guru Nanak says:

Thousands of people renounce the world physically and claim to be detached, but true detachment is that which pleases the Lord. One who is really detached is one who listens to the Shabd (Sound Current, Word) and is filled with the fear of God, and carries out his spiritual discipline accordance with the precepts of his Master. He serves the Lord, meditates of Him, accumulates the Treasure of His Name; his thirst and hunger for worldly objects vanish; he feels His presence everywhere; he is fully satisfied with the Elixir of His Name; he is the truly detached person. He achieves this with the Grace of a Master.

One who has reached the stage where he can see his Master within at will, is always a detached person. He will completely disregard the criticism of others. A truly detached person is one who has a strong desire to meet the Lord and for whom it is not possible to live without him. He thinks of Him with very breath and considers life useless without Him.

My mind is now detached and I have a strong longing to meet Him. That place is blessed where Thou art. My mind has become detached and a feeling of renunciation has entered in me, because I yearned for the Darshan of my Friend, the Lord. Just as a butterfly cannot live without flowers, I cannot live without God. I am in love with my Beloved and I am now detached every minute of my life. This body is worthless without Him. I cannot sleep without

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the love of my Beloved. But when I meet God then my mind is full of bliss. (AdiGranth)

A detached person is absorbed in Shabd and is thus truly detached. Other are all on the downward path. The detached person beholds Light within himself and listen to the Shabd. Thereby his mind is fully attuned to the Lord.

A detached person is really detached if he is attached to the Shabd. Others are all making false claims and are following the wrong path. Oh my mother! My mind is attached to Shabd and is dyed in detachment. Therefor it has become completely detached. There is Light within, and through that Light comes the Shabd by which my mind is attuned to the True Lord. (Adi Granth)

Without service to the Master and without contemplation, everything is foggy. No one can cross the ocean of life without Shabd. But whosoever is absorbed in Shabd or Naam is a really detached person.

The world is all illusion without service to the Master. Without Shabd nobody can cross the ocean of this world. He alone is fully detached who is fully engrossed in Shabd, because this Shabd is True. Shabd is my Master and Shabd is my Spiritual Guide who is as deep as the sea. This world is a desolate land without Shabd. Only a truly detached person can attain the state of Sahaj. So says Nanak, Oh Ye! Take it as True! (Adi Granth)

A person who is absorbed in Naam is always detached. Even when he is leading a householder's life, his mind is attached to the real Truth. (Adi Granth)

He alone is a real detached Sadhu in whose mind Naam has entered. He who has known himself by attuning himself to Naam is detached. (Adi Granth)

A truly detached person rises to the regions above, because true detachment comes after crossing the three gunas (attributes). Such a person goes to his Home. (Adi Granth)

A detached person has his mind fixed on his Home and is free from hope and despair. He is fully satisfied with the gift of Naam and is contented because he has drunk deep from the Ocean of Amrit (Elixir) in the Sahadj. (Adi Granth)

The mind is day and night detached, and the soul has fixed its abode in the Spiritual Region above Sun Madhal (Daswan Dwar). It was the magnificent blessing of my Master who gave me the knowledge of Alakh Lok (the Indescribable Region). (Adi Granth)

He is detached who is dyed in the color of God, because his mind is attuned with Naam and he drinks the nectar of immortality. He follows Hakum (the Will of the Lord); he has true knowledge, and he has destroyed his mind and the mind's desires.

A detached person is always engrossed in the Naam of God, and the Lord is always near such a one. Oh my God! I can live only if I meet Thee. Have mercy on me and give me a glimpse of Thy Darshan. (Adi Granth)

Everlasting bliss is enjoyed by those who have understood the knowledge of Truth, by the Grace of the Lord. Oh Nanak! I say only that person is detached who has his mind permanently fused in Him. (Adi Granth)

Only a Gurumukh is truly detached. He has control over his five senses and has subdued lust and anger as well as his mind.

A Gurumukh has attained pure Light and all his doubts have vanished. Oh Nanak! A Gurumukh is always the recipient of joy and he is constantly detached in the Name of God. (Adi Granth)

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Through the Grace of my Master I have conquered all my five senses, and through His Grace also I have acquired the virtues of forgiveness and patience. That person is really worthy of all praise who sings the praises of the Lord. (Adi Granth)

Oh Ram (God)! He who has subdued his mind is the real detached person. (Adi Granth)

Such a person, having realized his self, lives desirelessly in the world of desires. His mind is in contemplation day and night. Such a person is really detached and merges in the Lord. One who has renounced all desires and is also free from the attachment of illusion, is detached from all directions and really has detachment ingrained in his mind. Such a person is very fortunate.

With the Grace of God and our karmas, detachment is acquired through a Master by His Satsang and by following his precepts implicitly. One who is gifted by God with the quality of fear, obtains real detachment through that fear.

Detachment is actually a pre-requisite for meeting the Lord. Real detachment is produced when Shabd is heard within, because then the ties with the world are broken. When one becomes detached the cycle of birth and death is ended; pain, worry and separation will never come; illusion is destroyed and the bliss of Sahaj is attained.

CHAPTER 4. REPETITION OF NAMES AND AUSTERITIES

Human birth is obtained only through great good fortune. On getting it we should follow the spiritual path and the teachings that are preached by the Saints. Human birth is rare. It cannot be had again and again. If we miss this opportunity we would regret it very much later on.

Kabir says:

Oh Kabir, human birth is rare and cannot be had again and again; just as fruit which ripens falls to the ground and cannot be re-stored to the branch. (Kabir, Salok, 1366)

The rung of the ladder from which the hand has slipped cannot be caught again; even so is the human life wasted. (Belawal M3, 796)

He who misses the rung has to undergo the torture of coming and going. (Mam M5, 1075)

Shamas-i-Tabrez also says to the same effect:

Thousands of eons pass before this wealth (human body) is gained. How can I get it again if I let it go this time?

Man is engrossed, body and soul, in this world. He does not think of that other abode where he will someday go and live.

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To the abode, he is to leave, he is attached; for the abode where he has to go and live forever, he cares not. (Sri Rag M5, 43)

It is therefore, necessary that before leaving this world man should make some provision for the hereafter.

A journey to a strange land lies ahead of all; o ignorant one, beware, for death is near!

Human birth is the top of creation. It is obtained only by great good fortune. Human birth provides us with an opportunity to meet the Lord. Guru Arjan Sahib says:

For many births was I a moth or insect. For many births was I an elephant, a fish, or a deer. For many births was I a serpent or a bird. For many births was I grass and trees. Now there is an opportunity to meet the Lord, this body of glory has been obtained after long ages. (Gauri M5, 176)

The human body has been gained as a means of meeting the Lord. (Asa M5, 379)

Nothing is gotten free in this world. Of course, those in whose heart the fire of love is raging, need not do anything. Until such time as one obtains this wealth, he should make an effort and hold out his palms to receive. Shamas-i-Tabrez says that if you have not developed yearning for the Lord, you should remain busy in remembering Him, for the Lord does not withhold wages from the laborer.

Since you have no love, worship Him, for He would not hold back the wages of the laborers.

The Lord knows how to sustain and support his creatures.

In the Court of the Lord there is no dearth of anything. If there is anything wanting, it is our own service. It is because of this that we do not get His Grace. (Kabir Sahib)

In the Court of the Lord nothing is lacking; man does not receive Grace because of his lack of service. (Kabir Sahib)

Shamas-i-Tabrez says that the ferment becomes wine only after it has matured for a long time in the vat. If you wish to be intoxicated with divine love, you should engage yourself in spiritual practice.

The ferment does not become wine until after it matures in the vat for a long time. If you wish your heart to be illuminated, you should practice for a long time.

Offer your mind at the altar of His beauty and become desireless. The Lord Himself will then find some means of redeeming you. In order to offer their minds, people perform many repetitions of names (Japs) and austerities (Tap), practice self-discipline, fasts, pilgrimages and so forth, so as to generate love for the Lord. If one offers his heart sincerely to the Lord, He who is the source of mercy becomes kind and creates means for redeeming the offerer.

The nature of repetition of names and austerities is considered in detail below.

Repetition of Names (Jap)

Jap means repetition. It includes the mastery of mantras (set forms of words) as well as the method of succeeding in its practice. The aim of these methods is to touch the feet of the Lord. They are of five kinds: repetition (Jap); offerings in fire (Homa); water oblations offered to ancestors

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(Tarpan); special prayers to deities (Abhishek); feeding of Brahmins (Brahm Bhog).

According to the Scriptures, mantras are repeated for attaining various desires. They are practiced in several ways. Sometimes a mantra is added both before and after another mantra, as in 'Om Ram Om' (Sampat) . Sometimes a mantra is read as it is, as 'Om Nameh Rama' (Alom).

Sometimes it is repeated in the reverse order, as 'Rama Nameh Om' (Wilom). Similarly, various other methods are adopted, each leading to different results. In this way various powers are said to be acquired through the practice of mantras relating to Bhairon, Kali, Lakshmi, Hanuman and various other gods and goddesses. These mantras are called a Bhairon shield (Bhairon Kawach), Kali Shield (Kali Kawach), Durga Shield (Durga Kawach), etc. They are said to protect the body just as a coat of mail protects the arms and body of a warrior. But in the various hymns of the Gurus the Name of the in-dwelling Lord is described as the shield of the devotees.

Rama is the coat of mail which protects the devotee. It cannot be harmed by the enemy. (Gori M5, 868)

I am surrounded by Rama on all sides and no trouble can come to me, my brother. (Bilawal M5, 819)

To get the benefit of the Jewel of Ram Naam (the Name of God) is the purpose of repetition (Jap). The four Vedas all point out that the treasure of salvation lies in the Name of the Lord (Ram Naam), and to find the treasure is the purpose of all repetition (Jap).

The priceless Jewel of the Name is the essence of all repetition. (Ramkali M1, 931)

After studying all the four Vedas, the learned have come to the conclusion that the way to achieve happiness and salvation is the recitation of the Name of the Lord (Ram Naam). (Gori M5, 267-10)

For this reason stress is laid in the hymns of the Saints on the repetition of the immortality-giving Name.

Repeat the Nectar of Naam, oh tongue, for It makes the humble devotee its own. (Kabir, Gori, 331-6)

What is this Repetition? This repetition is the Lord Himself. He is also the reciter. This recitation is Nectar personified.

He Himself makes us repeat, and He does the repetition Himself. He Himself is the Nectar, He is the dear one, and He Himself is the taste of the Nectar. (Sorath M3, 605-15)

The repetition of the Name of the Lord is the essence of happiness and its remembrance is the highest flight of thought. With such repetition human life becomes successful. The mind becomes satisfied when it drinks this water of immortality and attains everlasting life.

These efforts result in bliss, for remembrance is the essence of happiness. Therefore repeat the Name of the Lord, the essence of wisdom. (Bilawal M5, 815)

Life is fruitful when it hears the Name of the Lord. Recitation leads to a happy life. Drinking the Nectar of the Name satisfies the mind. (M5 Mam 1018-15)

Those on whom the Lord showers His Grace repeat His Name.

He who obtains His Grace is the one who contemplates. He ever

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recites the Name of the Lord and by this he gains happiness. (Maru M4, 998)

It is mentioned in the hymns of the Gurus that of all the paths, the best path or the purest action is to repeat the Lord's Name.

The best of all religions (Dharam) is the pure action of repeating the Name of the Lord. (Gauri M5, 266)

The Lord is unknowable and unfathomable. Man has only a very limited capacity, and without the Master's help is not competent to perform his repetition (Jap) or to understand Him.

Nothing can be gained from repetition, austerity or self-control without the Master's help. From the very beginning the Lord is unknowable and unfathomable. (Maru M5, 1005)

The real recitation is that in which the mind finds God. This is the highest knowledge.

That recitation is the best in which man finds God and gets the highest knowledge. (Magh M5, 900)

The technique of remembrance and repetition of the Name of God is obtained by the company of the Master (Guru). It is only through the Grace of the Lord that man sings His praises and can continue to do so.

Remember the Lord in the company of the Master, oh Nanak! Repetition brings salvation by dyeing one in the color of His Name. (Gauri M5, 298)

Let us always sing the praises of the Lord. You have always enabled us to do so, oh Master and merciful Lord. (Asa M5, 399)

Austerities (Tap)

The meaning of Tap is to undergo physical or mental hardship or to perform any practice that removes egotism. It is called Riyazat in Persian. To live in jungles and subsist on roots and fruits, sitting in fire, exposing oneself to five fires (to sit with fire on all sides, and to bear the heat of the sun from above as the fifth fire), to lie on nails fixed in the ground, to remain standing with one hand raised, to sit in water and to undergo other physical and mental sufferings are called Tap (austerities). The purpose of performing these austerities is that the mind may become pure, and that lust, anger, attachment, greed and egotism may be removed so that realization of the Lord may be attained. Many persons leave their homes owing to domestic troubles and in order to escape responsibilities. They leave their homes and go to other places and put on ochre colored clothes; but lust, anger, attachment, greed and egotism accompany them.

One donneth ochre robes and warmeth oneself by the side of smoldering fire, and stung by worries, one abandoneth the household, and forsaking one's land, one wandereth from place to place. But, Lord, keepeth one within the five demons wherever one goeth. (Prabhati M5, 1348)

In the religion of the Saints, no importance is attached to austerities that cause pain to the body, since by exposing the body to water and fire the inner fire is not extinguished, nor by keeping the hand raised is egotism removed.

The inner fire is not extinguished without a Master, however much one may expose oneself to outer fire. (Maru M1, 1013-1)

By practicing ascetism or exposing oneself to the heat of the sun, the ego is not removed. (Sri Rag M3, 33)

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By practicing Hath Yoga the body becomes weak. The mind is not calmed by fasts and austerities. (Ramkali M1, 905-4)

Sheikh Farid says:

I would heat the body like an oven or feed the fire with my bones, and walk on my head when my feet become tired, if I could but meet my Beloved.

It is not necessary to heat the body like an oven or to burn one's bones. The head and feet have done you no wrong. The Lord is inside you. Turn inwards.

Do not heat the body like an oven or burn your bones like fuel. The head and feet have done no wrong. See the Lord within. (Salok M1, other than Wars 1411)

If one's goal can be achieved without causing suffering to the body, then why undergo such suffering? Kabir Sahib says,

Put on the mantle of knowledge and contemplation. Make the body the firewood and ignite it with the fire generated at the eye center. Bear the love of the Lord in the heart and know all the four yugas (ages) in trance. That supreme yoga which created body and life is Ram Naam (Lord's Name). It is only when the Lord is kind that one attains the true ideal.

He who follows the path taught by the Master wears the coat of knowledge stitched with the needle of meditation and the thread of Shabd. He uses compassion as a rake and the body as firewood, and ignites the fire of the eye center. He bears love for Him in his heart and contemplates in trance on all the four yugas (ages). All yoga is included in the Name of the Lord to whom belong this body and life. Oh Kabir! When He has compassion, He leads him to the true ideal. (Kabir, Asa, 477-9)

Gurus describe the real austerities through which the cycle of birth and death is ended and the soul reaches the door of the Master. The greatest of the austerities is the Master's service, through which the Lord dwells in the heart. In this way one reaches the door of the Master.

The Master's service is the best of all austerities. The Lord dwells in the heart of the man who performs such service and removes all his sufferings. He sees the Lord as the Door of the Truth. (Asa M3, 423)

The Gurus say that the true ascetic is he who has obtained the company of the Saints.

He is the true ascetic who has the company of the Saints and is dyed in the hue of the Master. (Basant M5, 1180)

He who withdraws his mind and senses from the pleasures of the senses and puts them in the service of the Master is a real ascetic. But if he is false of mind, always tells lies, runs after illusion (Maya), calls himself an ascetic but acts dishonestly, performs pilgrimages to all the sacred places, but has not controlled the mind and the senses, he will make no spiritual progress and will not gain salvation.

The false-hearted man earns falsehood. He runs after Maya and calls himself an ascetic. Steeped in ignorance he visits all the sacred places. How can such an ascetic gain salvation? (Ramkali War M3, 948)

Of course, if with a sincere heart, with clean intentions, and through the kindness of the Master, such a one perseveres in the truth he will then give up his wanderings outside and will get inner bliss and salvation. These aus-

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terities alone should be practiced because they alone lead to salvation.

With the Grace of the Master attain truth; oh Nanak, such an ascetic attains salvation. (Ramkali War M3, 648-16)

I have given up searching outside, for the Master showed me the Lord inside. I realized the wonderful Form of the Lord, and my mind no longer wanders. (Maru M5, 1002-3)

The Effect of the Iron Age (Kali Yuga)

The Iron Age has still a long time to last. Man is feeble. No one can properly do right actions. Dharam (duties), charity, pilgrimages and true austerities cannot be practiced. An adverse wind is blowing. He who practices the Name gets a bad name. Those who indulge in an outward show of piety or practice hypocrisy are considered to be respectable.

Kali Yuga is neither found in a particular land, nor at a pilgrim-station. Nor is it in a set-mansion and certainly not where men practice charity. Whosoever practices truth in this age, loses. And austerities bear no fruit. Moreover whosoever utters the Lord's Name is defamed: These are the signs by which Kali Yuga is known. (Ramkali M1, 902-17)

In this age all the world is indulging in selfishness owing to the restlessness of the mind, no one can properly devote himself to repetition of sacred names (Jap), austerities (Tap). or fasts or worships, and people are spoiling their chances of happiness in their future life by forgetting the Name.

Repetition of mantras (Jag), austerities (Tap), fasts or worship are of no avail to one who has a feeling of otherness from the Lord. (Kabir, Gauri, 324)

Oh Nanak, he who forsakes the Name is confused wherever he goes. All his Jap, austerities and self-discipline are wasted and he is at the mercy of others. (Sorath War M3, 148-19)

Unless one gets the correct method from the Master and develops true love and devotion, all his repetition, austerities, self-control, fasts and holy baths are in vain.

What use are repetitions, austerities, self-discipline, fasts, or baths in sacred streams unless one knows the way of loving devotion to the Lord. (Kabir, Gauri, 337)

In the Iron Age the outer repetition of mantras and the practice of austerities do not lead to salvation. The repetition of mantras, austerities, self-control, fasts, worship and so forth do not eradicate the feeling of egotism. The soul is entangled in the cleverness of the mind and the jungle of Maya. It does not find the way of escape from these snares.

Repetition, austerities and self-discipline practiced by an ego-centric man do not cure his malady since he will still suffer from pride, and the feeling of otherness is still alive with him. (Suhi M4, 732-7)

All repetitions, austerities and cleverness lead only to wandering in the wilderness. (Asa M1, 412-2)

In the Iron Age no action or ritual except the practice of Naam leads to salvation.

In the Iron Age no action or ritual is of any avail; except for the practice of Naam there is no other way.

The lure of the senses is very strong and widespread. The ascetic and the pundit, lured by austerities and greed,

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remain separated from the Lord.

The ascetics are led astray by austerities and the pundits by greed. (Asa M5, 370)

The poison of Maya is spread far and wide. But he who practices repetition rises and realizes. (Gauri M5, 210)

Unless Maya is destroyed, hundreds of actions, the repetition of mantras and the practice of austerities are of no account.

Without destroying Maya one gets nowhere, no matter what he may do in the way of countless actions, repetitions or austerities. (Gauri M5, 238)

The repetition of mantras, the practice of austerities, fasts and self-control and the making of pilgrimages do not lead to peace of mind. Peace of mind comes only after one takes refuge with the Master or the Lord.

I practiced repetition, austerities and fasts to see the feet of the Lord. But the fire cannot be extinguished without taking refuge in the Lord. (M 5 Bilawal 545)

What are True Repetition, Austerities and Self-Control?

The teachings of the Saints say that only those repetitions, austerities and services are beneficial which are dear to the Lord. They remove the feeling of selfishness and separateness.

Only that repetition, austerity and service is approved which is dear to the Lord. It is He who forgives and unites to Himself and removes egotism. (Sarang War M3, 1247-16)

The Lord is manifested in the Master. Therefore, obedience to Him is true repetition, austerities and self-control. The purpose of all austerities and self-control is to develop the soul (surat).

This development can only be achieved through the Grace of the Master. This is dear to the Lord. Such service is fruitful.

Repetition, austerities, self-discipline and obedience to the Master are to be performed by the devotee. Oh Nanak, service is done to develop the soul. This is acceptable to the Lord, and one then finds reality. (Sri Rag M4, 88-6)

For this reason the service of the Master is superior to all austerities. As a result of this the Lord dwells in the heart of the seeker and he forgets all hardships.

The Master's service is the best of all austerities. When the Lord's Name dwells in the heart, It removes all sufferings. (Asa M3, 423-13)

It is said that remembrance of the Lord and His dwelling in the heart constitute repetition, austerities and self-control.

Remembrance of the Lord includes all repetitions, austerities and worship. Remembrance of the Lord removes the feeling of otherness. (Gauri M5, 262-17)

He in whose mind dwells the Lord is the man who practices repetition, austerities and self-discipline, and who is the knower of the essence of things. The life of the disciple who has the Jewel of the Name is indeed perfect. (Sorath M5, 615-6)

The real austerity consists in finding the Master and practicing the Yoga of the Sound Current (Surat Shabd

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Yoga). There is no other true repetition or austerity or self-control. The Sound Current or Shabd is within all persons and is only obtained through the direction of the Master. Action, duties, purity, self-control, repetition and austerities are all based on the Shabd or inner Sound. The essence of all repetition and austerities is the Divine Sound.

He only is an ascetic who leads a life of austerity, meets a Master and gets from Him the Shabd. (Ramkali M3, 948)

There is no true repetition, austerity or self-discipline unless one practices the Shabd taught by the Master. (Maru M3, 1067-7)

Repetition, austerities and self-discipline are obtained when one practices the Shabd given by the Master. (Maru War M3, 1092-11)

All actions, duties, true self-discipline, repetition, austerities and pilgrimages dwell in the Shabd. (Parbhathi M1, 1332)

He who has the Shabd gains the door of salvation. In Shabd is contained the essence of all repetitions and austerities. (Dhanasri M3, 861)

The Name or Shabd is superior to all practices such as charities or donations, repetition or austerities. A person may go to Banaras and practice austerities there, or may hang upside down or may expose his body to fire, or may practice ascetism, or may perform the horse sacrifice, or may give gold in charity. He may do various repetitions and austerities. He may study all the religious books (Dharam Shastras and Sumrities). He may do various good acts and duties, observe fasts, and engage in internal introspection and contemplation. He may leave his home and wander in the forests, but none of these can equal the practice of the Lord's Name (Ram Naam):

The Name is superior to donation, charity and austerities. The tongue that remembers the Lord leads one to fulfillment. (Asa M5, 401-3)

If one practices austerities at Banaras and dies while hanging upside down at a sacred spot, or sits near fire or rejuvenates himself or performs the Ashumedha Yagna (horse sacrifice) or gives gold in sealed covers, all this does not equal the sacred practice of the Lord's Name. (Namdev, Ramkali, 973-10)

Repetitions, austerities, knowledge and contemplation, reading the six shastras and commentaries on them, performing of yoga practices, actions and duties, or wandering in the forests without performing any action, do not equal the remembrance of the Lord. Oh Nanak, it is sufficient for the beloved of the Guru simply to repeat the Name. (Gori M5, 625)

Sincere love is the essence of all repetitions and austerities. He whose mind is pure and who contemplates with love and devotion on the feet of the Lord must be considered to have performed all repetitions and austerities.

He whose heart and body are pure, who loves truly, and meditates on the feet of the Great Lord, must be considered as having performed all repetitions and austerities. (Sri Rag M5, 48-13)

Love is preferable to all repetitions, austerities, self-discipline, rapture, delight, honor and sacred knowledge.

Repetitions, austerities, self-discipline, gay happiness, glory and pride, oh Musan! are nothing as compared to love. (Chobole M5, 1364-3)

Real repetition, austerities and worship are those which lead to Love for the Lord. Love for the Lord is real. All else is false.

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That repetition, that austerity, that fast and that worship is true which increases one's love for the Lord. Without love for the Lord every other love is false and is forgotten in a moment. (Berari M4, 720-13)

How Real Repetition and Austerities are Practiced and Their Fruit

The repetition and austerities which are related to the practice of Naam depend upon the Grace of the Lord. Only he on whom the Lord bestows them can have them.

The Name contains repetitions, austerities and self-discipline. May the Lord bless us with His gracious look. (Prabhathi M5, 1348)

Repetitions, austerities, self-discipline, compassion and duties are practiced by those who are blessed by Him. (Ramkali M5, 966)

The company of the Saints is gained through the Grace of the Lord. The devotees of the Saints repeat the blessed Name of the Lord.

Those who get the Grace of the Lord gain the company of the Saints. They live on the Nectar of the Name of the Lord. (Suhi M5, 762)

The Grace of the Lord descends through a Saint or Godman. It is only through Him that repetition, austerities and self-discipline can be successful. With the help of a Saint, Naam resides in the heart and the devotee finds a place at the Door of the Lord.

Repetitions, austerities and self-discipline are obtained through the Guru by one in whose heart dwells the Name. Oh Nanak, by cherishing the Name he finds a place at the Door of the Lord and is glorified. (Sorath M5, 602)

He who finds a Master may be considered to have performed all austerities, fasts and pilgrimages. No effort, cleverness or other form of striving is of any avail. The main thing is to find a Master. All repetitions, austerities, purity and self-control depend on His Will. Those, for whom He wills it, can do them.

Pilgrimages, fasts and austerities are all dispensed with by the Lord when one meets a Master. (Ramkali M1, 879)

No effort, wisdom or artifice is of any avail. It is all given by the Perfect Master. Only those repetitions and austerities are true which are practiced by him, and which he gets done by others. (Gori Ramkali M, 915)

It is only when the Lord is merciful that, through the Grace of the Master, the full fruits of repetitions, austerities and self-discipline are obtained.

Repetitions, austerities, self-discipline and true greatness are obtained by the Grace of the Master and the help of the Lord. (Gori M5, 196)

For this reason service of the Master is the highest form of austerity. By serving the Master with body, mind and soul, the Lord resides in the heart and all worldly cares are destroyed.

Service of the Master is the best of all austerities. The Lord then dwells in them and all sufferings are ended. (Asa M3, 423)

The Lord of Death bows at the feet of those who repeat the Name according to the directions and instructions of the Master, and they are looked after by the Lord.

He who repeats the Name gets wisdom from the Master. The messengers of death are like pebbles under his feet. (Maru M1, 1042)

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Do good deeds and repeat the Name as directed by the Master. He looks after His followers and they realize the true secret. (Gori War M4, 317)

There can be no repetition, austerities or self-control unless the pleasures of the senses are given up. This can only be done by controlling the ten apertures of the body and by repetition of the Name.

He who gives up sense pleasures and evil deeds and contemplates on the soul, his repetition, austerities and self-discipline bear fruit. His lotus opens and drops of honey fall within. (Sri Rag M1, 23-17)

He who controls all the ten doors is contented of heart and repeats the Name. (Gori M5, 298-19)

These repetitions and austerities are obtained by sincere devotees through good fortune. Such a one becomes free from all ailments and is immersed in ecstasy day and night.

Oh Nanak, by repeating the Names the sincere devotees realize the Lord. (Sorath M1,598)

By repetition of the Name the devotee is rid of ailments and his body becomes healthy. He daily contacts the Lord in trance, while absorbed in deep meditation on His Name. (Varhansu M4, 574)

He is the true devotee, ascetic and house-holder who constantly remembers the Lord and thereby gets the gift of repetitions, austerities and self-discipline. Oh Nanak, the true devotee repeats the peace-giving Name in the approved manner. (Basant M5, 1184)

He is the true house-holder who controls himself and gets the gifts of repetitions, austerities and self-discipline. (Ramkali War M1,

852-12)

Remembrance of the Lord and praise of His Name lead to various benefits, according to the Gurus. All desires, ignorance and cares are destroyed, and death and rebirth end. All good intentions are fulfilled. The heart is filled with happiness, bliss and joys. The lotus opens and ego-tism disappears. The fear of death is overcome and one does not go to hell. He crosses the world of phenomena in safety. The Lord is seen everywhere and in everything. One not only crosses the world himself, but takes others also along with him. He is saved from the depredations of the five robbers (the senses), and attains the stage of easy and natural trance in meditation (Sahaj avastha). He is beholden to the Lord. The remembrance of the Master is remembrance of the Lord. The True Gurus, therefore, take care to explain the benefits of remembrance of the Master.

CHAPTER 5. THE MASTER OR PERFECT MASTER (Guru or Satguru)

What do we understand by the term “Guru”, and who is the Guru?

To know a Master or to understand His real significance or reality is, in fact very difficult. To do this, discerning eyes like His own are necessary. Only a Godman can know a Godman. How can a person, who is confined in the case of the body, realize the Lord’s glory? Unless we are as great as He is, we cannot understand Him.

*He who is as high as He is, He alone can know the One on High.
(Jap Ji, 5-10)*

Only a swan flying with other swans can know them. How can the doves and crows know from which country the swans come and to what land they go? The Guru, like that fabled bird which remains always in the sky, does His work on the earth, and then takes flight and returns to the skies.

He is beyond the three bodies (gross, subtle and causal), the three gunas, the five elements, earth, water, fire, air and ether, and the twenty-five prakritis; and He is beyond the reach of the mind and Maya.

Shamas-i-Tabriz says about the Perfect Masters or Sat-

gurus:

There are birds who lay golden eggs, they fly to the realm of the skies every morning, when they run they seem like suns in the seventh region. When they sleep, they make the sun and moon their pillows. Oh Shamas-i-Tabriz, they enable thousands of those born blind, with one kind look, to see the path.

The Perfect Masters are those who have indistinguishably become one with the Lord. They are born in human form according to the wishes of the Lord, so that they may take souls from the lower regions and unite them with the Lord. They connect with the Lord those who follow their instructions, and make them like themselves. Actually, they look after the entire universe.

A man standing on the top of the hill can see a fire whether it be near or far. Similarly, the Perfect Masters find out those that are engaged in selfless service or those that are earnestly seeking God, no matter where they are, whether far or near. They help them and become the means of uniting them with the Lord. It is necessary to have a special receptacle in order to obtain special Grace of the Masters. The receptacle is filled according to the state of its preparedness. The Perfect Masters freely distribute spiritual powers. One can, by their Grace, progress rapidly and unite with the Lord in this very life.

Although the Masters have assumed human forms similar to our own and live amongst us, yet they live with the Lord of all regions and universes. They appear to be bound to earth because of their bodies, but they live beyond the seven skies.

Their bodies are in the world, but their souls are with the Lord of the world; their bodies are tied to earth, but their souls are beyond

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the seven skies. (Moinud-din Chishti)

Outwardly they have the human form but inwardly they are quite different. Maulana Rumi says:

Do not judge the Saints by your intellect. Our words for milk (shir) and tiger (sher) are written in the same way, but in substance they are not the same.

Do not try to judge the Saints by means of your intellect. In Persian, the words “shir” and “sher” are written almost alike. But one sher is the tiger which kills and devours, while the other shir is the milk that sustains us.

Similarly, though human beings have similar shapes and forms, they differ in spiritual development. It is the spiritual development which fulfils the object of human life. It tears off all worldly attachments, destroys all doubts and the Sustainer of life is attained.

How can we adequately praise the Perfect Master or Satguru? He is the ocean of truth and wisdom. He is the embodiment of the Supreme Lord who has existed from the beginning throughout the ages.

How can the Guru be praised? The Guru is the ocean of wisdom. He is from the beginning, throughout the ages; He is the ever-existing Supreme Lord. (Asa M5, 397-1)

It is impossible to praise the Supreme Lord adequately. The Perfect Master is His manifestation and it is therefore also impossible, to praise Him adequately. He is like the Lord, beyond the reach of thought, imagination, inference, guess, theory and reasoning. He cannot be seen, heard or described. Book after book can be written and the whole of one's life may be spent in writing, but still one would

not be able to describe even one letter relating to His personality.

You are beyond inference, imagination, probabilities or intellect. You are beyond what I have seen, heard or read. The book is finished and life has drawn to a close. We are still only at the first letter.

The realized ones say that if all the earth were to be used as paper, all the trees as pens and all the seas as ink, we would not be able to describe His virtues. Kabir Sahib says:

If I were to mix all the mountains in the sea to make ink, and were to use the whole earth as paper, I would not be able to describe His virtues.

The Masters are spiritual Kings. We are beggars, deceived by Maya (the illusion) of the material world. How can we know their glory? Maulana Rumi says that if he were to praise and glorify the Lord till doomsday, he would not be able to do so.

If I were to describe His mercy until doomsday, it would be fruitless, for there is no limit and no end to it.

If we were to attempt to describe the Lord, we could only describe Him according to our intellect. If a buffalo were to describe Him, it would describe Him as a great buffalo. What comparison is there between a king and a buffalo? Guru Arjun Sahib says:

You are a King. You are the Emperor of Emperors, we call You the Exalted One, or the Master. Do we really praise You by such honorifics? It is in a sense, insulting You.

Thou art the King, oh Lord; if I call Thee a chieftain then is it any

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praise for Thee? (Bilawal M1, 795-3)

If a small child were to stand before his mother and say, "Mother, I know you", how imperfect would his understanding of his mother be? Similarly, how can we sing the praises of the Guru? Our praises would be so imperfect.

It is fortunate that whenever such Perfect Masters appear, they themselves give out a few hints regarding their true nature. For it is certain that unless they themselves reveal themselves, the human beings, who are spiritually asleep and under the sway of attachment and Maya, would not know them.

Let us, then, ask them what the Perfect Master or Guru is, and who He is? They say:

The Shabd or Divine Music is the Perfect Master. The Shabd is indistinguishable from the Supreme Lord. It is a conscious current of that Great Power which created the universe and which fully pervades it. All the universe emanated from this Shabd.

Who is your Guru, of whom are you the disciple? (Ramkali M1, 942-19)

The Shabd is the Guru and the soul is the disciple. (Sidh Gosht M1, 943-2)

The Shabd is the Guru, the ancient, the deep. The world would be a madhouse without the Shabd. (Sorath M1, 635-7)

The Word is the Guru, the Guru is the Word; in the Word is the nectar, which the Guru says we must accept. The Guru manifests Himself and redeems His disciples. (Nat M4, 982-11)

Tulsi Sahib says:

The soul, the disciple, and the Shabd, the Guru, travel together on the path. There is an inverted well in the sky, the soul becomes absorbed in it.

Bhai Gurdas Ji says:

Know the Shabd to be the Guru: your Guru will reveal this. Become the beloved disciple. The soul will follow the Melody. (War 7, Pauri 20)

Kabir Sahib says:

Where is your Guru? Where does the disciple live? How do the two happen to meet? When do the two separate? How do they come and go? The Guru is in the sky. The disciple is in the heart. The soul meets the Shabd. Then they never separate. Accept the Shabd as the Guru.

Most Gurus are false, they seek their personal ends, and wander about for self-gratification. The Shabd is the Guru of the entire universe.

Those in whom the Shabd Guru is manifest are indistinguishable from the Shabd. He alone is a Saint or Perfect Master who can initiate others. The Shabd is a manifestation of the Supreme Lord, and it is revealed to the Saints or Perfect Masters. They are indistinguishable from the Lord.

I churned the sea of the body, and saw a wonderful sight. The Lord is the Guru and the Guru is the Lord; oh Nanak, there is no difference between the two. (Asa M5, 442-18)

One who practices the Shabd is a Perfect Master or Perfect Guru. This is evident if we consider the word Guru

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etymologically. Guru is a Sanskrit word. It comes from the root "Gri", which means to call or speak or utter a sound. One who bestows the Shabd, one who practices the Divine Sound of the Shabd or is connected with the Shabd, is a Perfect Guru.

The Gurus have described the Perfect Guru in this way and have emphasized the necessity of taking shelter with such a one.

He instills truth in your mind; accept Him as your Guru. The unutterable He makes you utter; He unites you with the Divine Sound. (Dhanasri M1, 686-7)

Oh Nanak, know the Truth to be the True One. (Sri Rag M1, 15-18)

He is unutterable, but He makes us experience Him. He connects us with the Shabd. Kabir Sahib says that he who makes us see the invisible is a Saint or Satguru.

Oh brother, He is a Sant Satguru, who makes us see the invisible.

The Perfect Guru makes us hear the Divine Melody of the Shabd.

He is a Perfect Guru, who makes us hear the Shabd. He makes us offer devotion; He makes us contemplate upon Him. (Maru M3, 1055-6)

Kabir Sahib also says the same thing:

In their own spheres, all are great holy men. But he who has realized the Shabd, He is the greatest of all. There are various Gurus, and there are differences in their approach. Worship that Guru alone, who connects you to the Shabd.

Tulsi Sahib has also given the same definition of a True Guru.

He who knows the different Divine Sounds, He is indeed a great Saint. He knows the Unknowable, He knows the Word.

The Perfect Master or Guru is similarly described in the Sar Bachan:

He alone is the Guru who loves the Shabd. He who knows it not is not a Perfect Guru. He who practices the Shabd is a Perfect Guru. Bow before such a Guru. Become the dust of His feet.

The Perfect Master or Satguru is the true physician, for He has the life-giving herb of the Name or Shabd. The Satguru is the custodian of the Shabd, and it is the Shabd that takes the soul to its source. It is described as the Voice of the Silence in Theosophy, and it resounds in all the universes and regions.

The Saints, in their hymns, consider one who practices listening to the Divine Sound to be a True Guru. One cannot obtain true initiation except from such a Saint. When the disciple's efforts bear fruit, he realizes the Shabd and merges in the Lord, the source of the current.

Realize the Shabd and meet the Lord; your service will then be accepted. (Sri Rag M3, 27-9)

The Lord Himself, as the Shabd, pervades the Guru and showers the Shabd through Him.

He Himself pervades the Guru, He pervades as the Shabd. He who loves the True One merges in the True One. (Malar M1, 1279-14)

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The True Guru is merged in the Shabd

All the True Gurus were merged in the Shabd of Satguru; Nanak, Angad and Amar Das, thrice blessed is Guru Ram Das, His Guru connected Him with the Divine Touchstone. (Sawayye M4, 1407-13)

The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. (Bible)

All true devotees get the Shabd, which is real life, from the Perfect Guru. He is life in himself, and since He is free from ego, the Shabd speaks through Him. He has transcended the valley of death. He has realized the life of the Lord, which works through the Sound, and He himself can give that life or spiritual awakening to His disciples.

The soul is entangled in the inertness of Maya or illusion. In order to free it, it is necessary to breathe the Shabd into it, so that what is hidden may manifest itself. This cannot be accomplished by anyone except a Perfect Master or Guru. The enlightened ones say that it is only the Perfect Guru who can establish contact with the Sound.

That which is on trust should be returned; happiness lies in doing so. The Shabd of the Guru is established only in Him; it cannot be manifested in anyone else. (Sarang M3, 1249-8)

The realization of the Divine Sound is the holy gift of the Perfect Guru. The realization is not the result of one's own effort. How can hearing of the Shabd, which is limitless, be the result of one's own limited efforts? It is beyond such limits. When the unsophisticated, simple child begins to creep towards its mother, the mother lifts the child up.

The Lord is not attained by effort, He is not attained by service. He meets one of His own accord. He to whom He is kind meets a

perfect Guru, and practices His mantra. (Dhanasri M5, 672-12)

This does not mean that a disciple should not make an effort. He should practice his meditation as directed by the Guru. But he attains results only according to his Guru's Mercy and Grace.

He who meets a Satguru always sings the praises of the Lord. The Name pervades his heart, and he merges in the Shabd. (Vadhans Var M4, 592-8)

The unending music of the Shabd or Naam is within us, but we cannot get it without the help of a Saint, for the Lord has given the key to the Saints.

The Unending Music is the Treasure, the Saints have the key to it. (Ramkali M5, 893-19)

Without a Guru the Name cannot be attained; both the seekers and the adepts have been waiting in vain. (Majh M5, 115-2)

The lives of the Perfect Masters are sustained by the Shabd, which sustains their Pranas (life energy) also. The Perfect Masters swim in the waters of spirituality and give us life by making us also bathe in them. They are enlightened and they have experienced the son-ship of the Lord. Jesus Christ, for example, said:

I am the son of God. (St. John 11:36)

The Gurus say that the Lord does what the Saints request Him to do.

The Lord does that which is requested by the Saints. (Maru M5,1076-8)

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What the Saints wish they get done; no one is turned away from their door. (Maru M5, 0176-9)

Maulana Rumi says that Saints have been given power by the Lord even to call back an arrow from its flight.

The Saints have been empowered by the Lord; they can even bring the arrow back from its flight. (Maulana Rumi)

Are Saints the rivals of God? No, never. Actually, the Lord is captivated by the Saints, for they hold Him in bondage by their love for Him. Whatever the Lord wishes to do, He does through His Saints. In this universe, the Saints are His agents or officers and do His work. Paltu Sahib says that in His household there are no other managers. All Saints are lovers of the Name. Whatever they wish comes to pass.

Oh Paltu, in the house of the Lord there is no other manager. The Saints are lovers of God; whatever they wish comes to pass.

The Gurus describe the Saints as “child-like” and “indifferent”. Maulana Rumi also says that the Saints and Mahatmas are the children of God. They know this relationship and know their rights as children. They partake of all His virtues.

Maulana Rumi says:

Oh son, the Saints are the children of God, in sight or out of sight, they are always in His mind.

All Perfect Saints are the children of God. Everything – whether manifest or not, is known to them. God speaks through them.

Oh Lalu, know you this: Whatever He wishes, I say to you. (Tilang M1, 722-15)

In this physical universe, the Saints are the redeemers of human beings. The living Guru is the hope of the people, the Light of the world and the Savior of mankind. Because of the Grace of the Shabd, the Saint or Perfect Master is free from all limitations and bondage. He takes souls out of the stormy sea of birth and death and takes them to the immortal regions. The Shabd and the Perfect Guru are indistinguishable. The Guru, in His outward form, has a human body. He teaches and persuades those who come to hear Him. But when you go to the subtle regions, He assumes a subtle form and accompanies you in that form. If you reach the causal region, the second spiritual region, He assumes a causal form and in that form He helps you there. He has traveled through all the stages of the journey to the highest regions and can help you in those regions also. He does not rest until He merges you in His real form, the Shabd.

3) He who has realized the True Being is a Perfect Master or Guru. He has transcended both the dissolution and the grand dissolution. He has the power to take others to the highest region. It is only by remaining in the company of such Saints that one can be redeemed.

He who knows the True Being, He is the Saguru. His company brings release. Oh Nanak, sing the praises of the Lord. (Gauri M5, 286-12)

The Different Kinds of Master or Guru

There are four Gurus, namely: the mother, the father, the teacher and the Satguru. Of these, the Satguru is the True Guru, and His relationship is wholly spiritual. A

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worldly religious guru is called an acharya or teacher, and he gives social, ethical and religious teachings. This class of gurus or teachers includes the academic teachers also.

The Sant Satguru or Saint is called the Satguru. He has an entirely spiritual relationship with the disciple. He imparts spiritual teachings only.

According to the stage to which they have ascended in the spiritual regions, Gurus can be divided into three classes: 1) Sadh Guru; 2) Sant Guru; 3) Param Sant Guru.

A Sadh Guru is a holy man who has risen above the region of Trikuti or Onkar, which Muslims call Lahut. This is the second region above the physical universe. According to the Muslim Sufis, he is one who has crossed the region of 'Hu', has wiped away all the dirt covering the soul and has removed the covers of the three attributes or gunas, the five elements, the twenty-five instincts, and the mind and Maya, all of which cover or hide the soul.

A Sadh is free from the three gunas. (Gauri M5, 272-7)

He has recognized himself to be a particle of the Supreme Lord, and he tries to merge in Him.

A Master or Saint is one who has attained the Sach Khand, True Region, which is beyond the dissolution and the grand dissolution.

Param Sants are those who have reached the region of Anami, (Indescribable or Nameless), or Nirala, (Detached), or Maha Dayal, (Most Merciful), or Soami, (Lord) and have become One with the Supreme Being.

There is a great deal of difference between a Saint and a Param Sant. A Param Sant is one who has reached the True Region and has crossed all the lower regions. This difference is pointed out for academic purposes only. Only those who have been given the authority of initiating the seekers by the Lord, are Perfect Masters or Gurus. If the Lord authorizes one who has reached the Sadh gati (status of Sadh) or Sant gati (status of Sant) or Param Sant gati (status of Param Sant) to be a Guru, he is called a Sadh Guru, Sant Guru or Param Sant Guru. There can be many Sadhs, Saints or Param Saints, but the Lord only rarely nominates any one as a Perfect Master or Guru authorized to initiate. All Perfect Masters are Saints, but all Saints are not Gurus. There are many graduates or holders of the Master of Arts degree, but only a few of them are professors. Similarly, all those who seek spirituality do not become Gurus. Actually, it is only rarely that one becomes a Guru.

The Perfect Masters or Saints, also called Gurus, are regents or viceroys of the Supreme Lord. They are of two kinds. First, there are Swathe Sant Gurus in their own right. They are born Saints who come direct from the highest spiritual region, such as Kabir Sahib, Guru Nanak Sahib and others, all of whom taught the true spiritual path from an early age. They always remain connected with the Lord. Whenever such Saints come into the world they start a wave of spirituality. Then there are others who succeed them and continue their teachings. After some generations this work slowly decreases and dies out. Then another Saint comes and starts the wave again. These Saints may come anywhere and in any nation.

The second kind of Saints are those who are not born as Saints but who have practiced spiritual meditation in this world. They have the necessary ability, and have been

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commissioned by the Lord to do the work of a Guru. Even they are not brought up to Mastership here. They come here already perfected. For name's sake only, they appear to attain completeness and perfection in this life. The first kind of Saint is described as follows by Kabir Sahib:

Oh Kabir, we are familiar with the secret; we have come here, as ordered.

Bhai Gurdas Ji says:

The Baba (Nanak Dev) was born with the Gift; thereafter He practiced it assiduously. (Var 1, Pauri 24)

Oh Lalu, know you this; whatever He wishes, I say to you. (Tilang M1, 722-15)

The first kind of Saint gets an order from the Supreme Lord to go forth as a Guru, and He then takes birth; while the second kind receives the order to act as a Guru after he has been born.

There is no difference in their spiritual powers or work. Both kinds of Saints possess full powers and use them when necessary.

Besides these two kinds of Perfect Masters or Gurus, all others, who work as gurus, are merely imposters. Many of them are selfish and proud and are worshippers of Maya, illusion. They use their knowledge as a tool and use the seekers after spirituality as their beasts of burden. Narrow-mindedness and religious prejudices are the results of their teachings. Gurus of this kind are dangerous. By their wilful and harmful actions, they give a bad name to the institution of a Perfect Guru — the glorious, unimpeachable and spotless Power.

Is There One Guru or Are There Many?

The Word is the Master of the entire universe, and the soul the disciple, which, having merged in it, becomes indistinguishable from it. In the sphere of unity and oneness, He in the form of the Word is the Guru of all the universe, but in the sphere of plurality, it is the person in whom the Word is manifest and who is granted the status of a Master that acts as a Guru.

Kabir Sahib says,

I know the secrets of that house and have been authorized by Him.

The story of how Guru Nanak, while in the state of deep meditation in the bed of the Veyin river (a large rain-water drain), was authorized to act as a Guru by the Supreme Being, is well known. Bhai Gurdas Ji says:

Baba Guru Nanak was born with the gift; thereafter he practiced it assiduously. (Pauri 1, 24)

The Lord called me to His presence, I praised Him and was given the robe (of the True Master), the Nectar of the Name then became my food. (Majh M1, 150-17)

Both Kabir Sahib and Guru Nanak Sahib were Great Masters. According to history, Kabir Sahib was born in 1398 A.D. on a full moon day near Banaras and his Light merged in the Eternal Light in 1518 A.D. Guru Nanak Sahib incarnated in 1469 A.D. at Talwandi in the Punjab and his Light merged in the Eternal Light in 1539 A.D. at Kartarpur. This means that Kabir Sahib manifested 71 years before Guru Nanak Sahib and that they were contemporaries from 1469 A.D. to 1518 A.D. Both of them taught the

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True Spiritual Path of Surat Shabd Yoga.

Similarly, Shamas-i-Tabriz and Maulana Rumi were contemporaries in Persia from 1207 A.D. to 1247 A.D. Guru Angad Sahib and Dadu Sahib were contemporaries from 1504 A.D. to 1552 A.D. Two other Great Saints, Guru Arjan Sahib and Dharam Das, were also contemporaries from 1561 A.D. to 1606 A.D.

It can be seen, therefore, that there can be several Perfect Gurus functioning at the same time. But for a person who wishes to become a Gurmukh or a beloved disciple, he must have one Guru only, just as a chaste woman has one husband only and remembers and thinks of him alone. A woman visited by a number of persons is a prostitute.

Know the One, see the One, praise the One; believe in One, select One, and seek the One.

A disciple should have one Master only. The disciple should continue to contemplate on the Form of the Master who initiated him even after the latter leaves this world, and he will succeed. The Master, when He initiates a disciple, takes His stand by him. He dwells in his heart. He is the ideal. The disciple will succeed because of this fact. He will gain inner experience. He will lack nothing. A Master never dies. He is imperishable. He is a principle or an ideal, which never dies. He merely gives up the body. A disciple may serve and live in the company of another holy man. He should, however, maintain internal connection with the Guru from whom he received initiation, and always fix his attention on His Form. He is present in his heart and will look after every one of His disciples. If one were to shift from one Master to another, he would never gain anything.

The Master or Guru of the Time

The Guru of the time is the Guru with whom the disciple has a living connection. Gurus of the past are no longer Gurus, because they are not living.

Both are necessary in their own spheres. By reading the history of the past Gurus and their beautiful hymns, we can realize the necessity of a living Guru and to some extent we understand His mission. The real benefit of spirituality, however, can only be had from the Guru of the time or the living Guru. The Guru who initiates a person is his present Guru or Guru of the time.

Even if there be more than one Guru at one and the same time, a disciple should have one Guru only, just as a woman should have one husband only. Contemporaneous Gurus fill their respective disciples with their own higher consciousness. One cannot gain emancipation without this. Gurus stress the need for this again and again. Maulana Rumi says,

Do not rely on your intellect or ability or cleverness. Do not break your relationship with the prophet of the time.

Do not turn away from the Prophet of your own time; do not rely on your own self and your own efforts.

Every Prophet of God emphasizes the necessity of seeking the Master of the time. He who has not, after due deliberation, searched for the Master of his time (in other words, has not received initiation from the Master of the time) who is the Regent and Viceroy of God and is a Perfect Guru, will remain lacking in true spirituality.

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If we do not find the living Master, we will remain deprived of true spirituality. For this reason Maulana Rumi advises that one should follow Moses (the living Master) and God, and should not let pride harm his soul.

Believe in the God of Moses and the Master: Let not your pride undermine your faith.

True devotion does not grow without a Master of the time. When we have not seen the Lord or enjoyed His company, how can we love Him? Without love and devotion we cannot reach the True Region.

Some persons think that the teaching in the Adi Granth about the necessity of a living Master held good during the lifetime of the Sikh Gurus only. This matter deserves serious consideration. The advice of the Perfect Masters or Saints is for the entire world and for all times, and not for a specific period.

Great Saints speak the eternal Truth, for all the world, for all the ages. (Sorath Var M3, 647-1)

The command of an emperor is as good as the emperor. This command stresses the need for a living Guru.

The Word is the Guru, and the Guru is the Word; the Divine Nectar is in the Word. Oh seekers, obey the words of the Gurus; the living Guru grants release. (Nat M4, 982-12)

Bhai Gurdas Ji comments as follows:

The Vedas and other scriptures are the shop of the Master, which enable a man to cross the ocean of the world. The reality cannot be understood without a Master. The Lord incarnates as the Master and makes us understand. (Var 1, Pauri 17)

The inner secrets cannot be expressed in words, either spoken or written. They can be explained only by the Perfect Master of the time. He accompanies a disciple on his spiritual ascent and takes him across all the difficult stages of the journey.

The Master helps in overcoming all the difficulties. (Basant M5, 1185-15)

This work cannot be done by a Guru who lived in past ages. The formless Shabd takes form. The Shabd must take form. Incarnations have form. Perfect Masters are incarnations of the Supreme Being, the Timeless One. They are called Guru Avatars or Masters incarnate. Guru avatars are human in form. Bhai Gurdas Ji says that without a Master incarnate no one can know the Lord.

Without the teachings and help of a living Guru, the inner secrets of the path to the highest region cannot be known. Initiation is necessary to obtain knowledge of this path. Reading the Vedas and Shastras is not sufficient.

From the history of the Sikhs it appears that the Adi Granth, the holy book of the Sikhs, was compiled during the time of Guru Arjan. Side by side with the doctrine of the Word of the Guru, or the Word personified in the form of the Guru, there have been living Gurus in human form who have bestowed initiation. Up to this very day the Khalsas or Pure Ones who have the inner Light, have this right to bestow initiation.

When full Light appears in the heart, the Khalsas (pure ones) then know the most Pure One. (Patshahi 10)

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The Necessity for the Living Master

The formless Lord pervades everywhere, but in spite of this, unless we become directly connected with Him, we do not receive any virtue from Him. Electricity is present everywhere, but we cannot derive any light or other benefits from it unless we know the location of the switch. Even if we know this, it is of no use unless there is a light bulb properly connected with the switch. When the connection is made, electricity does its proper work. It lights our dark house. It alleviates the heat of summer by operating fans. It cooks food for us. It runs our factories.

Similarly, if we are connected with the Lord, our actions will bear fruit. The Perfect Master is the Lord in human form. He is the Shabd personified, "the Word made flesh." Unless we are familiar with the human Master, how can we realize His subtle form, which is the Shabd? The Shabd and the Perfect Master are the two means of taking the soul to its original Home. No one but the Master can reveal the secrets of Reality, and without Him no one can gain release from the bondage of mind and Maya. No one can meet the Lord except through the Shabd, and it is only the Satguru who can connect the soul with the Shabd. This is the only purpose of their manifestation in this world.

The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. (Bible)

The Perfect Master or Satguru has a very clear inner vision and can at once see who is fit for this Path. Those that are ready are accepted. He, in His Grace, chooses them and makes them followers of the Truth.

When the disciple is ready, the Guru appears.

When our soul grows weary in its search for the Lord, and is anxious to return to its home, when our eyes long to see the Lord and we hunger for Him, then, in order to fulfil our intense desire, He incarnates as a Perfect Master or Satguru. In order to release the seekers from their bonds He himself comes as a redeemer. He gives the seekers instructions according to their development, and connects them with the Lord.

The secrets of spirituality, or of the practical means by which the soul can become united with the Lord, are given out by the living Master only. This teaching is imparted through an unspoken language. There is no spoken language by means of which it can be imparted.

Religious books merely give a few hints about the ascent to the spiritual regions. The scenes witnessed by the soul with the help of the Master in the subtle regions cannot be fully described. The books, being inanimate, cannot help the soul in its ascent. In the writings of the Saints there is a reference to internal experiences. The bliss of these experiences can be had by internal progress and not otherwise. It can be achieved through the Satguru only. It cannot be had by reasoning. Holy books and Scriptures describe it to a certain extent only; but it cannot be experienced except through the living Master.

Past Saints

A patient cannot take medicine from a past physician, however proficient he may have been. No one can get his case decided by a past judge. No woman can marry a dead person and beget children of him. Similarly, Perfect Mahatmas came in their own time and redeemed those who came in contact with them then. After the expiration of their period they left the world and merged in the Lord.

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Before departing, they passed on their work to others. Only man can make another man understand. This is the law of nature. The Lord works in this world of matter through living persons.

Many believe that past Mahatmas are even now present in the spiritual regions and can help us. This matter should be considered calmly. Those Perfect Masters fulfilled their mission and merged in the Lord and left the remaining work to some other Mahatmas. One Mahatma finished His work and handed over the office of Guru to another, according to the direction of the Lord, so that the work of connecting the souls with the Lord and redeeming them could continue. Even if a past Mahatma wished to redeem a person, He would work in accordance with the law of nature and carry out His mission through a living Mahatma.

We can take the help of past Masters only after ascending to the regions where they are. We are, however, in this gross world, while they are in the world of the spirit. If we think that past Mahatmas can help us from the spiritual regions, we are acting on inner feelings, imagination and inferences. And unless our inner eyes are opened, we are unable to be certain whether our inner thoughts are from the Lord, from a past Mahatma, from some imperfect soul, or if they are only waves of our own subconscious mind. It is wrong to act on the waves of the subconscious mind, and one is likely to be misled by them. Moreover, when we have not seen a past Mahatma, the anti-power or any other soul can claim to be that Mahatma and deceive us. As we cannot positively recognize Him, we are likely to be deceived.

Let us consider whether it is logical to think that past Mahatmas can act as Gurus and that it is not necessary to

have a living Guru. If a past Mahatma can do so, surely the Lord Himself could give the necessary spiritual instructions. Then why did any Mahatma have to come here at all, as the Lord could always do so?

If, however, there was a necessity for a Mahatma at any time in the past, it follows that there is a necessity for one even now, just as there was before.

If the Lord wishes to make people understand, He must take human form. This is the law of nature. He has to take the form of a Saint or a Holy Man.

The Lord took the form of a Holy Man. (Maru M5, 1005-8)

The Lord showed great renunciation and took the form of a Saint. (Kabir, Asa 476-14)

This does not mean that the past Mahatmas are dead. No, they are immortal and have crossed the gross, subtle and causal regions. They are united with the Lord and are indistinguishable from Him. If they are supposed to be wandering in the lower regions, what was the use of their perfecting the practice of listening to the Shabd?

It is no use getting entangled in long intellectual arguments. It does not help or carry us forward. Seek the guidance of a living Mahatma who can tell you the natural and easy method of uniting with the Lord. You need not wait for another life after you die here. If you try, you can succeed here and in this very life.

Complete and imperishable spiritual success can be had from a living Guru only. There is a dynamic power of higher consciousness in Him. His touch charges us and connects us with the current of the Shabd, and He helps

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us in the higher spiritual regions by accompanying us. That soul is indeed blessed which takes shelter with such a Mahatma.

It is obvious that if, for instance, we had to visit London, we would first consult a directory to find where it is situated and the route we should follow, where we would have to change and at which port we would have to embark, and to which company the ship belongs. We would have to obtain a passport, for if we did not have a passport we could not start our journey. Similarly, we have to obtain a "permit" from a Saint, the Deputy of the Lord, to enter the realm of the Lord. This passport or permit is initiation. One has to have the permit stamped with the seal of the Satguru, this fact has been mentioned by various Mahatmas in their hymns. Their writ runs throughout all the universes and regions since they are the duly appointed Deputies of the Lord. When we get their passport, no one can obstruct us in any of the universes or regions. Saints say if the seed of Nam is sown in any heart, it will certainly sprout and the initiate will certainly reach his original Home.

In addition to obtaining the information and papers needed for the journey, the other necessary measure to adopt is to follow the right path leading to your destination. If the right road leads to the north and one walks towards the south, one cannot reach the destination, however enthusiastic he may be. He will only go further away from his destination. It is, therefore, necessary to follow the right path.

When making preparations for a journey, we consult various directories. But if someone tells us about a person who has already visited the place and the country to which we want to go, we would not only consult the

directories but would also consult that person, because he has seen and known everything for himself. If, on contacting him, we learn that he is again visiting that country and is willing to take us along with him, we would gladly accompany him. We can, to some extent, check his facts with those given in the directories. If the facts and directions are corroborated by several directories, we are all the more satisfied. The souls of the Saints visit the spiritual universes and regions. They can therefore, give us the information needed for our own journey to those regions.

A Gurumukh comes and goes at will. (Ramkali M1, 932-13)

Religious books are like directories. They simply point out the way. The Saints-incarnate take us to the higher regions in the ship of Naam. We can obtain tickets or passports from them and cross in their ship of the Naam or Shabd. They are themselves the captains. We can thus reach the region of the Lord.

It is good to study religious books, but the power that takes us across is the Naam or the Shabd, without which it is not possible to reach the region of the Lord. If we simply make enquiries and take no step forward on that path, we cannot reach the country of the Beloved. Bhai Gurdas says:

The traveler enquires about the right path but walks not on it. How can he reach the land of the Beloved by mere talk? (Kabit 439)

To try to walk on that path by oneself results in being led astray, and one has to repent for this mistake. If one has the Master by one's side, one can easily reach the Home of the Lord and become intoxicated with its bliss. If it had been in our own power to go back, we would not have remained separated from the Lord.

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If we could meet Him by our own effort, we would not linger here to grieve in separation. Let us then find the company of a Holy Man, oh Nanak, and rejoice in His royal glory. (Majh M5, 134-5)

If something that we want is at one place and we search for it at another, how can we ever find it? But if we take with us someone who knows the secret, we can certainly find it. The path which would otherwise take innumerable lives to cover is then traveled over in a moment.

Kabir Sahib says:

The thing you want is at one place, but you search for it at another; how can you ever find it? Oh Kabir, if you want to find it, take one with you who knows where it is. He will then show you the thing you want. It is a long, long way to go, but He will take you there in a moment.

In order to learn how to cook well, one has to work under an expert cook. When studying medicine or engineering, one has also to do practical work. One cannot become a doctor or an engineer by mere reading. One needs the help of a teacher in all the external sciences. How much more is a teacher needed in the case of the abstruse and difficult spiritual science? For without a teacher, when we shut the eyes, we see only darkness within us. A teacher is needed to show us how to see the Inner Light. One needs a teacher in every line. Some say that no spiritual teacher is necessary, and that they can acquire spiritual knowledge by themselves. They are like a person who refuses to drink water out of the well of someone who is willing to serve him, but insists upon digging a well of his own. This shows that he is not thirsty as yet. Those who do not need spirituality do not need the Master either.

Bhai Nand Lal says:

No one except a lover of rubies loves a ruby; he alone has the eye which can truly evaluate a ruby.

We can further illustrate the necessity of a Guru by another example. One wishes, let us say, to fly in an airplane. But the pilot has locked the door and engine of the plane so that no ignorant person can get in and possibly be injured. A person who does not know how to operate a plane does not even know how to board the plane. But even if he were to do so, the airplane would not start, since the engine is locked. Even if it were to start, the ignorant person does not know how to take it up or bring it down. Even if he were to take it up, he would not know the conditions in the upper regions. There would be nothing but certain destruction for him.

This human machine is wonderful. In the first place, the soul cannot concentrate itself at the proper place unless proper instructions have been given. Even if it should do so, however, it could not climb into the ship of the Shabd. Even if it should somehow be connected with the Shabd, it has no knowledge of the higher regions and does not know the direction to be followed in order to go up or to come down. If the pilot takes a new man with him in the plane, unlocks it, and takes him up on a few flights, the new man might then be able to fly the plane by himself.

For traveling through the spiritual regions it is very necessary to have a pilot who knows those regions and who has often traveled through them. If he is with us, the journey becomes possible. If such a Mahatma were to invite us to accompany Him and we should say, "No, thank you, we will fly our plane by ourselves," we would be very unfortunate. Maulana Rumi says that it is very dangerous to travel on this path without a Master.

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Seek a Master for this journey; without a Master it is full of risks and dangers.

The Naam or Dhun-atmik Shabd is an unspoken language. It cannot, therefore, be learned from books and Scriptures. We can only get this wealth from a Mahatma who gives initiation. He is the Shabd personified, and the Lord's Shabd will be manifest only through Him.

Without a Master no one can attain the Shabd. The Lord has so ordained it. (Maru M3, 1046-11)

The Shabd of the Guru is controlled by the Lord; It cannot be manifested by anyone else. (Sarang Var M4, 1249-8)

The Master knows all the inner secrets. What He says is based upon His own experience. His testimony, therefore, carries great conviction.

Listen to the testimony of the Saints; they say what they have seen with their own eyes. (Ramkali M5, 894-8)

The Gurbani attaches great importance to the necessity of having a Guru. In the hymn called "Asa-di-var " it is said that man has been sleeping for many lives. It may be taken as an axiom that no one, unless he has a True Guru, has ever reached the Truth, or will ever reach It.

No one ever found Him; no one ever will find Him. He Himself dwells in the Master. He manifests Himself in, and speaks thru Him. (Asa Var M1,466-7)

When the Lord is kind, the Master is kind. Man wanders in many births; the Master then attunes him to the Shabd. The Master is most bountiful; let all the world know it. Meet the Master, realize the Truth by giving up egotism. (Asa Var M1,465-2)

All the Saints say that no one can meet the Lord without a Master. The Lord Himself has made this irrevocable law.

It has been ordained by the Lord since the beginning; no one can know Him without a Master. (Bihagara Var M3, 556-2)

The Gurus say that God has given them to understand that no one can gain release without a Master.

Oh Nanak, the Lord has so ordained; no one can gain release without a Master. (Gond M5, 864-9)

The Master is the physician who gives us sight. The Lord is inside us. All the world is blind and works in darkness. If one meets a Master, he can then see the Lord inside himself with his own eyes.

This world is blind; all work in darkness. No one knows the path without a Perfect Master. On meeting a Master, one sees with one's own eyes. One realizes the Truth within oneself. (Sorath M3, 603-16)

Who are the really blind? Not those whose outer eyes are without sight, but those who are far from the Lord.

They are not blind who have no sight. Oh Nanak, blind are those who are separated from the Lord. (Ramkali Var M2, 954-15)

Guru Arjan Sahib also says that a man with eyes is blind since he cannot see the Lord who is so close to him, and fearlessly commits sins oblivious of His presence.

He sees, tastes and speaks in ignorance; he hears and yet hears not. He considers that which is near to be far; he, a confirmed sinner, continues to sin. (Suhi M5, 741-3)

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We see the gross world with gross eyes but our Third Eye or Shiv Netra is closed. It is only when the Third Eye opens that we can see the subtle, causal and other regions of consciousness, which are beyond the reach of the mind and intellect.

He is blind and acts blindly. The Third Eye has not opened in him. (Malar Var M1, 1289-18)

We are deceived by Maya and are blinded. We cannot see beyond the gross world.

Deluded by Maya man does not remember the Lord; he suffers in this death-afflicted land. He is blind and deaf and sees nothing; he is self-centered and is consumed by his sins. (Majh M3, 111-10)

It is impossible to enter and pass through the subtle regions by oneself. It is necessary to have the guidance of those who have already traveled there. Maulvi Rum says that if you wish to go on a pilgrimage, you should go with one who has already made the journey. The worries and difficulties of the journey will be reduced. It does not matter whether such a guide is a Hindu or a Turk or an Arab.

If you wish to go on a pilgrimage, go with one who has already made it. Whether he be a Hindu, a Turk or an Arab. (Maulana Rumi)

Masters are spiritual physicians and open one's spiritual eyes. Shamas-i-Tabriz says:

If you wish to see the manifestation of the Lord, put the dust of the feet of the Saints in your eyes as collyrium, for they can grant sight even to the born-blind.

If you wish to see the Lord, use the dust of the Saints' feet as col-

lyrium. They have the power to make the born-blind see.

That collyrium is the Naam or Shabd. By applying it one can see the spiritual regions. Unless one applies it, he remains blind, and his coming to, and going from this world are of no use.

Those who know not the Shabd are blind and deaf. Their coming here serves no useful purpose. (Sorath M3, 601-7)

Guru Nanak tells us that the Shabd enlightens us and enables us to see and realize the Lord.

Learn this from Nanak; enlighten yourself and realize Him. (Basant M1, 1190-2)

The Lord is in every heart, but we are, as it were, suffering from cataract.

He is in the heart, but we see Him not; such a life is a curse; oh Tulsi, we suffer from cataract.

Sight is a great blessing to us. A sightless person, longing for sight, cannot see and wanders about in the dark. If he recovers his sight by an operation, he feels greatly indebted to the surgeon. The inner eyes are millions of times more useful. Without them one cannot see beyond this world. One cannot see the Lord. Without Him we have been wandering from birth to birth. The Master opens the Inner Eye or the knowledge-center. This inner vision is most essential, but it is highly regrettable that we, engulfed in Maya, do not experience it.

Not only men, but even gods long for the Third Eye. They cannot make spiritual progress without it. Not to speak of their inability to see the Lord, they cannot even

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see their own mother, Shakti (primal force).

Mother Nature conceived, oh wonder! and gave birth to three deities; one who creates the world, the other who sustains the world, the third who destroys the world. The Lord sees them all, but they see Him not; how strange!

Gosain Tulsi Das says that no one can cross the ocean of the universe without a Master.

No one can cross the ocean without a Master, even if he is an ascetic like Shankara. (Tulsi Ramayana)

If persons of such high status require a Guru, what about the common man? He may try in millions of ways, but he can achieve nothing. Hence the Guru says:

No one can find the Lord without a Master, even though he goes on making millions of efforts. (Maru M3, 1057-8)

Tulsi Sahib further says that release cannot be gained without the Grace of the Master.

Oh Tulsi, without the Grace of a Master, it is difficult to see the path of release, far off, beyond the physical bounds.

The Gurus, in their hymns, have placed great emphasis on the need for a Saint or a Master, saying that no one need have any doubt that anyone has ever crossed the ocean of existence without a Master.

Let no one remain in doubt; no one has crossed over without a Master. (Gond M5, 864-5)

This universe is an ocean. The Master is a ship and He Himself is its captain. No one can cross over without the Master. It is only through His Grace that we can meet the

Lord. No one gets release without this.

Guru is the ship, Guru is the captain. No one has crossed over without a Guru. One meets the Lord through the Guru's Grace. One cannot get release without a Guru. (Sawayye M4, 1401-11)

In the religious Scriptures of the Hindus the necessity of having a Guru is also strongly emphasized. In the Katha Upanishad I-ii, it is said:

People cannot know Him simply by hearing about Him. The Mahatma who says anything about Him is a wonderful person. He is worthy and wise who gains access to Him. No one can realize God without a Guru.

It is again said in the Katha Upanishad I-ii:

God cannot be realized without initiation, however much one may meditate on Him. Unless you are initiated by a true Guru, you cannot realize Him because He is so subtle that He is beyond the reach of imagination.

In the Chhandogya Upanishad IV, 9-3, it is said:

It has been said by revered persons such as Gurus that without initiation we cannot comprehend our reality.

In the Mundaka Upanishad, 1st Mundaka, 2nd part, Salok 7-12, it is said:

Let a Brahmin, after he has experienced all these worlds which are gained by actions, acquire freedom from all desires. That which is eternal (which has never been made) cannot be attained by means of the transitory (which has been made). Let him, in order to understand this, take faggots (a sign of discipleship) in his hand and approach a Guru who is learned and who dwells eternally in Brahm.

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Without a Guru one cannot follow the directions given in the Scriptures. The Svetasvatra Upanishad, 6th Chapter, Salok 23 says:

He who is firmly devoted to the Lord and is also as greatly devoted to the Master as to the Lord will understand the hints given in this Upanishad.

In the Manu Smriti, 2nd Chapter, it is said:

A disciple should, both before the beginning and at the close of a lesson, touch with both hands the feet of his Master and obey his preceptor. (Shaloka 71)

Those who, without a Guru, learn the Vedas by hearing from others, are really thieves of the Vedas since their real meaning cannot be understood without a Guru, and one who wrongly interprets the Vedas goes to hell. (Shaloka 116)

Bow to him from whom you wish to gain worldly knowledge or divine knowledge. (Shaloka 117)

He should stand with folded hands, having controlled his body, tongue, intellect, desires and heart. (Shaloka 192)

In the Bhagvad Gita, Chapter 4, verse 34, it is said:

You should prostrate yourself before a Perfect Master and carry out spiritual practices and serve Him. Only a Guru who knows the reality can impart this knowledge to you.

We cannot gain knowledge of the spiritual path without a Master. It is very necessary to know a Master.

Jesus Christ said:

No man cometh to the Father but through me. (Bible)

He who does not know the Son, does not know the Father. (Bible)

He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me. (Bible)

A search through the Scriptures of all the religions shows that all lay emphasis on the point that no one can gain release without a Guru.

The Shastras, Vedas and Smritis all say the same; hold fast to the belief that there is no release without a Master. (Gujri M5, 495-12)

The method of taking shelter with the Guru is the best method of realizing the Lord. Hazrat Mohammed said to Hazrat Ali:

Oh Ali! You are the lion of truth, a hero and a brave man; but do not rely on your own strength alone. Come under the shade of the fruit-bearing tree. From among the various methods of meeting the Lord choose the best: find out the loved one of the Lord. He will hold your hand, for He is beloved of the Lord. He takes the seekers to the Court of the Lord.

The Prophet said, 'Oh Ali! You are a brave-hearted lion. But do not depend on your bravery. Take shelter under the tree of hope. Oh Ali! Of all the directions, turn to the 'Shelter of the Lord.' He takes His servant by the hand. He leads the seekers to His Court.'

Maulana Rumi says that the mind cannot be controlled except by taking shelter with a Master. You should, therefore, firmly clutch the garment of a Master who has controlled the mind. Go and sleep under His protection, so that He will release you from this bondage. Sing His praises day and night. Search for this hidden treasure with the Saints. You should wander from door to door; roam in

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the streets and bazaars, and search for Him over and over again. As far as possible, do not turn your back on the Saints. Make an effort to know them as they are.

Nothing except the Grace of the Master can kill the ego; hold fast to the garment of the Redeemer. Go and sleep under His protection; it may be that He will then grant you release; go on cooing like the cuckoo day and night; seek the secret of the hidden treasure from the Master. Go from door to door and street to street; search for Him time and again; do not turn your face away from the Saints; then leave the rest to God.

Spirituality is a difficult path and cannot be trodden without the company of a Master.

The soul is covered with three sheaths, namely, the gross, subtle and causal bodies. One can, with the Master's help, reach the subtle and causal regions. His Original Home, however, is beyond the three regions, in the fourth region. There are many entanglements and obstructions in the gross region. If we reach the subtle region, there are numerous misleading and distracting devices there, and it is difficult to escape them. And beyond that region it is impossible to enter the region of pure consciousness all alone. To walk on this path is to tread on a razor's edge.

There is danger at every step. He who wishes to know the reality or to get true knowledge and to meet the Lord should seek a Perfect Master who knows the way. It is said in the Katha Upanishad (I, iii, 14):

Arise, awake, learn the true knowledge quickly. Seek a Master who has knowledge of what is beyond, since the Mahatmas say that the path is sharper than the edge of a sword and it is very difficult to tread it.

It is impossible to realize the Lord without a Master. A disciple needs the help of the Master at every step.

Maulana Rumi says:

Search for a Master, because to tread this path without him is full of risks and dangers. If you tread this path without a Master, Satan leads you astray and throws you in a well. If the protecting hand of the Master is not on your head, then the voice of Satan will worry and lead you astray. Many wise men trod this path, but were led astray by the Negative Power (Kal). There are Shabds (Sounds) of Kal inside us, which are imitations of the Lord's Divine Sounds. They lead you to destruction.

Follow the Master, since without Him the journey is full of sufferings, risks and dangers; whoever went this way without a Master, was misled by the evil ones and thrown in a pit. Oh fool! If you have no Master, the voice of evil will keep you confused; the evil ones will lead you astray and cause you suffering. Many wiser than you have tried this path before. The voice of evil conies as the voice of a friend; it's a friend who leads but to destruction.

We can cross this gross darkness through the merciful Grace of the Master only. When the soul leaves the gross region the Master accompanies it and helps it in overcoming all difficulties and pitfalls.

The Master helps in overcoming all the difficulties. One reaches home safely and attains bliss. (Basant M5, 1185-15)

The subtle and causal regions are like wastelands. Maulana Rumi says that you should not tread this path alone. Take a companion with you on the way. Do not enter this jungle relying on your own strength.

You should not journey without a friend; do not enter this desert relying on your own self.

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Hafiz has also stated with great firmness that you should not go on this way without a Master, for without a Master it is dark and there is danger of your going astray.

*Do not tread this path without a guide; there is utter darkness.
Beware of going astray.*

There is Utter Darkness Without the Guru

There is utter darkness without the Master, Guru. The reality cannot be clearly apprehended because it is beyond the mind and the intellect. It expresses itself in an unspoken language. But the Master makes the disciple understand through contemplation. Without a Master, one remains entangled in ignorance. Falsehood appears to be the truth, and one becomes trapped in it. here is no other way to reach the goal except through the Grace of the Master. Without a Master, success is not obtained and one is not freed from attachment, Maya and the three gunas.

There is utter darkness without a Master; such a life is worse than death. It is like drowning in desert sands, a tragedy in a waterless waste. (Malar M1, 1275-12)

One does not gain emancipation without a Master, nor does one know the secret of true spirituality. What is learned from the Master is the secret of the heart and is practical knowledge. It is a practical matter.

There is utter darkness without a Master. One cannot understand without a Master. Without a Master the soul is not realized. Without a Master release is not attained. Seek a Master, meditate on truth. When you meet a Master, the Shabd will remove all your sufferings. Let the Master dwell in the eyes. Let the Master dwell on the tongue. Oh! Praise the Master always. Nalh Kavi has said so. They who have not seen the Master, they have done nothing.

They have wasted their lives. (Sawayyes M4, 1399-16)

Ordinary people are in utter darkness. On closing the eyes there is nothing but darkness. In addition, the darkness of ignorance pervades everywhere. The person who can dispel this darkness is the Guru. "Gu" means darkness and "ru" means light: one who can light up the darkness, one who can take us from utter darkness to the Light of Truth. The celebrated poet Kalidas says that the Guru is one who can produce Light in darkness and take one by the hand into the presence of the Lord.

The Guru shows Light in the darkness; He takes one by the hand into the presence of the Lord.

Being in darkness, whatever one does becomes the cause of one's bondage. Saints say that very little is gained by reading or listening to religious books, the performance of formal religious practices and rites, worship, repetition, meditation and praising God's virtues. These do not give release from bondage. Kabir Sahib says that without a Guru, charities and the repetition of holy words are of no use; the Puranas and the Vedas confirm this fact:

The counting of beads without a Guru; giving in charity without a Guru; all are of no use whatsoever. The Puranas and Vedas say it so.

Without a Guru all actions and observances are fruitless. Without a Master all worship is a waste. Unless the internal eyes are opened and unless one knows the reality, one cannot gain emancipation. It is, therefore, necessary to take shelter with some Guru who can turn us away from external practices and connect us to the inner practice of Naam and take our soul to its Original Home, beyond this lower universe of vast regions.

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On meeting a Master, darkness is dispelled. He is seen as being radiantly present on all sides.

On meeting a Master darkness is dispelled. He is present wherever one may look. (Ramkali M1, 877-1)

Even if there were hundreds of moons and thousands of suns, our eyes, if they had no sight, would find utter darkness. Similarly, there may be millions of Lights on the spiritual path, but unless our Third Eye opens it is all dark. The Guru Granth Sahib says that without a Guru these Lights remain hidden and the darkness persists. The Guru opens our Inner Eye and we begin to see the Spiritual Light.

Even if there be hundreds of moons; even if there be thousands of suns; with all their light, there is darkness without a Master. (Asa Var M2, 463-2)

CHAPTER 6. CHARACTERISTICS OF A MASTER

The Master is born in a particular country, and yet He belongs to the people of all the countries. Because He has a certain form, He belongs to a particular country, but He is free from the bondage of body. He can travel in the higher regions at His pleasure. He is a Master and a manifestation of the Shabd. He belongs to all. He is One with the Lord. He is present everywhere. He remains constantly with the disciple and helps him. He reveals Himself within the disciple.

The Master is One with the Lord; He pervades all things. (Sri Rag M5, 53-5)

The Master is always with me; He frees me both here and hereafter. (Vadhans M4, 588-2)

The beneficent form of the Master is in my forehead; wherever I look I see it with me. (Dev Gandhari M5, 535-15)

The Master is immortal. He is the helper of the helpless and supporter of the supportless.

Eternal is the Lord; Eternal is the Master; Eternal is the True Wisdom. He is the Lord of gods; He is the Lord of men; He is the helper of the helpless; He looks after those who have no other support. (Ramkali M1, 934-10)

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The Lord Himself knows His mysterious ways. The Master knows them also.

I pay homage to the Creator of the world; He is unborn; His laws and justice are perfect and fair. The Creator Himself knows the reasons for creation; the other one who knows is the mighty Master. (Ramkali M5, 930-5)

The Master is unerring. All human beings make mistakes. It is a part of their nature. But the Master is human in form only. Inwardly He is One with the Lord. Like the Lord, He is faultless.

All commit mistakes, except the Lord and the Master. (Sri Rag M1, 61-7)

It may be said without any doubt that the Master can lead us to union (with God). He accompanies us on our inward and upward journey, and shows us all the regions, whether subtle or causal, and takes us to the Original Home.

The Master was kind to me; He showed me the land of death. He showed me the under-world. He showed me the subtle world. He is 'Brahma'; He is unborn; He is; He shall be. He is found in the heart. (Sorath M1, 597-19)

The Master is the greatest of the great. There is no one higher than Him. He can do whatever Hewishes.

Oh mind, dwell on the Master; no one is equal to Him. I know no one else; the Master unites us with the Lord. (Sri Rag M5, 49-15)

The Master is the creator; the Master is the sustainer. His words are true, and nothing is beyond His power. Whatever He wills, happens according to His wish. (Sri Rag M5, 52-13)

The Lord redeems all the disciples of the Perfect Master.

Knowledge is the Master's weapon; devotion is His sword and coat-of-arms; therewith He vanquishes Kal, the devouring monster. The Lord is the protector of the Master, and the Lord redeems all, when the Master so desires. (Gauri M4, 312-14)

He is the True King. He is the Lord of Amrit, Nectar of Immortality, and devotion.

The Lord is the treasure-house of devotion and ambrosia, and He dwells in the Master. The Master is the True Lord of treasury; He fills the coffers of His disciples with the wealth of Godliness. (Asa M4, 449-16)

The Master is a jeweler.

The Master is the great jeweler; the ruby of Naam is His stock-in-trade. He can manifest Naam and thus redeem the disciple.

The Lord's Naam is both a ruby and a diamond; the Master manifests it. The self-seekers are unfortunate indeed, not to know what a treasure lies hidden in the straw (human body). (Ramkali M4, 880-15)

He who reflects on the self, recognizes the diamond. The Perfect Master gives a single glance, and thereby redeems the disciple. The disciple accepts the Master; and his mind is stilled. Such is our Master, of royal state, and a perfect connoisseur of jewels, that at a single loving glance He discerns the jewel within us and redeems it. (Asa M1, 413-16)

The Master has the key to the temple of God.

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I see nothing but is clothed in beauty, bright and joyous; I see none but is a part of myself, not apart; for by the Grace of the Master all doors have been opened to me. (Sri Rag M5, 80-13)

Where there is no Shabd, darkness abounds. Nothing is gained there, and coming and going do not cease. The Master has the key; no one else can open the door. When one is fortunate, one meets a Master. (Majh M3, 124-14)

The Master has the key; the mind is a room; the body is the ceiling. No one but a Master can open the door, for no one else has the key. (Sarang Var M2, 1237-10)

The Master is the true place of pilgrimage.

The Master is the true place of pilgrimage; He constantly meditates on the Lord's Name. (Majh Var M4, 140-4)

There is no place of pilgrimage equal to a Master; for a True Master is the Lord Himself. (Asa M1, 437-3)

The Master is a river of purity, and bathing in it rids one of sins. When one meets the Master, He gets the Holy Name; the animal is tamed; and turns into a god. (Prabhati M1, 1329-1)

The Master is the Pool and Source of the Nectar of Immortal Life.

The Master is a Pool of Nectar, the Fountain of Truth. When a crow bathes in it, He turns into a swan. (Gujri M4, 493-2)

The Master is a Pool of Nectar, and the fortunate ones bathe in it. The seekers come to the Master, as swans come to the pool. (Suhi M3, 751-1)

The Master is the Pool of Nectar. His depths are infinite. (Gauri 2M5, 50-4)

The Master is the philosopher's stone.

We are vile and sinful men of ego, suffering from the illusion of duality; but when we meet the Master, who is the philosopher's stone, we are turned into gold, and the infinite, pure Light fills us. (Asa M3, 427-2)

The Master is the philosopher's stone. The rusted, iron-like mind turned into gold after meeting Him. (Sorath M3, 638-14)

When iron contacts the philosopher's stone, it acquires its qualities, and turns into gold. The Master is the philosopher's stone; he who meets Him is benefited. Prahlad benefited by the Master's words. For the Master protects the honor of His devotees. (Kanara M4, 1311-11)

The Master has controlled the five enemies, namely: lust, anger, greed, worldly attachment and pride or ego. Being one with the Lord, the Master becomes free from all mental defects.

The Master meditates on Truth; Truth and the Master are One. He is the Perfect Master who has controlled the five senses. (Gauri Var M5, 304-4)

The Master is free from enmity. He is above pain and pleasure, good and evil. Like the Lord Himself, he is without ill-will and wishes well to all.

The Master is free from enmity; He sees the Lord in all. He seeks the good of everyone; and wishes ill to none. (Garui Var M4, 302-3)

The Master is free from enmity; He treats all as God's sons. He removes our defects, and purifies our bodies. (Ramkali Var M5, 960-18)

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He is not grieved by suffering; He is not elated by happiness. He remains unperturbed. He transcends pain and pleasure and remains immersed in Naam. Poison or nectar, whatever comes in His contact, is filled with His sweetness; they do not affect Him.

The Master is always merciful.

The Master is merciful and bountiful; He is always compassionate. The Master is free from enmity; He sees the Lord in all. (Gauri Var M5, 302)

The Master is always merciful. We get nothing but what we deserve. He looks after all with the same kindness; and we receive His Grace according to the measure of our love. (Sorath M3, 602-6)

The Master protects the disciple; He is always kind to those who serve His Will. (Gauri M5, 286-14)

The Master forgives the sinners and backbiters.

Without the Master there is no release; He is an old, old lover of the Lord. By His Grace He grants release, and forgives the sinner. (Maru M1, 1027-18)

To those who meet the Master, all sins are forgiven. (Gauri Var M4, 310-17)

Even if someone slanders the men of God, they do not forsake their virtues. (Berari M4, 720-1)

He who slanders the Master, but later takes shelter with Him, is forgiven for his sin. The Master admits him to His Holy Company. (Bilawal Var M4, 854-18)

He is the Lord's intermediary. He unites the separated souls with

the Lord.

May I be a sacrifice unto the Friend, by meeting whom I meet the Lord. (Ramkali Var M5, 964-4)

As I had heard about the Master, so I found Him to be. He unites the separated souls with the Lord; He intercedes for them. (Ramkali Var M5, 957-2)

The Master is the driver of the elephant-like mind of the disciple.

The mind is the elephant, and the Master is the driver. His wisdom is the goad, and the mind does as He directs. The mind needs the goad always; for without the goad, it strays. (Gujri Var M3, 516-18)

Oh Kabir, the body is like a forest, and the mind is like an elephant in rut. Wisdom is the goad, and the driver is the Saint. (Kabir, Shalok 1376-13)

The Master is the great boatman.

The Master is the boatman, and the boat of the Shabd takes us across to land where there is no wind or fire, nor water nor any form. (Maru M1, 1009-14)

The Master is the boatman; rare are the men who understand Him. When He is kind, He takes us across the ocean of this world. (Asa Var M1, 470-11)

The Master is one with Naam. He is the ocean of Naam and gives away Naam liberally.

The Perfect Master is attuned to Naam; He is the boatman in the Iron Age. He who obeys the Master crosses the sea and gets attuned to Truth. (Bihagara Var M4, 552-9)

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The Master is the Ocean of Naam; I long to see Him. I cannot live without Him even for a moment; I will die if I do not see Him. (Suhi M4, 758-19)

The Master gives the Naam of the Lord. He unites us with the Lord. (Sri Rag M4, 39-18)

The Master gives the disciple the gift of divine life and directs him to take to devotion.

The Masters are above birth and death; they come to the world to do good to others. They bless us with Divine Life and devotion, and unite us with the Lord. (Suhi M5, 749-2)

The Master has eternal love for the disciple. He looks after him carefully. He cares for him like a mother. He helps him both here and hereafter.

When a mother looks after her son, she keeps him always in view; she feeds him constantly, and caresses him every moment. So does the Master treat the disciple; He keeps him absorbed in the Love of the Lord. (Gauri M4, 168-1)

The mother is happy when the son feeds himself; the fish is happy when it swims in the water; the Master is happy when the disciple heeds His words. (Gauri M4, 164-10)

The Master helps the disciple; He redeems him here and hereafter. The Master loves the disciple, and protects him fully. (Gauri M5, 286-16)

In the case of the disciple who practices according to the Master's directions, the Master comes at the time of the disciple's death and takes charge of him.

Serve a True Master; for He gives protection. He comes at the time of death, and takes one along with Him. (Maru Var M1, 1284-10)

How to Find a Master

A True Guru is found only through the Grace of the Lord. How can a blind man catch a man with sight unless the latter helps him to do so? Whenever the Lord is kind to anyone, He creates circumstances for him to meet a Perfect Master. One can do nothing except pray to Him, sincerely with love.

When He is kind, one meets a Master. One remembers Him, and becomes One with Him. (Malar M1, 1257-11)

When the Lord is kind, the Master is kind. A man wanders in many births, but the Master rescues him by means of the Shabd. (Asa Var M1, 465-2)

A master is found only by great good fortune.

Those who are fortunate meet a Master. (Sri Rag M4, 82-15)

The Benefit of Having a Master

The Gurus clearly describe the various benefits of having a Master. Egotism, pride and ignorance are destroyed. Thirst and hunger go away. Sufferings and doubts are removed. Uncertainty disappears. One is saved from the five thieves, namely: lust, anger, greed, attachment and egotism, and the fire of Maya. One becomes wise and gains knowledge of the three worlds and of his own self. One becomes happy, pure-minded and cheerful. The mind, which is engrossed in attachment and Maya, awakens. Desires are satiated. One obtains occult and spiritual powers, conviction and faith. One becomes happy and full of peace. One is always joyful, and the Lord dwells in one's heart. One is steeped in devotion, attains self-real-

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zation and is dyed in Naam and Shabd. One is freed from the cycle of birth and death. One is honored in the Lord's Court both here and hereafter. The Lord of Death is subdued, and one crosses the ocean of the universe and gains release. One treads the path that leads away from this world of delusion. The lotus of the heart blossoms, and one attains the stage of dying while alive. One ascends beyond Trikuti and attains the condition of sahad yoga (preparedness for the state of oneness with God), sunn 86amadhi (the trance of the void), sahad gati (the condition of equipoise beyond the influence of Maya), the eternal region and ultimately the Original Home. One is honored in the presence of the Lord and is united with the Lord.

Guru Dev – The Radiant Form of the Master

The word 'dev' comes from the root 'dev', which means light. By Guru Dev is meant the Radiant or astral form of the Master. Theosophists also say that in the astral and causal planes the form of the Master is very bright and is visible for many miles. Tulsi Das says that the nails of the feet of the Master shine like diamonds and by meditating on them, divine sight is developed.

The nails of the feet of the Master shine like diamonds; meditation on them gives divine sight. Bal Kand 3

Maulana Rumi says that when the Master dwells in your heart, you begin to see the past and the future.

When the Guru appears in your heart, you know everything from the beginning to the end.

A deep study of the teachings of the Gurus shows that by the Guru is meant the manifested incarnation of the Lord, and our need for such an incarnation has been

stressed. A Master is really a Godman who is the manifestation of Divine Truth in the world.

Oh Nanak, the Guru is the Lord; the Perfect Master unites the devotee with the Lord. (Kanara M4, 1310-17)

The term Guru Dev is also used to refer to the Inner Light-Form of the Satguru. This form is free and beyond the bondage of body and mind. It can be seen with the sight faculty of the soul only. When it appears, all doubts are removed and the disciple's service bears its true fruit.

My eyes were opened by the Master, and all my doubts were removed. My aspirations were fulfilled. (Gauri M3, 200-10)

Guru Arjan Sahib says that this blissful image of the Master appears in the forehead.

The blessed image of the Guru appeared in my forehead, and now I see it wherever I go. (Dev Gandhari M5, 535-14)

This Light-Form remains with the disciple in the eternal regions as well as in the regions of Brahma, and unites him with Sat Purush. There is no difference between the Guru, the Satguru, and the Lord. These are merely the names of different forms of the same current of the Lord.

Owing to the law of "like attracts like", when the Lord appears in human form to redeem souls, he is called the Guru. His real form, which has existed from the beginning and throughout many ages and is very bright, is called Guru Dev. This form is very blessed. Satguru means the Perfect Master. This term is used to mean the True Being, Sat Purush who is manifest in the Satguru. The Gurus say that beyond Guru Dev there is the real form which is Satguru and Hari (the Lord), and that it is invisible and

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imperceptible.

Oh Nanak, I bow to Guru Dev, Satguru, Par Brahm, Par Meshwar and Hari. (Gauri M5, 256-5)

The Guru is our Light and our Lord; His very sight is beneficial, for He is the perfection of all virtues. (Bilawal M5, 802-11)

He is beyond all praise; He is the all-powerful Master. The Master is Par Brahm Par Meshwar. He is limitless, unseeable and imperceptible. (Gujri Var M5, 522-12)

Guru Dev is unseeable and imperceptible; all the three worlds become known through His service. It was a gift of His own bounty that I could find the unimaginable and imperceptible. (Bhairon M1, 1125-10)

In the human form, He is called a Guru (a Master authorized to teach). In his Light-Form, He accompanies us to the subtle, causal and spiritual regions and merges into the form of Satguru or Sat Purush and becomes indistinguishable from Him. The Guru Dev is the connecting link between the Guru and Satguru. When the soul gathers in one place and crosses the stars, the sun and the moon it finds the Light-Form of the Guru manifested. This form is like the bodily form of the Master, but it is extremely beautiful, radiant and alluring. When hinting at this, Maulana Rumi says that if you wish to see this form, you should travel towards your Original Home, the region that was visited by Hazrat Ibrahim, Abraham. You should pass through the big star and by your determined efforts transcend the sun and the moon. You will then be able to place your forehead at His Door.

Like Jalil, go towards the Reality; cross the star, the skies and the blue beyond; put your foot on the sun and the moon, and then place your head at the Door of His Court.

Guru Nanak Sahib also hints at this spiritual path.

From the east you should turn to the west, and should join together the sun and the moon. (Ratan Mala, page 767)

First go to the east; then go to the south. Then climb the mountain from the west after a full round; beyond the seventh region is the lotus throne, which is the seat of Par Brahm, resplendent with a wealth of infinite Lights. Oh Nanak, that is the land of perfect detachment. (Ratan Mala, page 767)

Gather the soul together in the back of the eyes and cross the sun and the moon. Then rise up, walk round the seventh Puri (Sahasdal Kanwal), and pass by Brahm and reach Par Brahm, where there is the Jewel of Naam. He who reaches there is truly detached. The Light-Form of the Master is blissful. Guru Nanak has said:

The wonderful form is blissful; it is shown by the Perfect Master. (Maru M1, Sorath 1041-16)

On seeing that form the disciple cries out: “Wah Guru!” (Glorious Master) “Wah Guru!” (Wonderful Master).

This form remains with the soul in all the regions and universes. It takes on the form of the Shabd in the region of Brahm. It takes the soul to the Ultimate Home or Sach Khand (True Region). When this form appears within, all doubts are destroyed, the service of the devotee is approved and half of the task of the disciple is then accomplished. Thenceforth the devotee has to do nothing. The Light-Form is responsible for taking the soul to the Ultimate Home. The Saints praise this form and the bliss of contemplating on it.

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The Lotus Feet of the Guru Dev are dear; the Saints worship them with Love. (Asa M5, 394-5)

The Saints are filled with joy when they remember the Guru Dev. (Gond M5, 869-14)

Khwaja Muinud-din Chisti describes the Light-Form of the Master as follows:

Oh Master, on seeing Your moon-like face the sun is steeped in the water of shame, and on seeing the effulgent rays of Your cheek the moon has hidden its face. On getting the dust of Your path the sun has become bright and has built his golden throne in the skies. If even one ray of Your bright face were to shine in the skies, the sun would hide itself with shame. In the person of the prophet this sun or light of truth is manifest, just as the moon gets its light from the sun.

The sun saw Your moon-like face; and drowned itself in the waters of shame. When Your face arose, the moon hid itself. The dust of Your feet is luminous. The sun obtained radiance from it. It erected its golden tent in the sky. Beauteous are Your cheeks; if a flame from them shines in the skies, the sun hides behind a curtain. The Light of the Lord appears in the Guru. The moon gets its light from the sun; the Guru gets his Light from the Lord.

Maulana Rumi also hints at the Master's Radiant Form:

You do not know the emperor sitting in my heart. Look inside, and do not be misled by my outer form. You do not know my companion; you do not know the King inside me. Look at my golden face; look not at my iron feet.

St. John described the Light-Form thus in the Bible:

I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet. (Revelations 1:10)

And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks: and the midst of seven golden candlesticks one like to the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. And his head and his hairs were white, as white wool, and as snow, and his eyes were a flame of fire. And his feet like unto fine brass, as in a burning furnace. And his voice as the sound of many waters. (Revelations 1:12-15)

After these things I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven and the first voice which I heard, as it were, of a trumpet speaking with me, said: 'come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must be done hereafter.' (Revelations 4:1)

There is a hint about this in the Sar Bachan, where it is stated that the Guru showed His wonderful form which cannot be described.

The Guru appeared in a wonderful form; it cannot be described.

A pure heart is needed to see this form. It can be seen by pure eyes only. It cannot be manifest to every eye.

See with the Inner Eye; His face is like the moon. Not every eye can see the glory of that moon.

This form of the Master is everlasting, eternal and ever-existent. This has been so throughout the ages. It leads the seeker to merge in Sat Purush.

Great is the Lord; great is the Guru Dev; great is the Eternal Being, who feeds the hungry lotus. (Kabir, Gond 873-3)

The Guru Dev is eternal; the Guru Dev is ever-existent. (Gauri M5, 250-5)

Guru Arjan Sahib also says to the same effect:

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I bow to the eternal Guru. I bow to the ever-existent Guru. I bow to the Satguru. I bow to the Guru Dev. (Gauri M5, 262-10)

The Guru Dev is the highest of all and is all-powerful. All happiness is gained by serving Him. By His Grace egotism is destroyed and one gains release.

The Guru Dev is the most powerful. All happiness is gained by serving Him. (Bhairon M5, 1152-14)

By Your Grace egotism is banished. The Guru Dev is all-powerful. (Bilawal M, 811-5)

The Guru Dev is true. His service is also true. All else is false.

The Guru Dev is true; His service is true. (Nam Dev, Bhairon 1166-15)

Guru Arjan Sahib has sung the praises of the Guru Dev in a beautiful manner. He says:

Guru Dev is mother, Guru Dev is father, Guru Dev is the Lord and Parmeshwar (the Powerful One). The Guru Dev gives happiness and is a true friend who never deserts us. He banishes ignorance. He gives the gift of Naam. He is the manifest image of peace and of true intelligence. He is the philosopher's stone. The Guru Dev destroys all sins and is the redeemer of sinners. Holy is the spot where He sits; it is the true fountain of divine knowledge and immortality. One becomes pure by bathing in it. The Guru Dev is from the beginning, and has been through the ages. One is redeemed by remembering the mantra of the Guru Dev; His mantra is the Lord's mantra. Oh Lord! Have mercy and lead us to a Guru Dev. Take us sinners and fools, across. The Guru is the Satguru and Par Brahm Par Meshwar. We bow before the Guru Dev.

Guru Dev is the mother and the father; Guru Dev is the all-powerful Lord; Guru Dev is the friend who banishes ignorance; Guru Dev is the blood relation and brother; Guru Dev is the bountiful one who gives Naam; Guru Dev's mantra stills the mind; Guru Dev is peace, truth and wisdom personified; Guru Dev is the philosopher's stone; Guru Dev is the sacred pool of nectar; Guru Dev is boundless knowledge; Guru Dev is creator and redeemer; Guru Dev redeems the sinners; Guru Dev is from the beginning, existent in all ages; Guru Dev gives the mantra which saves, Guru Dev's company leads to the realization of the Lord; Guru Dev's Grace takes us sinner's across; Guru Dev is the transcendent Lord, the God of Gods; Guru Dev is the Lord; Nanak salutes Him. (Gauri M5, Bawan Akhri 250-1)

The Gurus mention various benefits that result from realizing the Guru Dev. Lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride are gotten rid of, and millions of sins and sufferings are banished. It removes all defects and raises the soul from a lower to a higher level. It extinguishes the fire of Maya in which all are burning. All desires are fulfilled, and actions prove fruitful. One is honored in the world. It redeems souls in the Iron Age, and the foolish and ignorant souls take to devotion for the Lord. They get happiness, peace and equipoise. One becomes emancipated, and redeems one's family also.

The Guru Dev can be realized only through the mercy of the Lord by a great good fortune.

The Perfect Master

In order to obtain the full benefit of spirituality, Saints and Mahatmas have, in their hymns, emphasized the need of a Master. But the Guru should be a Perfect Master. It is only a Perfect Master who can make us perfect. All the Mahatmas have, therefore, praised a Puran Master or Murshid-i-Kamil (Perfect Master).

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There are stages of spiritual evolution. Unless you find a Perfect Master, your spiritual evolution will not be complete. If one desires to become a Master of Arts, one cannot do so by learning from a fifth standard or a tenth standard student or a graduate teacher, for they can take one only up to the stages they themselves have attained. In order to pass the M.A. examination we need at least an M.A. teacher. In the schools, we have different teachers for different classes. A student who passes the M.A. examination respects all teachers from the very first class onwards. Similarly, there are stages in spirituality, such as that of a Sadhu or Saint or Perfect Master.

In order to get the full benefit of spirituality, we need a teacher who has attained the stage of a Saint. A Sadhu, who is free from the bondage of body and mind and has transcended the three gunas can also help; but a Guru of this type places before the disciple the ideal of a Satguru.

A person below this stage is not so helpful. A guru can only teach up to the stage he himself has reached. He takes the disciple there and not beyond it. It is folly to expect benefit from an imperfect guru. He cannot help you to find release. Guru Nanak Sahib says:

Disciples are many; so are gurus; no release can be found through an imperfect master. (Ramkali M1, 932-11)

A Perfect Master may not have any university degrees, but His company gives something better than formal scholarship, namely, spiritual enlightenment. The Perfect Guru does not reveal all His competence on the first day. As the ability of the disciple increases, the Guru also reveals more and more. At first, He appears merely as an elderly person, but gradually He reveals Himself as a Perfect Guru. He does not stop there. He shows the disciple

that He is merged in the Lord and that there is no difference between Him and the Lord.

Recognizing a Perfect Master

It is not easy to recognize a Perfect Master. We can do so to a certain extent by the signs on His body, His way of life, and the spirituality gained from Him. Some facts about these points are briefly given below.

He is always kind and treats all alike. He is free from prejudice and enmity. He is unaffected by praise or slander.

The Master is always merciful; we reap the harvest of our karmas, but His gracious look alleviates pain. He reveals Himself according to the measure of our faith. (Sorath M3, 602-6)

Great indeed is the Satguru; He is the True Being. Great indeed is the Satguru; He is without enmity. Praise and slander are the same to Him. (Shalok M4, 1421-9)

His Way of Life

The Master's way of life is of a particular kind, and it distinguishes Him from others.

The Master is bountiful. He is never a beggar. He does not hanker after anything. He earns His own living. He is a burden on no one. He maintains Himself, and helps the helpless and the suffering.

He is no Master, who begs from door to door. Do not bow to such a one. He who labors and gives in charity, oh Nanak, he is on the right path. (Sarang Var M4, 1245-17)

He charges no fees and does not accept any donations

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for His teachings. He imparts them free of charge. His teachings are free, like the other bounties of nature such as air, water, sunlight and so forth.

His ornaments are prayer and humility. Despite the fact that He is all-powerful, He does not boast that He can do anything out of the ordinary. He always says that it is the Lord who does something, or that it is being done by His Satguru. Truly, a fruit-laden branch bends humbly. He who considers himself humble is truly great.

He who is humble is truly great. (Gauri Sukhmani M5, 276-7)

He is not opposed to anybody and does not complain about the conduct of anyone. Even if someone bears Him ill-will, He forgives him. He does not criticize anybody, and He does not slander anyone. He loves everybody, including His enemies. He believes and lives up to the precept:

Love thy enemies.

He is the radiant sun of purity, universal wisdom, truth and spirituality. He is spiritual, and seekers after spirituality gather round Him like moths and make their lives fruitful by obtaining spiritual benefit.

He does not dress in any particular manner and does not torture His body for controlling the mind. His method is quite different. It is easy and natural.

He does not perform miracles like a juggler to please His audience. Although He is all-powerful, He keeps His powers hidden. But He does sometimes use them if He is so disposed. His disciples are always benefited by His-Grace.

The Structure of the Body

Certain physical characteristics are said to be possessed by a Perfect Guru. He has no physical defects. He walks like a chakor (moon-bird). His eyes are like those of a lion. He has a broad forehead, a lotus on the sole of His foot and a mole on His face. Hafiz Sahib says:

If my Beloved of Shiraz (Guru) takes control of my mind, I will sacrifice both the worlds to the black mole on His face.

If that Beloved of Shiraz possesses my heart, I will sacrifice Samarkand and Bukhara to His dark mole.

The Character of a Perfect Master and the Influence of His Company

By sitting near a Perfect Master and contemplating on Him the mind is inclined to get under control and is stilled to some extent.

By seeing Him, the mind becomes happy; but how are we to see Him? The Saints are our friends, helpful and true; they dye us in His color and help us live in His presence. (Suhi M5, 760-10)

Rays of purity constantly radiate from Him. He is full of wonderful Light and kindness. He has an indescribable influence on others. He has magnetic attraction. By His words, which are full of mystical meaning, He pulls the soul upwards. He produces an experience of bliss which defies description.

If He were to give out the secrets of His mysteries; the souls would take flight towards the sky. (Maulana Rumi)

One finds a strange radiance and attraction in His eyes

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and in His forehead when one gazes at them, even for a moment. He feels a pull, and his attention gathers together and seems to ascend to the higher subtle regions from the gross regions. His consciousness expands and is elevated.

There is peace and evenness within a Perfect Master. As a result of being in His company, a current of bliss runs through us. We feel happy on meeting Him. All our doubts are removed and we feel certain that our ultimate destination will be attained.

Such a one is the Satguru, on seeing Him one feels happy; that the doubts of the mind are banished, and the abode of the Lord is attained. (Gauri M4, 168-10)

He is full of the Elixir of Life. His face is bright and radiant. His voice is attractive and the light in His eyes is both alluring and piercing. Powerful currents of life-energy emanate from a Saint and surcharge the surrounding atmosphere. His words have a strange influence. They penetrate the hearts of the listeners. The mere presence of a Saint awakens souls and redeems them.

A Perfect Master can, with a single glance, find out one's inner condition. He then instructs us according to our condition. When anyone visits Him He can see the visitor's inner condition as if that person were encased in transparent glass, but He keeps it a secret. Bees rush to flowers for their fragrance and honey; similarly, the seekers go to the perfect Master to partake of His wealth of spirituality and righteousness. No one returns empty handed from the bountiful Master. They bring back with them the seed of Naam which, sooner or later, fructifies and gives release to the soul. When one begins to visit a Perfect Master, his good days begin.

When I met the Holy Man my good days began. (Dhanasri M5, 671-11)

The Sant Satguru is the True Son of the Lord. To Him all religions, castes, faiths and sects are alike. He sees the same Lord in all living beings.

The Lord Himself acts in this body of five elements (the body of the Saint). (Janam Sakhi Guru Nanak – Journey to Mecca)

Without partiality to any religion or caste, He imparts the same message to all the world. To Him, all are the children of God, and He looks upon them with the same eye.

The Satguru is merciful, and all are equal to Him. He looks upon all with the same eye, and he who loves Him, prospers. (Gauri Var M4, 300-15)

He clasps all to His bosom.

Oh Nanak, the Satguru unites all to the Lord. (Sri Rag M1, 72-8)

He does not ask anyone to give up his religion and adopt a new one. He is concerned only with the soul. He does not mind what religion he belongs to. But it is necessary that you should have a desire for spiritual progress.

There is no question of religion or caste so far as He is concerned.

I rejoice in the Shabd, which knows no distinction. It is the same for all, whether a Brahmin or a Sheikh. (Kabir)

The Perfect Master fearlessly preaches the path of spirituality, which is free from the limitations of Scriptures and formalities and is present inside everyone. He is a true

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Haji, one who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca; one who has seen God, who has made the upward journey to the Court of the Lord. You will derive spiritual benefit from a Perfect Guru wherever you meet Him.

Maulana Rumi says,

If you wish to go on a pilgrimage, take with you someone who has experience of it, whether he be a Hindu, an Arab or a Turk.

Do not be misled by His outer form. Consider only His spiritual attainment. We do not have to enter into any outer relationship with Him. We must take instructions in spiritual science from Him and practice what He teaches us.

If you wish to go on a pilgrimage, take one with you who has experience of it; He may be a Hindu, a Turk or an Arab. Do not look at his features or color; look at his ideal and determination.

The Perfect Master is an incarnation of the Lord. Just as the Lord communicates His teachings to the Saints without the agency of speech, similarly, the Saints impart their messages to their disciples by means of internal experiences, and without the use of speech.

Like God, the Master does not make use of speech or any material instrument. He teaches the disciple without speaking.

The Master is formless like God and above the sphere of senses. He instructs His disciples without uttering a word.

The teachings of the Saints are imparted in an unspoken language, the language of the soul which, one soul

conveys to another soul. The soul is a particle of God and His great mystery. It speaks without tongue or throat.

The soul is a particle of God, and it is a secret of God. It can speak without a tongue or palate.

It can function and act without the aid of any senses.

He sees without eyes; He hears without ears; He walks without legs; He works without hands; He speaks without a tongue; He dies while living. Oh Nanak, He knows His law; He is one with Him. (Majh Var M1, 139-2)

Maulana Rumi also says that in the higher spiritual regions these feet are not needed for walking, nor do we require a tongue for eating, wings for flying, ears for hearing or eyes for seeing.

The soul travels without wings or feet, it eats without lips or teeth; it sees the universe with closed eyes.

With Perfect Masters it often happens that seekers after truth have no need to put questions during discourses. They get answers to their questions without asking them.

Whenever the Saints manifest themselves, they preach the practice of Naam or the Surat Shabd Yoga (Yoga of the Sound Current) and clearly say that the Lord has never been and will never be realized by formal religious practices. He is inside your heart. Your heart is the true temple of God. You must search for Him there. The Lord can be realized only by going within.

This body is the Temple of the Lord, and the Jewel of Knowledge is to be found therein. (Prabhati M3, 1346-4)

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The body of man is a wonderful thing. If the Inner Eyes are opened, it is discovered to be the abode of the Lord, the temple of God. It is the true mosque wherein God is to be found.

The heart is the mosque; the body is the true place of worship. And God created man to His own image. (Bible)

Why should men who have within them these natural mosques and temples, wander about outside seeking the Lord? This is not proper. Those who search for the Lord outside the body cannot find Him.

The Friend is by your side; why are you so ignorant? Your Friend is within you; why do you seek Him elsewhere? (Maghrabi)

In your head are beautiful gardens, and the company of great souls. Make haste and visit them; ask the secret from the Master. (Maulvana Rumi)

They who search not inside the body are ignorant and foolish. They look for the treasure in wrong places, like the deer that looks for musk in the bushes. (Gauri M4, 309-9)

Those who search for Him outside the body are fools. They are like the deer which searches for musk in the bushes. Out of ignorance they wander in solitudes and wastes. Whatever is in the macrocosm is in the microcosm. You must search for Him inside your own self. We are mistaken when we search for Him in brooks, streams, hills, man-made temples and other places. We will not find Him there. If we know the secret of the path, we will find Him. We cannot, however, go inside without a True Master.

Know ye by the Grace of the Master, the temple of the Lord is within you. (Prabhathi M3, 1346-2)

The teachings of the Perfect Masters are wholly true and scientific. They are natural and practical. They are not merely the result of imagination and intellect. Whatever they teach, they teach with absolute conviction, for their teachings are not the result of mere reading or learning. They are based on their own personal inner experiences, and these experiences are common to all holy men. Their spiritual experiences tally with the experiences of other holy men. They do not ask people to have blind faith. They have themselves seen the Lord.

But the Lord of Nanak is visible to the eyes (of the Saint). (Asa M5, 397-7)

Namdev filled the golden cup with milk, and placed it before the Lord. Such devotees dwell in the Lord's heart. The Lord was pleased; He drank the milk and the devotee went home. Namdev then had the vision of the Lord. (Namdev, Bhairon 1163-19)

They are true Hajis (men who have seen God). They say,

Practice the spiritual meditation and see with your own eyes.

The Beloved should be seen with the Inner Eyes, and His words should be heard with the Inner Ears. You will see His Light behind the darkness, and will understand His wonderful words with the ears of the spirit.

Shamas-i-Tabriz says:

We should see the Beloved with our own eyes, and listen to His voice. When one closes the eyes there is darkness. One should see His Light behind it.

You would then understand His glory as a result of

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your own experience. The Perfect Masters or Saints do not rely on Scriptures and books, for the Scriptures merely describe the experiences of holy men. Saints, however, are themselves the Vedas and the Scriptures personified. Books owe their origin to them. They are all this and more. The teachings of the Saints are free and true, and all bondage is banished through them. One attains immortal honor and distinction through them.

Guru Nanak Sahib has described the signs by which one can recognize the Perfect Master in His "Malar". He says:

The real Master is one who shows us our True Home inside our body. He makes us hear the five Melodies that are ever resounding within us. All the worlds, the underworlds, the islands and universes are wonderful, as the sweet Melody of the Shabd, (Divine Sound) is resounding in them. The Melody comes from the Throne of the True Lord.

Guru Granth Sahib advises us to hear that Shabd in the Sukhman or the Royal Vein, and attune ourselves to the spiritual regions. The Melody is indescribably sweet; on hearing it all worldly desires die out. When the lotus of the heart turns upwards, it is filled with this Nectar. When you drink this Nectar, your mind will not waver. Prayer will become automatic and constant and there will be communion without speech with the unspoken Word, which has been since the very beginning. All the seekers who realize the five Melodies are real devotees and return to their Original Home. Guru Granth Sahib says that he is a slave of anyone who seeks and realizes the Shabd and reaches his Home.

He is the wise and True Master, who shows us our home within our body. There rings the Melody of the five Shabds; there is the

beat of the drum of Shabd. The worlds, underworlds, islands and seas all make one wonder-struck. A deep and subtle Melody plays there, and a King sits on the Throne of Truth. Hear the Music in the Sukhman, in the region of the void, hear the unutterable Music, and the desires in the mind will die out. The lotus will be upturned and will be filled with Nectar; then the mind ceases to wander, and the eternal Music never leaves us. It is with us from the beginning through the ages. All who realize the five Shabds and go back to their Original Home, have found the Shabd which leads them Home. Nanak is the slave of such Perfect Masters. (Malar Var M1, 1290-19)

All holy men say that the True Master is one who can attune the soul to the Shabd or Divine Harmony.

The Perfect Master attunes us to the Shabd; He is all-powerful and all-pervading. He is above the illusion of Maya, and has not an iota of greed in Him. (Maru M1, 1021-7)

A Perfect Master does not make His disciples engage in any external practice. His teachings are: "Go inside and attune yourself to the Shabd." The sign of meeting a True Master is that the unending Music begins to play within the initiate.

Oh Nanak, he who has a Perfect Master hears the Anhad Shabd (unending music). (Asa M5, 393-16)

He who is attuned to the Naam is a Perfect Master. In this Iron Age, He is like a ship that can ferry the souls across. A devotee sets sail on board this ship and goes across the ocean of existence. He realizes the Truth within himself.

The Perfect Master is attuned to the Naam; He is the boatman in the Iron Age. He who obeys the Master crosses over; for he gets attuned to Truth. (Bihagara M4, 552-9)

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Whenever Saints and holy men appear, they sometimes create an atmosphere which is not liked by the worldly-minded people. They do so, so that the slaves of the world and worshippers of mammon, who often gather round them like flies, may leave them, and the real seekers may not suffer. They intentionally provide some cause for criticism so that only the deserving will come to them.

Should there be no keeper at the gates of the Master? There should be one so that worldly dogs may not crowd in. Slander acts as the Master's doorkeeper, so that no undeserving soul may approach them.

In the Janam Sakhi (biography) written by Bhai Bala, it is stated that Guru Nanak said,

Many Saints will incarnate in the Iron Age in order to redeem the sinners.

Bhai Ajite then asked what would be the signs by which they could be recognized, and would the people be able to find them? The Guru said that one sign would be that whenever Saints would incarnate, many impostors, who followed the formalities of religion, would criticize them. A few would follow the Saints, but they, too, would be criticized by the so-called disciples of the so-called gurus.

People would forget the Yoga of the Sound Current and would read the written words and say prayers while kneeling. The Path of the Unending Music would be forgotten. Men would repeat other mantras and would not know about the Path of inner devotion. When the Yoga of the Sound Current would not be practiced, I will appear in the garb of Saints. When the practice of Anhad Shabd (Unending Music) commences, one could know that I was

there.

When a Saint appears on the earth, there is a flood of spirituality. The true seekers gather round Him from all sides. All benefit from His teachings – the simple as well as the righteous, for they find a true satisfaction in the teachings. It even happens that some thieves, robbers and sinners also come to the Saints, benefit by their teachings and become holy men. The Masters act like a washer-man and wash away the dirt of our sins. They are living examples of selflessness and sacrifice. They rule the hearts of the people. Spirituality is preached by them on a grand scale. People throng around them by the thousands, and the world is wonderstruck by this demonstration of spirituality and devotion.

The Perfect Masters or Saints are powerful personalities. They look after their disciples whether they be near at hand or far away. This naturally creates confidence in the hearts of their disciples. Their hand is no less strong than that of the Lord. Their reach is so great as to transcend the seven skies. As the disciple's contact with his Master increases, he receives fresh benefits and sees new miracles.

Powerful is His hand; it is no less strong than that of the Lord. His hand has the power of God. You may be sure that His reach is so great that it transcends the seven skies. (Maulana Rumi)

These are some of the signs of a Perfect Master which should be taken into consideration by a seeker.

Besides these, there are innumerable other signs which a seeker recognizes after being in His company for some time. Maulana Rumi says there are other signs which are known only to those who are acquainted with them.

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There are many signs to help one recognize a Saint; but only he who knows them can recognize them.

When one goes inside, one sees the Light-Form of the Master and this form speaks to the disciple. It replies to his questions and remains with him constantly.

The Master is constantly with me. (Asa M5, 394-3)

The disciple then knows the Master intimately.

The world is full of the so-called "Masters". But most of them hunger for fame and wealth and are not real masters. They should be avoided. A Master should be adopted only after a careful and balanced consideration. If one should find the above signs in anyone, it would be an indication that there is some reflection of the genuine truth in Him. Never try, however, to test a Master. When one meets a Perfect Master, the mind is stilled by His magnetic attraction. There can be no success without His help.

Except for the Master's Grace, nothing kills the ego. Hold fast to the garment of that great mind-subduer. If you hold fast, it will be because of His Grace; whatever power you get, will be His. (Maulana Rumi)

The Perfect Master is a person who is free from cravings and desires. You must surrender to Him all your mind, body and wealth so that He may make you like Him. How this body and mind should be surrendered is described as follows by Kabir Sahib:

Surrender body and mind to Him who has no desires; who has given up all consideration for the self, and who attunes you to the Lord. Surrender of the mind means surrender of all, for the body goes with the mind. What else is left with you to give? Kabir has

said: Surrender of body and mind is for your good; the burden is then removed from your own head. If a man asserts that he has done this by his own efforts, he is quite in the wrong. Surrender of body and mind means nothing, if the underlying desires are not given up. Kabir says to that seeker: How can the mind be controlled? When body and mind are truly surrendered, the desires should also go with them. Kabir says that he is without fear, for his mind is with the Master. His innermost thoughts are also surrendered at the Lotus Feet. Oh Kabir, these feet are those of the Master, I see naught else.

A Perfect Master is a wonderful being whose worth is beyond description.

A Perfect Master is glorious. Oh Nanak, may I be a sacrifice unto Him. (Sorath M5, 618-14)

The Master is very great; no one can truly evaluate Him. (Sorath M5, 514-15)

A Perfect Master is a highly realized soul. He has no feeling of duality. One is redeemed on meeting Him.

His mind is enlightened; He has no feeling of duality. Oh Nanak, meet Him, for He redeems and sings the praises of the Lord. (Gauri M4, 168-15)

He is a helper of the helpless and a pardoner of the sinners.

Be humble and lie prostrate before the Master; the Master honors the humble and blesses them. (Sri Rag M4, 41-4)

No one remains here forever; it is so ordained. Time tears the body. This mind is full of defects, and the body suffers because of them. I am a sinful beggar. But the Perfect Master obtains reprieve for me, and forgives my sins. (Maru M1, 1012-4)

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When a Perfect Master looks at a soul with a merciful look, the soul is redeemed.

The devotee reflects on the self, and recognizes the diamond. The Perfect Master gives him a single glance, and thereby redeems him. When the disciple accepts the Master, his mind is stilled. (Asa M1, 413-16)

Bhai Nand Lal says that one life-giving look of the Master is sufficient.

A single life-giving look of the Master is quite sufficient for redeeming the disciple.

Whatever the Perfect Master desires is approved by the Lord and comes to pass in this world.

Whatever the Perfect Master prays for, is heard by the Lord. It pervades everywhere, and is in every heart and on every tongue. (Bilawal M4, 856-12)

The power of the Master is the Shabd. It is eternal.

Perfect is the Master; perfect is His power; His Word is eternal; It lives forever. (Prabhati M5, 1339-19)

How Can a Perfect Master be Found?

The Perfect Master is found only through the Grace of the Lord.

He to whom the Lord is kind meets a Perfect Master. (Sorath M5, 640-16)

Oh Nanak, when the Lord is merciful, then a Perfect Master meets you. (Shalok M4, 1421-19)

Many aspire to get a Perfect Master, but only he, who is so destined, meets Him.

*He alone finds a Perfect Master, whose destiny is so ordained.
(Gauri Var M4, 307-19)*

How is the ground prepared for meeting Him? When one sincerely aspires to meet the Lord, the Master appears.

*He who has sincere devotion in his heart, meets a Perfect Master.
(Bhairon M3, 1129-14)*

The Signs of Meeting a Perfect Master

There are many signs for ascertaining that one has met a Perfect Master. The most significant of these is that one gets a first hand-experience, a living contact with Naam, the Light of God and the Voice of God. The wish of the Master (which, in fact, is the wish of the Lord, since the Master is merged in the Lord and there is no distinction between them) becomes the willing duty of the disciple. He then treads the path of obedience and submission.

Your Law is infinite, and nobody can fully comprehend it; he who meets a Master, treads the path ordained by Him. (Asa M5, 396-15)

CHAPTER 7. ONENESS OF GURU, GURU DEV, SATGURU AND LORD

It is said in the Scriptures that Akal Purush is without form. He sees without eyes, works without hands, walks without feet and hears without ears. He is present everywhere but is not visible.

He is beyond the reach of intellect or imagination, for they function within human limitations. How is one to meditate on Him and to become acquainted with Him? For, in actual fact, one can love only one's fellow human beings.

Birds of a feather flock together, pigeons with pigeons, and falcons with falcons.

Birds love birds, animals love animals, and man loves man. In order to still the mind, we must have something before the eyes as an objective. To fulfil this need of human beings, Rama, Krishna and others came to this world as incarnations of Kal, in the form of human beings, and Saints come as incarnations of Sat Purush, also as human beings. In an inspired line, a Persian mystic says:

Since He is God, He comes Himself.

This is true. God does reveal Himself to us. We are helpless and have no access to the Lord. He is all pow-

erful. But in spite of His being formless, He reveals His Light in the human body and thus manifests Himself. He appears amongst us in the form of a Perfect Saint and becomes the means of uniting us with the Lord. The Satguru is the being through whom the Lord sends His message to us in this world. The Gurus have therefore repeatedly praised the Satguru and they say that the Lord is manifested in Him and that if you wish to be united with Him you must take shelter with the Master. There is no other means of success.

Know ye the Master and the Lord to be one; the Lord accepts one whom the Master loves. (Gord M5, 864-11)

The Master is sent by the Lord; the Master is the true sustainer. If the Master is pleased, everything is yours. Nanak would gladly sacrifice himself unto Him a thousand times. (Gauri M5, 218-9)

What is the Meaning of Oneness?

The oneness of the Master with the Lord means that his essence is merged in the essence of the Lord, and they are One. The Lord is infinite. He pervades everywhere. The Master is the point where He is manifest, and the whole world derives spiritual Light from him. The Master, so to say, is the bulb in which the electric light is made to appear. The Lord enlightens the people of the world by this bulb. The Master is not the body. He transcends it. The disciple is also not the body. When he transcends the bondage of the body, he sees the glory of the Master. The Satguru is the place where the sun of Reality rises. One of the Saints says:

He has hidden a sun in man.

The True Master is hidden in the human body. He

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radiates the Light of the Lord. This body is not sufficient to manifest His light and beauty. In order to know Him as he really is, we have to rise above the body. His eyes are the windows of the Lord's Home, and in them shines His Light. We cannot understand it by any worldly example.

The Perfect Master remains intoxicated without wine and satisfied without food.

The Man of God remains intoxicated without wine; the Man of God remains satisfied without any meal. (Maulana Rumi)

His eyes remain fixed on the vision of the Lord, and his hand is the hand of the Lord.

His eyes are fixed on the vision of God; His hand is the hand of God. (Maulana Rumi)

The Master is not a creature of this world and is not in the bondage of this body. He goes beyond all the lower worlds and regions, the mind and the intellect, and lives and moves in the spiritual regions. And He, in his mercy, gives eyes to thousands of persons to see inner sights and cross these regions.

The living Master is one with the Lord. He is the true manifestation of the Lord in this world. He has been given the duty of working for the salvation of its creatures. He is the manifestation of the Shabd. He is the source of love. He is the incarnation of bliss and peace. Only man can guide man. This is the law of nature. The Master assumes human form according to this law, so that he may persuade people and unite them with the Lord through his own strength. He can every day, or whenever he likes, enjoy the bliss of the innermost and highest regions of Light and Life.

The Sikh Gurus and other holy men have clearly stated that there is no difference between the Master and the Lord. In fact they are one.

The Lord is infinite, transcendent and powerful. Oh Nanak, He is met in the form of the Master. (Sorath M5, 599-6)

My Guru is true and eternal; He does not come and go; He is the imperishable one. He pervades all. (Suhi M5, 759-7)

How can the Master's greatness be described? He is from the beginning and has been throughout the ages. He is the very Lord.

How can the Guru be praised? He is the pool of wisdom and truth; He has existed throughout the ages from the beginning. He is the very Lord. (Asa M5, 397-1)

The Gurus say:

We have churned the ocean of the body and have made the wonderful discovery that the Master is the Lord and the Lord is the Master. There is no difference between them.

We churned the sea of the body, and saw a wonderful sight. The Lord is the Guru and the Guru is the Lord. Oh Nanak, there is no difference or distinction. (Asa M5, 442-18)

The Lord lives in the Master.

The Creator Himself is in the Master; the Lord is manifested in the Master. Myriads of men are redeemed by Him. (Maru M1, 1024-9)

Without the Master love does not awaken in the heart, try as you may. The Lord has enshrined Himself in the Master, and the

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Master unites us with Him. All homage to the Master! (Maru M4, 996-13)

The slanderers come to grief and suffering; there is no difference between Namdev and the Lord. (Namdev, Bhairon 1166-12)

Kabir Sahib says,

I have become one with the Lord. My mind is filled with the joy of union.

I and You, my Lord, are now One. My mind is filled with the joy of union. (Kabir, Gauri 339-8)

He again says, "Ram and Kabir are united and nobody can distinguish between them."

I have ascended to the Lord's throne, and have met the Supreme Music-Maker. Rama and Kabir are now One, no one can distinguish between them. (Kabir, Ramkali 969-16)

The Lord and the Master are one.

The Lord and the Master are One; oh Nanak, the Lord loves the Master. (Maru M1, 1043-9)

The Master and the Lord are One; He pervades everywhere. (Sri Rag M5, 53-5)

The wave goes back to the ocean; the Lord and His servant are One. (Sarang M5, 1209-17)

Oh Nanak, the devotee and the Lord are One; by remembering the Lord, one merges in Him. (Vadhans M4, 562-6)

Oh Nanak, the Saint and Hari (the Lord) are One; remember Him, blessed is His Naam. (Sri Rag M4, 79-6)

There is no distinction between the Saint and the Lord; there is barely one like Him in a million. (Gauri M5, 208-17)

The Lord and His servant merge and become One; the Lord and His servant are alike. (Asa M4, 447-15)

The Lord and His devotees are one. Let there be no doubt about this. The Saint is like the wave, which is nothing but a rise of water and not different from it.

The Lord and His devotees are One; there is no difference between them. The wave rises from the water, then it subsides in it. (Dasam Granth)

The drop, when it falls into the ocean, becomes one with the ocean. The Lord is wonderful. The Master is the means of manifesting Him.

The transcendent Lord is wonderful, and the Master is His image. (Bhairon M5, 1152-15)

All religious books say that there is no difference between the Master and the transcendent One.

Oh Nanak, I have studied the Smritis and the Vedas; there is no difference between the transcendent One and the Master. (Bhairon M4, 1142-9)

The Lord is the Shabd,(or the Word made flesh). He pervades the Master as the Shabd. He distributes the gift of Shabd through the Master. He is the Incarnation of the Shabd.

The Lord Himself pervades the Guru; He pervades as the Shabd. The Master loves the True One, and He merges in the True One. (Malar Var M1, 1279-14)

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The Master is One with the Lord, as is the Shabd.

The Lord Himself is the Master and the Shabd. He has loved the devotees through the ages. (Gauri M3, 246-7)

The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, full of Grace and Truth. (Bible)

There is no difference between the Guru, Satguru and the Lord.

There is no difference between the Perfect Master and the Lord; devotion to them is crowned with happiness. (Sri Rag M4, 77-5)

The Master is the True Being who repeats the Naam of the Lord, on hearing which the souls are redeemed.

The Perfect Master is the True Being; He repeats the Naam of the Lord. He who hears what He says is released; may we be a sacrifice unto Him. (Dhanasari M3, 667-6)

The Perfect Master is eternal and everlasting. He is free from birth and death. He is never- changing. He is never destroyed. He is sustained by the Naam or Power of God.

The Master is eternal; He does not come and go. He is the imperishable One; He pervades all. (Suhi M4, 756-7)

The Master is unchanging; His mind is still. He is sustained by Naam. (Sarang M4, 1199-5)

The Perfect Master is a manifestation of the Lord. His words are nectar and make men immortal.

The Perfect Master is the image of the Lord, and His words are nectar. (Malar M5, 1264-6)

The Master, being one with the Lord, is the creative cause of the universe. He sustains the entire universe and its living beings.

The Master is the creator; the Master is the sustainer; His words are true. (Sri Rag M5, 52-13)

The Master is the Lord, the Creator. He is the sustainer of the entire universe. (Suhi M5, 741-12)

The Master is a fountain of happiness; the Master is the creator. He is the life of the souls; Nanak is sustained by the Master. (Gauri M5, 187-12)

Tulsi Das Ji says:

I bow at the holy feet of the Master. He is the ocean of compassion and mercy. He is, in reality, the Lord in human form. His words, like the rays of the sun, dispel the thick darkness of attachment.

I bow at the holy feet of the Master; He is the Lord in human form. His words are like the rays of the sun; they dispel the thick darkness of attachment.

One day, Lord Christ asked his disciples:

But whom do you say that I am?

Simon Peter answered and said:

Thou art Christ, the son of the living God. And Jesus answering said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (St Matthew 16:15-18)

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On another occasion he spoke more clearly to them.
Philip said to him,

Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.

Jesus said to him,

Have I been so long a time with you; and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also. How sayest thou, show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? (St John 14:8-10)

Jesus also said:

I and the Father are one. He that seeth me hath seen the Father. This that I tell you I do not say of my own, but the Father abiding in me doth His works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.

Guru Arjan Sahib, when speaking of his oneness with the Lord, clearly stated:

My temple is the highest. My region is endless. My Kingdom is an everlasting one. My wealth is immense and is not subject to decay. My glory has existed throughout the ages. My followers are at every place. I am praised in every home. Devotion is given to me in all the lands. The Lord is manifest within me. The Father has become one with the son. When the Father is pleased, He and the son are dyed in the same color.

My temple is the highest of the high. My region is endless and indescribable. My kingdom is eternal. My wealth is immense and everlasting. My glory resounds throughout the ages. My glory is manifest everywhere. My praise rings in all homes. All the people give me devotion. My Father is manifest within me. The Father and the son have become one. Oh Nanak, God, my Father, loves

me. The Father and the son are blended in the same hue. (Bhairon M5,1461-13)

Hindu Scriptures also say the same thing.

The Master is Brahma; the Master is Vishnu; the Master is Maheswara; the Master is the transcendent One. I bow to such a Master.

A drop merges in the sea and becomes the sea. It is so stated in Mandakya Upanishad.

As the flowing river disappears in the sea, losing its name and its form, thus a wise man, freed from name and form, goes to the Divine Saint, who is greater than the great. He who knows that highest Brahm also becomes Brahm. That Divine Being manifests in his body. How can He who pervades everywhere confine Himself to one place, and how can the Infinite Being be limited to the human body?

In this connection Lord Krishna says in Verses 24 and 25 of Chapter 7 of the Gita:

The undiscerning think that I am the unmanifest that has come to manifestation; they do not know my higher being, immutable, supreme. Veiled by Maya, I am not known to all. This world is deluded and does not recognize me as unborn and immutable.

He again says in Chapter 9,

I pervade all the universe in my unmanifest form; all beings are sustained by me, but I do not depend on them. Fools scorn me because I have taken the human form. My higher being is not known to them.

The Muslim holy men also say that the Master is, in

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fact, the Lord. Maulana Rumi says that the hand of the Master is not smaller than that of the Lord. It wields His very same power. His reach is very long and extends beyond the seventh heaven. His hand is connected with the Lord. No one can imagine His grandeur. He is a brilliant sun hidden in the form of a man. Try to know Him as He really is.

Powerful is the Master's hand; it is not less strong than that of the Lord; His hand is the power of God. One should believe in its greatness for it extends to the highest heaven. In His palm flows the Eternal Current; the Lord is without rival or partner in His grandeur. He has hidden a sun in man. Know the Master as He is. (Maulana Rumi)

Maulana Rumi again says:

The Light of the Lord shines in the Master. We look at His manifest human form and therefore do not know that He is in fact the Lord Himself. He has assumed the form of a man, but in reality He is the Lord.

The Light of the Lord shines in the Master. You can see this if you master your mind.

He further says that the Lord has said that He is very vast. He cannot be contained in the hills, dales, lands and skies and so forth. It is curious, however, that He is contained in the heart of a Master. In other words, the ocean is contained in a pot. If you want to search for Him, look for Him there.

The Prophet said, 'God has told me, I do not live high nor low. I do not live in land or skies, nor do I live in heavens. Believe me, my dear, I live in the hearts of Saints. If you want me, go and seek in those hearts.'

In his manifested form the Master is human, but His soul is one with the Lord.

*His body is in this material world, but His soul is in the heavens.
He is beyond the ken of matter and mind.*

Shams-i-Tabrez says that the Perfect Master is the King of kings. The Lord has closed the doors to His abode and is sitting behind them. But He manifests Himself in human form as a Perfect Master and comes to earth to open the doors.

That Great King is sitting behind firmly closed doors, but He Himself takes the form of man and opens them.

Bulleh Shah says that the Lord comes in human form to awaken the people.

God has come in human form; He has come to awaken the people.

The Gurus say to the same effect:

The Lord has come in human form; He is called Ram Das (Servant of God). (Sorath M5, 612-7)

Our Lord is very wise and is called a Saint. (Kabir, Asa 476-14)

Oh Pipa, Om is the real essence. Only a Perfect Master can reveal it. (Pipa, Dhanasri 695-15)

The Master is the immaculate Lord; do not consider Him to be a human being. (Ramkali M5, 895-5)

The servant of the Lord is like the Lord Himself. The form makes no difference. (Maru M5, 1076-3)

Bhai Gurdas says:

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That One took form, and was called Guru Gobind. The formless One assumed form; He is One, but appears as many. (Var 25, Pauri 1)

He who imparts to you true knowledge, know Him to be the Lord. He is the real Shabd. Consider Him to be One with the Lord.

He who imparts the true knowledge, know him to be the Lord. He is the true Shabd; He is One with the Lord. (Basant M3, 1174-17)

When a blackbird is being taught to speak, a mirror is placed before it and a man hides behind it and speaks. The blackbird looks at his own reflection in the mirror and thinks that someone of his species is sitting there before him and speaking. Similarly, the Lord is hiding behind the garb of the Saints and speaks through them. The Lord is indescribable and wonderful. He has to take a human form to manifest Himself to the human beings. How can He communicate with human beings without a body? Kabir Sahib says that Brahm speaks under the cover of body and cannot speak without it. How can one see a personality who has no attributes unless it takes a form like us?

The body of a Master walks on this earth, but His soul soars to the seven skies. He is human in outer form, but God speaks through Him. He is in reality God. He is God plus man, that is, a Godman. He is the string that connects us with God. The Master is the Shabd-personified, but He has to take a human form so that He may make us understand Him.

It is said that the King of Russia, Peter the Great, went to Holland to learn the art of ship- building. He disguised

himself as a workman. There were many Russians who had fled from his tyrannical rule there, and he talked to them of Russia and advised them to return to their homes. They also felt like returning. They said, however, that the Czar had turned them out and that therefore they could not return. Peter told them that the Czar was his friend, that he would recommend them to him, and that the Czar would agree. When Peter, after learning the art of ship-building, made ready to return home, those who believed his words accompanied him.

When Peter entered the country, everyone bowed down and showed him great respect. This encouraged his companions to believe that he would make the Czar feel favorably disposed towards them and would give them permission to live in Russia. When they reached the capital, Peter left his companions and asked them to see the Czar in his court. When they went there, they were wonder-struck at seeing him sitting on the Czar's throne. They had believed him to be a laborer like themselves, and did not know that he was the Czar. They then felt grateful that the Cczar had brought them home in the guise of a laborer.

The position of a Master is similar. He takes on human form to take human beings to their original home. Outwardly, He appears to be a prisoner amongst other prisoners; but in reality He is the king of all regions and universes. He is not a prisoner. He is, no doubt, in the guise of a prisoner; but He is here for redeeming the prisoners and has come here to free them of their bondage.

Guru Arjan Sahib says:

He who sent you is calling you back home to enjoy the bliss of the eternal kingdom.

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He who sent you calls you back. Travel happily and return home comfortably. Sing the bliss of union with the Lord. Enjoy the eternal kingdom. Come home, oh friend. The Lord will remove your sufferings. Your troubles will be ended. The Lord is manifested in the Master. He destroys and removes suffering. The welcoming music is playing, and the Lord will welcome you there. Be firm and have no doubts; the Word of the Master will sustain you. His glory pervades the world. His court is resplendent. He sent us into this life, and it is He who is calling us back. The Creator has done a wonder. Oh Nanak, all glory be to Him, the True One. (Dhanasri M4,378-2)

When Rani Inderamati, by intense meditation, reached the True Region, she saw that Kabir Sahib was sitting in the place of the True Being. She said,

Oh Lord, why did You not tell me earlier that You were the True Being, and I would have recognized You.

Kabir said,

How could you have believed at that time (before you had developed spiritually)?

All the Saints who have reached the true and nameless regions are one with the Lord. When this is so, how can one be great and the other small? All are the same. If we consider one to be greater and the other smaller, it is our mistake.

He who differentiates between one Saint and another, goes to the region of hell.

Millions of people visit a Master and see Him. They hear His discourses and describe Him according to their own respective understanding. They call Him a kindly gentleman or a philosopher or a learned man or a wise

moralist. They comfort themselves by so describing Him. But there are very few amongst them who see the Lord in Him. Everyone praises Him according to his own degree of understanding. If the Master were only a man, he could give us nothing more than human virtues. But in fact He is more than human. One who is not developed inwardly, fails to recognize Him. He reveals Himself only to those who are sufficiently developed. He whose eye is not trained cannot recognize Him. How can a blind man see or recognize another person by his face? Unless the Lord or the True Being is Himself kind to a person, that person will not recognize the Guru as Guru. Unless the Perfect Master, who is Truth incarnate, reveals Himself, one cannot recognize Him. Even if the Master should live next door, an undeveloped person would not know Him. Very often, the members of a Perfect Master's own family fail to recognize His stature.

No one can recognize Him without good fortune. But one who recognizes Him, recognizes the Lord. Bhai Nand Lal says:

The Lord is ever present. See His holy vision.

When the seeing Inner Eye is opened or the Lord Himself makes Himself known, then one begins to feel the reflection of the Lord within him. The only object of Simran (repetition) is to open the seeing Inner Eye so that we may be able to see the Lord everywhere and in the Master, where He is manifest. But this is possible only by the Lord's Grace.

The Gift of the Lord and the Master

The spiritual Path is not easy. It is, in fact, very difficult. It is said in the Katha Upanishad:

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Arise, awake. Go to the holy men and get knowledge from them. The learned say that this path is sharp as a razor's edge and it is difficult to tread it. (Katha Upanishad 14)

In the Holy Quran, the path is described as the Pul Sirat, Razor Bridge which is sharp as a razor's edge and narrow as a hair. Bhai Gurdas also says that following the Master is like treading a path that is as narrow as a hair and as sharp as a razor. One feels diffident about entering the path after reading the difficult rules and formalities mentioned in the Vedas and other Scriptures. How, one thinks, can a weak and helpless man, who is a prey to worldly attachment and Maya, contend against five powerful enemies, lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride? How can he cross the ocean of existence?

It is true that the Lord sends the Masters to redeem us. It is, however, not easy to serve them and act within their will. Unless the Lord and the Master shower their Grace, it is extremely difficult to progress spiritually. The Lord is merciful. He, in His compassion, unites whomsoever He likes with Himself.

He sustains all the world; Devotees, by His Grace, are united unto Him. The living beings have no power of their own; they have nothing to say about the matter. (Sri Rag M3, 32-7)

It is true, however, that the Lord leads one to whom He is kind to His incarnation, the Perfect Master. The Master then connects him with the Shabd, which takes him to the Lord.

Those who serve not the True One, serve the other one, and go to destruction. Oh Nanak, the Master is kind; He connects us with the Shabd. (Gauri M4, 315-3)

By His Grace one meets a Master and serves Him. He connects the soul with the Shabd. (Majh M3, 110-1)

When the Lord is kind, one meets a Master. One then contemplates on the Name of the Lord. (Suhi M4, 757-10)

The virtues found in the Lord are found in the Master also. He too is the redeemer of the fallen and is merciful. He forgives their sins and bestows on them Naam, the Name, which helps them to rise.

My Master is the redeemer of the fallen; I rely on Him. He hears the prayers of Nanak, and He forgives all. (Sorath M5, 620-4)

Great is the Perfect Master, like the Lord; serve Him and gain infinite happiness. Through His Grace the Lord forgives the sinner, and His Name helps him to rise. (Gauri Var M4, 30507)

The Master even goes to the extent of forgiving his critics, and often times even draws them to him.

One who slanders the Master and then takes shelter with Him, is forgiven His sin and admitted to the Holy Company. (Bilawal Var M4, 854-18)

He cleanses innumerable sinners of their sins and takes them across the ocean of worldly existence.

He forgives the sinners, and they contemplate on the True Name. He takes them across the ocean on board His ship. (Sorath M3, 638-12)

The Master is the True Lord. He is an ocean of mercy. Everything is had by His Grace.

The Lord gave us the Master, and the Master is the true sustainer.

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When the Master is pleased, oh Nanak, you are blessed. (Gauri Majh M5, 218-9)

The Grace of the Lord and the Master is in the gift of Naam, which is the Word or Holy Spirit. The Masters always emphasize its importance and help us through it.

The Lord blesses the devotees with Naam, and its glory increases from day to day. The Lord takes the devotees to the original abode; all honor be to Him. (Gauri Var M4, 316-5)

You are unknowable and unfathomable, and one has Your vision only by good fortune. The Lord Himself was kind, and the Master bestowed the Name. (Asa M5, 406-4)

There is no higher gift than that of Naam in this world or even beyond it.

There is no wealth equal to that of Naam; He alone is true to whom the Lord gives it. (Asa M3, 364-13)

The gift of Naam and access to the Lord can be obtained only through the Master and His company.

He alone is great to whom the Lord is kind; by the Master's Grace He dwells in the mind. (Gauri M3, 159-6)

The Merciful Lord was kind; oh Nanak, He gave the company of Holy Men. (Asa M5, 391-12)

The way to obtain the Grace of the Master is to practice listening to the Divine Sound of the Naam and constant remembrance of the Lord. The Master is then kind and bestows His Grace and the practice is successful. Both things, the practice and the Grace, are interdependent. They are like the two wheels on which a cart moves.

He, in His Grace, bestows the Name. (Suhi M1,729-18).

Nothing but Name can help us; treat pleasure and pain alike. Do not give up the Name; the Lord Himself gives it, and the Master unites us with it. (Asa M1, 416-2)

If the Lord is forgotten for a moment, that moment is wasted. Remember Him with every breath, and He will forgive you of His own sweet will. (Gujri M3, 506-14)

By recognizing the law and living according to the will of the Lord, the Master is pleased.

They who know the 'Word' have no regrets; oh Nanak, let the Name dwell in the heart. (Gujri M5, 523-6)

When the Saints bestow Naam according to the Will of the Lord, no power can destroy it. The seed of Naam, which they sow in the heart, cannot but bear fruit. The disciple will certainly reach the Lord one day.

Truth is attained by His Grace; it is a gift bestowed by His will. No one can deprive us of it. (Sri Rag M1, 62-12)

Oh my mind, be ever engaged in devotion, for a devotee always gives devotion. The treasure of devotion is gift from the Lord; no one can deprive you of it. (Vadhans Var M3, 589-2)

Kal and Maya cannot destroy the seed of Naam planted by the Master, for the Master is beyond their reach. He is the True Being or the Lord. The lords of the subtle and causal regions cannot undo His acts.

No one can undo His acts; He forgives and redeems at will. (Solhe M5, 1030-16)

No one can go against the order of the Master; oh Nanak, the Mas-

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ter is the Lord Himself. (Gond M5, 865-2)

The bounty of the Lord is endless. There is no limit to it.

Oh Nanak, His bounty is endless. (Asa M1, 358-12)

This bounty can be had by a great good fortune only.

You are unknowable and unfathomable; one has Your vision only by good fortune. The Lord Himself was kind, and the Master bestowed the Naam. (Asa M5, 406-4)

On receiving this bounty one is released from the cycle of coming and going (birth and death).

When the Lord forgives, there is no more coming and going. (Vadhans M3, 571-8)

Coming and going ceases, and one dwells in the original abode. He gave the true treasure; it was so willed by Him. (Maru M3, 993-18)

Only a devotee gets this treasure, and no one else.

Oh Nanak, He is all in all; there is no other like Him. He gives the treasure of devotion, and the devotee is full of happiness. (Maru M3, 994-9)

If the Master takes me to task I accept it gladly. If He forgives me, it is His greatness. The devotees understand Him. Those who are egotistic fail to do so. (Suhi M4, 758-6)

It is only through the Master's Grace that one can repeat the Name.

When He is kind, one repeats the Name; no one else can sing His praises. (Asa M1, 416-4)

One should therefore not be proud. One can do nothing by oneself.

The Lord is the doer and the cause; He knows the secrets of all hearts. (Gauri M5, 266-11)

A seeker should therefore humbly wait at the door of the Master and hope for His Grace.

Care Given by the Master

The relationship between the disciple and the Master is very abstruse and cannot be fully or adequately described. The Saints have, however, tried to explain it so that we may comprehend it to some extent. All worldly relationships, they point out, are based on self-interest. The relationship between the Master and the disciple, however, is pure. It is selfless. We can understand it to some extent by comparing it with the relationship between the mother and her child. The mother cares very deeply for the newborn child. She shares its pains and pleasures. The child has no power of discrimination. He cannot, for example, distinguish cleanliness from dirt. If the child is unhappy, the mother is very anxious and tries to remove the cause of its suffering and even passes the night without sleeping. When the child is happy and smiles, the mother is happy both mentally and physically.

The mother feeds the child and lulls it to sleep. Even if the child should wet the bed on a cold winter night, she would place it on the dry portion and herself lie on the wet portion of the bed throughout the night.

When the child is small, it is ignorant of language and of its home. The mother looks at the child and the child

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looks at the mother. She prattles to the child and teaches it to speak. She looks after the child in all matters. She sees to it that it does not put its hand in the fire, she feeds it and keeps it clean. She carefully instructs the child until it grows up into an adult.

Similarly, when a disciple is reborn, so to say, in the family of the Master, he is ignorant of spiritual matters. His thoughts and cares are always entangled in low desires. But the Master stills the mind and the senses of the disciple and purifies him. For spiritual progress, control of the mind and the senses by stilling them is necessary. While the Master in His mercy lends help to still the mind of the disciple, He at the same time enables him to understand and to speak that language which is unspoken. The Master is always careful about the progress of the disciple. He does everything possible to make a disciple clean, devoid of all dirt, and pure. He removes all his defects.

*Serve the Master, the giver of happiness. He washes off all vice.
(Sri Rag M5, 43-19)*

A Perfect Master removes all the defects of the disciple. He gives him good advice and spiritual wisdom. He ends his bondage to the world. Great, indeed, is such a Master.

Wonderful is the Master, our teacher. He instructs us in the Lord's wisdom. He has made us wise. (Gauri M5, 168-3)

The Master removes the filth of wrong thinking. (Gauri M5, 286-14)

The Master breaks the bondage of His devotees. (Gauri M5, 286-15)

The Master does not let the disciple face situations that

are too difficult for him. Just as a child is ignorant and the mother saves him from impending catastrophes, similarly, the Master protects the disciple from sufferings and difficulties without even telling him anything about them.

*He protects His disciple; He does not let him face difficulties.
(Dhanasri M5, 682-1)*

The Master removes all the sufferings and diseases of the disciple. The sufferings ordained by fate are lightened. He gives strength to the disciple, which enables him to regard the worldly sufferings as insignificant.

The Lord is kind to me, and all my sufferings and sorrows have vanished. No painfully hot wind blows upon me; the Master himself protects me. (Gauri M5, 218)

The Master bestows the boon of Naam on the disciple. He feeds the disciple on spiritual food and makes him drink the water of eternal life. He awakens the disciple and makes him realize his true self. He shapes his life both here and hereafter.

The Master protects the disciple; He is always kind to those who serve Him. (Gauri M5, 286-14)

The Master helps the disciple. He redeems him both here and hereafter. (Gauri M5, 286-16)

The Master brings up the disciple with the love of a mother – nay with an even greater love. He always keeps him under His protection. He is an ocean of love.

He rears the disciple like a mother, and always keeps him in view. He feeds him both externally and internally with love. He enables the disciple to love the Lord always. (Gauri M4, 168-2)

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It is immaterial whether the disciple is near to, or far away from the Master. He has a long reach, for His hand is the hand of God. His hands wield the power of God.

His hand is the Lord's hand; His eyes feed on His vision. (Shamas-i-Tabriz)

The hand of the Master protects the disciple in mountains, wastes, seas and even beyond. The white-robed swallow, it is said, leaves her young ones and goes far away, but constantly keeps them in her thought. The tortoise lays eggs on land but lives in the water and from there it hatches the eggs by fixing its attention on them. The Master always keeps an eye on the disciple in order to bring him up properly. He takes care of him through His spiritual force, so that he may rise above the three gunas.

The mother swan travels afar in the skies, but she always remembers her off-spring and feeds them on her love. Even so does the Master love the disciple, and cherish him to His heart.

(Gauri M4, 168-4)

Oh Nanak, the Master loves the disciple with all His heart. (Gauri M5, 286-17)

He lends a helping hand and sustains the disciple every moment. (Dhanasri M5, 682-2)

The relationship between the Master and the disciple is that of pure love. He is very kind. He gives us instructions regarding how to return to our home, and then prays to the Lord to forgive us and free us from bondage.

He calls upon the people to tread the path to the Court of the Lord. He prays to the Lord to forgive and release them. (Maulana Rumi)

The Master is the true friend of the disciple. Whenever the disciple encounters difficulties, He comes to his help. The disciple, as a rule, does not know this; but such incidents take place between the disciple and the Master every day. This fact is fully supported by tradition.

Sometimes incidents take place which we do not understand at the time, but they are for our good, as we come to find out later on. A child may be sleeping comfortably, while its mother sits beside the bed and looks at its face lovingly. She fans the child and patiently waits for it to open its eyes. Similarly, the Master waits lovingly for the ignorant disciple to awake from the sleep of attachment and Maya.

All this care is given to the disciple while he is in this world. But the Master himself comes and stands by the disciple at the time of his death, which is the time of utmost anxiety. He takes the soul of the disciple with Him. He is also present to help the disciple at the time of final reckoning.

He accompanies the disciple; He is with the disciple on the day of reckoning. (Suhi M1, 729-3)

My Master is the image of joy and power; He attunes us to the Transcendental One; He helps us till the end. (Ramkali M5, 915-11)

Maulana Rumi says:

Oh foolish man! Take hold of the garment of the Master so that you may escape the sufferings of the next world.

Oh fool, catch hold of His garment quickly, that you may be freed from the pangs of death.

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The company and friendship of worldly people is transitory and evanescent. Some leave us when we face difficulties; while others desert us in the end. But the Master is the true protector and helper of the disciple. He is always with him at the time of need or difficulty. He does not leave him alone at the time of death or even later.

Oh Nanak, break with your worldly friends and brittle supports, and give your love to the Master – a firm and true friend. They leave you while you are still alive; He does not forsake you even after death. (Maru Var M5, 1102-3)

Yama, the angel of Death cannot take with him any soul that is protected by the Master. The Master Himself takes His initiates with Him. Kabir Sahib says:

Just as gold does not rust and iron cannot be consumed by worms, similarly, a Master's devotee, whether good or bad, never goes to hell.

Gold never rusts, and iron is not consumed by worms. The devotee, be he good or bad, never goes to hell.

The Master helps the disciple to overcome difficulties in both the worlds – the physical and the spiritual. There is no helper other than He.

I have the wealth of the Lord, and it will be with me as I journey. He is my life-long friend, and will accompany me; He protects me here and hereafter; the Lord gave me the Master out of His great mercy. (Sorath M5, 628-6)

The Master is always with me; He frees me both here and hereafter; all glory be to the Master; for He made me realize the Lord. (Vadhans Var M4, 588-2)

There is no friend like the Master; by the Grace of the Lord, He is my friend both here and hereafter. (Maru M1, 1031-19)

If we find a Master by good fortune, we are, so to say, insured both here and hereafter. He is very kind. He helps us in the hour of need and on dangerous occasions without expecting anything in return and without asking for any reward for it.

He is my benefactor and accepts no reward; He helps us in our difficulties; He saves us from the rocks and rapids (in the stream of life). (Maulana Rumi)

The Master is the redeemer of the poor. He helps us with His Grace. His company is more beneficial than words can express. If the Master is with us, not even an army of thousands of enemies can harm us.

Him whom the Master helps, thousands cannot harm. (Sawayye M4, 1399-19)

They are fortunate who are united with the Master. They have no anxiety.

The Hand of the Master on One's Head

The Master is the great and inexhaustible storehouse of mercy. But He sometimes has strange ways of showing His mercy. Some he redeems simply with one kind glance. He has springs of Naam or the Holy Spirit within Him. If He places His hand on the head or forehead of any disciple, that disciple is redeemed. The Gurus have described the benefits of this act. The Master, by placing His hand on the head of the devotee, gives him a vision of the Lord. The Naam or Shabd manifests itself inside. The disciple benefits from the spiritual current which flows from His

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hands, and all his sins are wiped off.

I am happy; I am at peace; the Master so ordained it. The Shabd dwells within me. He gave me the vision of the Lord by placing His hand on my forehead. (Sri Rag M5, 73-17)

The Jewel of the Lord's Naam dwells in my heart, for the Master has placed His hand on my head. The accumulated sins of many births have been removed; the debt of ages is wiped out by Naam. (Jaitsri M4, 696-3)

Those on whose head the Master places His hand are very fortunate and rare.

Blessed is he who has the wealth of the Lord: He is fortunate on whose head the Master places His hand. (Bhairon M3, 1155-17)

The head on which the Master places His hand is one amongst millions of devotees. (Prabhati 1340-15)

His hand helps the disciple in situations of every description, and the disciple need not concern himself about obtaining help from anyone else. All bow to the Master; all the worlds pay Him obeisance.

His power is recognized in the four corners of the world. He placed His hands on my head, and was kind to me. He removed all my sufferings. (Dhanasri M5, 641-17)

He is bountiful, most powerful and great. This servant has praised Him in a few words. I have no need for anybody's help, if the Master places His hand on my head. (Sawayye M4, 1405-1)

The world bows to him, and falls at his feet; the world and the heavens pay homage to him on whose forehead the Master places His hand. The Perfect Master makes him perfect. (Gauri Var M4, 309-5)

The disciples of the Master are blessed. They live and make spiritual progress under His constant and never-failing protection.

Shelter of the Guru

To take shelter with the Master means to subordinate one's will to the will of the Guru and unreservedly surrender oneself to Him. This is an easy means of gaining release from the cycle of birth and death. The disciple should implicitly rely on the Master and should give himself up to Him in the same way as one confides in a surgeon and trusts his life in his hands. Similarly, one follows the instructions of a guide when one is lost in a jungle and is sick and tired, and cannot himself find the way. The Master's task is not only to teach, but to help the disciple in overcoming his difficulties. He alone is a true friend who not only advises us regarding what to do in difficulties, but also helps us in freeing ourselves from them.

Let us suppose that one wants to go to a foreign country. He makes enquiries about travel by air or by sea. When he sets out on his journey, he takes his place on a specific ship or plane. He completely assigns himself to the care of the captain or the pilot and has no further worries. In actual fact, he has to depend on the captain or the pilot. If the passenger should happen to fall into the sea, the captain, without any payment, would try to save him. The case of those traveling in the spiritual regions is the same. In order to understand spiritual matters and the teachings of a Master, one should use one's intellect and discrimination; but after one takes shelter with a Master, he should surrender to Him unconditionally. One should follow the path indicated by the Master. He knows the path we have to tread, while we are ignorant of it. We

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have to rely on His help, and by doing so we can fulfil our ideal of progress in the spiritual regions.

To take shelter means to have full confidence in the Master and to be guided by Him. One should follow His orders without considering their so-called propriety. Whatever the Master directs us to do is for our good, although at the time it may not appear to be proper or beneficial for us. The disciple should obey Him in word, deed and spirit.

When the disciple surrenders himself to the Master for good, the Master looks after him in every way. Just as a mother brings up her child, so the Master looks after His disciple. As the disciple becomes purified, the Master gives him spiritual wealth. The child who sits in the lap of his mother need not worry, because all his worries are hers. He is care-free and happy. Similarly, the disciple, after taking shelter with the Master, becomes care-free and happy.

The Gurus call out with raised hands,

Friends! If you wish to enjoy spiritual bliss, take shelter with the Master!

The Master gives the clarion call: He who wants constant spiritual bliss, let him take shelter with the Master. (Kalyan M4, 1326-15)

In chapter 18, shloka 66 of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna, as a teacher, gives the following advice to his disciples:

Do thou, renouncing all religious rites, take refuge unto me alone, and I will free thee evermore from all thy sins. So do not grieve.

It is easier to practice meditation than to surrender unconditionally to the Master. When one takes shelter with the Master, one must be like a child. He must give up his own will and conform to the will of the Master. He must surrender himself to the Master in word, deed and spirit. This is difficult, but if owing to good fortune one gets shelter, then all his desires will be fulfilled. He will merge in the form of the Guru.

The shelter of the Master is gained only as the result of great good fortune. To take shelter with the Master is to take shelter with the Lord. The Master is the Lord.

I have no friend but Thee, oh Lord; I take refuge with the Master. I find the Lord there; Oh fellow traveling merchant of small worldly wares, come, seek a Master and gather the everlasting wealth. (Sri Rag M4, 81-18)

He who is so destined by the Lord, oh Nanak, takes shelter with a Saint. (Gauri M5, 296-5)

When the Lord is kind, a devotee reaches this stage.

Blessed are they who find shelter with Him, all glory to the True Court of the Lord; come, come to this place of eternal calm. Oh Nanak, when He is kind, the devotees meet the Master. (Sri Rag M2, 31-7)

The Gurus have described the various benefits that result from taking shelter with the Master. The mind is controlled; one is freed from all grieves, sufferings, pains and pleasures, and the three modes of feeling. One is freed from the burden of karmas.

I took shelter with the Master, and the Lord put His seal of approval on my mind. (Ramkali M5, 879-17)

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I met a Perfect Master, and I took refuge with Him. Then all my grievances and troubles were removed. (Asa M5, 395-16)

This body is the city of pleasure and pain; he alone is saved who takes shelter with the Master. He remains detached from the three modes; such a devotee is really blessed. (Mara M5, 1075-17)

The mind becomes pure. All desires are fulfilled, and one gets happiness.

He who takes shelter with the Master is purified. But if the proud person repeats the Name of the Lord, he cannot wash off the dirt. (Sri Rag M3, 38-7)

The Masters have come to redeem the world, and the world thirsts for their sight; he who takes shelter with them Crosses over; blessed is the company of the Saints. (Gauri M5, 207-7)

The Master is the bestower of all happiness; take shelter with Him. On seeing Him, one gets joy. Praised be the Lord, all sufferings depart. (Gauri M5, 207-17)

Egotism and darkness are banished, and Light appears.

Egotism and 'otherness' consume the world. Oh Nanak, contemplate on the Shabd and take shelter with the Master. (Sorath Var M3, 651-11)

I took shelter with the Creator and the Cause, and then I reached my Home easily through the Master's Grace. The darkness disappeared and the moon rose. (Asa M5, 393-18)

The gift of spiritual life is obtained and Naam manifests itself.

The Master gave the incomparable gift; He made the Name of the Lord dwell in my heart, when the Merciful One is kind, He gives

us shelter with the Master. (Asa M4, 443-6)

In the Kali Yug, Iron Age, the Name is hidden, even though the Lord fills every heart. The Jewel of the Name shines in the sky of the hearts of those who have taken shelter with the Master. (Prabhati M3, 1334-15)

The fear of death is removed. One does not have to go to hell. The cycle of birth and death comes to an end and one crosses the ocean of worldly existence.

He is freed from the fear of death and Kal, and does not go to hell. Oh Nanak, taking shelter with the Master redeems the devotee; the Lord and the Master protect him. (Sarang M4, 1248-18)

All the Master's actions are pure; He protects us. Oh Nanak, a devout disciple never goes to hell. He is under the protection of the Lord. (Asa M5, 464-10)

He who is fortunate contemplates on the Name; oh Nanak, one who has this shelter does not come and go. (Sri Rag M5, 53-5)

Oh Blissful Lord, the destroyer of pain; he who takes shelter with the Saints crosses this ocean of existence, which is full of sufferings. (Dhanasri M5, 691-7)

The Lord forgives the sins of one who takes shelter with the Master. He becomes fearless and balanced, and attains the highest abode. He is honored in the Court of the Lord and is united with Him. By taking shelter with the Master, the devotee gets shelter with the Lord. One who is separated from his mother suffers a great deal. One who has not taken shelter with the Master is like a child who is separated from his mother.

The Gurus therefore emphasize the point that one should take shelter with the Master.

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The Words of the Master

When one is reborn in the house of the Master, that is, when one takes shelter with Him, one should give up all previous spiritual or other practices and ask Him what to do. Other practices cannot free one from birth and death and unite one with the Lord. It is the duty of the disciple to follow the path taught him by the Master. Whatever he does in obedience to the wishes of the Master is giving devotion to Him. If a passenger follows the directions of the boatman while in his boat, he gets across the river. He should therefore obey the directions without any objection. His welfare depends upon his doing so.

The Master is responsible for His disciple in all matters. The disciple should therefore lovingly carry out the orders of the Master, and not let his own whims interfere with them, even though the Master's orders may sometimes appear a trifle strange at the first glance. The Master is all-powerful. There may be something which we do not understand. Hafiz Sahib says:

Dye your prayer-cloth in wine if the Master so directs, for you do not know the spiritual path but He does.

Dye your prayer-cloth in wine if the Master so directs; for He is not unaware of the path and its ways.

How can he who merely does lip-service and does not carry out the Master's orders gain spiritual salvation? He who obeys the Master is dear to Him.

Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only. (St James 1-22)

Engage in the practice of listening to the Shabd. Do not

merely give lip-service to the Master. How can you derive full benefit by merely seeing and hearing the Master? The Gurus say:

Take the words of the Master to be true. Let them dwell in your heart and make your life fruitful.

Believe in the words of the Master, and let them dwell in your mind. In this birth as a human being, try to get freedom from the bondage of the body. (Sawayye M4, 1401-10)

The words of the Master are not separate from Him. The Master pervades them. His words are outpourings of His heart and are permeated with His Truth and soul-force. Such words permeate the hearts of spiritually-minded persons like arrows and produce a sweet pain, which cannot be described.

The devotee thirsts for the Lord, and the words of the Master pierce him like arrows. Only the wounded know these pains; others do not realize them. (Bilawal M4,835-19)

The words of the Master bear fruit in accordance with the extent to which you act upon them. To obey the Master is to give devotion to Him. Guru Ram Das Ji Says:

Think of the Master always, whether sitting or standing, walking or traveling. The Master is the Word and the Word is the Master. He will emancipate you through the Word.

Think of Him while sitting, standing or walking; the Master is the Word and the Word is the Master. You will be emancipated through the Word. (Kanra M4, 1310-2)

The words of the Master are very sweet and pleasant. You are filled with Nectar through them. By acting in accordance with the words of the Master one becomes

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immortal.

Blessed is the Guru's Word, for with it one attains the Lord's Nectar, as Ambrika, the king, attained the eternal state by uttering ever the Guru's Word.

The words of the Master are sweet; one gets Nectar through them. The devotee reaches the eternal abode; he should contemplate on the Master's words. (Kanra M4, 1311-12)

To repeat the mantra given by the Master according to His directions, and to practice it, is true devotion and the essence of Truth.

Repeat the Simran as directed by the Master; this is devotion and the essence of Truth. (Ramkali M5, 895-7)

To practice as directed by the Master is right thought.

Act as directed by the Master; this is right thought. (Sri Rag M5, 52-10)

The Word of the Master dwells with the devotee. Water cannot drown it, the air cannot dry it, thief cannot steal it and fire cannot burn it. It is imperishable, everlasting and inscrutable. It is the sustainer of the helpless. It protects one's honor. Through it one is freed from death and all doubts are destroyed.

The Word of the Master dwells with us; water cannot drown it, a thief cannot steal it, fire cannot burn it. (Dhanasri M5, 679-10)

The Word of the Master is imperishable. The Word of the Master frees one from death. The Word of the Master is inscrutable. The Word of the Master removes all doubts. (Gauri M5, 177-4)

The Gurus direct that "Ram Naam" (the Name of the

Lord) be praised through the words of the Master. One can journey towards one's Original Home by following His directions. The cycle of birth and death will cease. All of this can be had only in the company of the Saints.

Practice the Lord's Name as directed by the Master; search for it in the company of Saints. Seek for the Original Home as directed by them. The cycle of birth and death will then cease. (Maru M1, 1030-7)

This wealth cannot be had by those who are puffed up with pride. Many persons who visit the Master sing holy hymns, but what the hymns tell of, is fruitful only in the case of those who practice the teachings of the hymns and the directions of the Master, believing them to be true.

Seekers and disciples come to worship, and all sing the holy hymns. The singing of those alone is fruitful, who act on the words of the Master as true. (Dhanasri M4, 669-14)

Those who see the Master repeatedly begin to love Him, and those who act on His words, believing them to be true, are dear to the Lord.

Those who visit the Master repeatedly learn to love Him very much. They believe His words to be true, and they are very dear to the Lord. (Nat M4, 982-2)

Practice as the Master directs. You will then recognize the Shabd and easily reach the abode of peace. You will enjoy real bliss and cross the ocean of existence.

Do as the Master says, and you will recognize the Shabd and reach the eternal abode. The Eternal Name glorifies. (Bilawal M3, 832-17)

He who does as directed by the Master is happy and gets the es-

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sence of peace. He is freed from fear and is ferried across. (Sarang Var M3, 1248-8)

It is very necessary to obey the Master and act within His Will. The salvation of the disciple depends upon this. Everyone may see the Master. But it is very necessary to obey His words and practice the Shabd imparted by Him.

All the world can see the Master, but this does not lead to salvation unless one practices the Shabd. (Vadhans M3, 594-11)

The Master should, however, be an adept in the practice of the Shabd or Divine Sound so that He may make the Shabd dwell in us. The Shabd is not in the nine doors of the body. Only He who has knowledge of the Shabd beyond the nine doors deserves to be called a Master. When one gets such a Master, he should act according to His instructions and remain within His will. By doing so he will make his life fruitful and will emancipate his family also. He does not then have to suffer.

The life of those who obey the Master is blessed. Their mothers are blessed and their family is redeemed. (Sri Rag M3, 28-10)

He who acts within the Will of the Master does not suffer any ill. The Nectar is given at the Will of the Master. He who submits, drinks. (Sri Rag M3, 31-14)

By remaining within His Will, a disciple gets the Nectar of immortality. As a result, he reaches the Original Abode.

Oh mind, listen to the Master, and act on His advice. Come to live in the Original Home. Drink the Nectar and be happy. (Sri Rag M3, 37-2)

Who acts upon the words of the Master? He alone, to

whom the Master is kind.

He to whom the Lord is kind acts on the words of the Master. (Prabhāti M5,1348-10)

He who acts upon the words of the Master and realizes the Lord, has no equal. We should, therefore, repeat the Name of the Lord.

Oh mind, repeat the Name of the Lord. He who obeys reaches the abode of the Lord. There is no one as powerful as He. (Gond M4, 891-5)

The Gurus describe many benefits that result from acting upon the words of the Master. One praises the Lord. He becomes dyed in His color. His tongue tastes the Nectar. All of his actions prove successful. He gets the possession of the nine treasures. Diseases and fevers are banished. One's desires are fulfilled. The mind becomes still. Egotism is destroyed. Pain and pleasure appear to be the same. Harmful desires and cravings are banished. Sins are gotten rid of and sinners are redeemed. The poison of Maya leaves us. One becomes indifferent as to whether one is in the home or outside. The snare of death is destroyed and death does not come near. One does not go to hell. Birth and death cease. Great contentment is experienced. One concentrates easily. The Nectar is obtained. One is connected with the Name and his devotion proves fruitful. On realizing the Lord, the seeker and the Lord become One.

CHAPTER 8. WORSHIP (PUJA)

The word puja (worship) comes from the Sanskrit root puj, which means to serve or praise some higher and more sublime being than one's self in order to gain spiritual benefit. Nowadays wherever one looks one finds only outer worship prevalent. Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs and those belonging to other religions are all engaged in outer worship. Churches, gurdwaras (Sikh temples), mosques and mandirs (Hindu temples) are all religious places. In the same way, all religious books deserve to be venerated. But people regard bowing their heads and offering flowers before them as worship. The Sikh Saints have written extensively on this type of worship. Guru Ramdas Ji says that ignorant persons whose inner vision has not awakened are wallowing in ignorance. They worship lifeless idols and tombs by placing flowers on them. But all their efforts are of no real spiritual worth.

*Misled by superstitions, the ignorant blind ones make offerings of flowers to lifeless stones and graves, and waste their entire lives.
(Malar M4, 1264)*

Kabir Sahib also does not approve of worshipping lifeless idols and does not believe that this leads to salvation. This likewise is the view of Guru Nanak Sahib.

The Hindus die while worshipping their idols; the Muslims die while bowing before Him; they burn, while they bury, the dead,

neither of them know the Reality. (Kabir, Sorath, 654)

They who go and worship gods and goddesses do not know the Transcendental One; Oh Kabir, they see no truth and instead are taking poison. (Kabir, Gauri, 332)

The deluded ignorant ones worship stones; that which will itself sink how can it save you?

It is strange that he who lives in the natural mosque (the body), which was constructed by the Lord with His own hands, should undergo hardships in man-made mosques.

Tulsi Sahib says,

It is regrettable that the owner of the real mosque should visit man-built mosques and temples.

Maulana Rumi says:

Fools pray in the mosques; the illuminated ones try to purify themselves; Oh fools, that is man-made, this is God-made. There is no mosque except the one inside the Saints. The heart of the Saint is the mosque, all should worship the Lord there.

The ignorant people respect the mosque built of stones and bricks, but try to harm the Saints in whom the Lord is manifest. The worship in the mosque is all external observances. The Reality is that mosque which is inside the Saints. It is a true place of worship because the Lord is manifest there. All the five elements are found in man, four in animals, three in birds, two in insects, and one in vegetables. Man should not worship the lower beings. Many people worship stones or idols. What is idol worship? When did it start? What is real idol worship, and

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what is its purpose? These questions are discussed in a separate chapter on Idol-worship. People do not gain peace or realize the Lord by observing external rituals such as pilgrimages, cleanliness, self-control, burning incense, repetitions, austerities, putting marks on the forehead, bathing or reading scriptures. Guru Arjan Sahib says that one is not dyed in the color of the true Lord simply by doing the six actions (Khat Karam), namely, practicing, cleanliness and self-control, bathing and so forth. Such a person never gains salvation.

If he does the six actions and worships after bathing, if he is not dyed with love for the Transcendental One, he goes to hell. (Sri Rag M1, 70)

Visiting holy places, fasts, cleanliness, self-discipline, acts of piety, matter not. Oh Nanak, it is only by devotion that one obtains deliverance; all else leads to duality. (Sri Rag M1, 75)

By doing the six actions, by worship, putting marks on the forehead, visiting holy places or bathing at sacred spots, by washing the intestines or performing the eighty-four postures, one does not get peace of mind. (Majh M5, 98)

The real and beneficial worship is the inner worship, which is not performed by the hands and feet or by the mouth, but by the mind and heart.

The inner worship is done by the mind. Such a worshipper sees the One and none else. (Basant M3, 1173)

I went to the temple to worship the Lord, but the Master told me that He is inside the mind. (Ramanand Ji, 1195)

If one cherishes the Lotus Feet even for a moment in his heart by remembering the Lord, all his desires are fulfilled. (Prabhati M5, 1349-2)

That worship is fruitful which leads to love for the Lord.

That repetition, those austerities, that fast and that worship is fruitful, which promotes love for the Lord. Except the love of the Lord, all other attachment is false and is forgotten in a moment. (Berari M4, 720-12)

The real worship is performed with inner love and by offering service of the body and the mind.

Visiting holy places, fasts, cleanliness, self-discipline, acts of piety matter not. Oh Nanak, it is only by devotion that one obtains deliverance, all else leads to duality. (Sri Rag M1, 75)

Oh Mother, what should I offer to the Lord? I do not find any beautiful flower or any other thing that is worthy of Him; neither incense, lights, sweets nor scents; how is Thy servant to worship Thee? By offering the body and mind we attain the Lord, through the Grace of the Master. There is no other way of worship. Oh Ravidas, what will be your fate? Ravidas, Gujri, 525-16)

When the worshipper progresses, he sees the Lord in His full glory. He sees that flowers and other beautiful things are already there, and there is no need to offer them. Even the body, the mind and our wealth are no longer ours. Then how can we offer anything?

I see none alike. The one sun pervades everywhere, how then can I worship another? (Prabhati M1, 1345)

Guru Arjan Sahib says that only the Lord should be worshipped. Those who worship others are killing their soul.

From king to insects, and from insects to the king of the gods, all

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fill their bellies by causing pain to others. They leave the Lord and worship others, and thus kill their souls. (Malar M5, 1267)

The Lord is the basic substance or essence of all forms and of the formless. How can we worship Him? The Lord as the Shabd or Name pervades the whole of the universe. Name and Shabd are the Lord, and worship of them is worship of Him. The Saints teach that real worship consists in remembrance and repetition of the Name of the Lord. This is acceptable to the Lord. Most of the people do not do this and are following a wrong path.

In order to worship, contemplate on the Name; without the Name there is no worship. (Gujri M1, 479)

The true men have attuned themselves with the pure Lord through the Shabd. There is no worship without the Name. Without the Name, people are misled by doubts. (Ramkali M3, 900-9)

The Name should be worshipped in all hearts. Man is tied with the rope of attachment and Maya. This can be cut only by a Master, and He alone can make man worship the Name.

He cut the rope and made me His slave, and made me serve the Saints. I became a worshipper of the one Name. The Master showed me beautiful visions. Gauri M5, 209

But only a sincere devotee can worship the Name.

One worships, but knows not the way. Secondly, his mind is stained. Only a Gurmukh knows the true worship, and the Will (of the Master) dwells in his mind. (Ramkali M3, 910)

The proud man cannot perform this worship. Everyone performs worship, but the proud man does not find the Reality. (Ramkali M1, 910-7)

This real knowledge and contemplation or the wealth of the worship of the Name can be obtained only from a Master.

Oh Nanak, give up virtue, worship, knowledge and contemplation; he to whom the Master is kind meets the Merciful Lord. (Gauri M5, 187-3)

The Guru and the Lord are one; oh Pipa! Om is the quintessence of Reality; the Master can reveal it to you. (Pipa, Dhanasri, 695-15)

I searched the ocean of the body, and discovered a wonderful thing. Oh Nanak, the Master is the Lord, and the Lord is the Master, and there is no difference between the two. (Asa M4, 442-28)

Until a man rises to higher and finer regions where he can himself worship the Lord, it befits him to worship His incarnation, the Master. The essence of the Master is Naam or Shabd. A disciple should, therefore, while contemplating on the human form of the Master with his outer eyes, progress inwardly and see the illuminated form of the Master within. When the heart of the devotee meets the heart of the Master, then the melody of the Shabd will be heard. Devotion to the Master is a step leading to spiritual relationship. Worship of the Master is worship of the Lord. Gurus place great emphasis upon this. One should worship both the Lord and the Master to gain salvation.

Worship the Lord and the Master with love in your mind and heart; the Master is the giver of bliss and the mainstay of all. (Sri Rag M5, 52)

The Name of the Lord can be repeated by all, whether Kshatriyas, Brahmins, Sudras or Vaishyas. The devotee worships the Master as the Transcendent Lord, and remembers Him always day and night. (Belawal M4, 800)

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Guru Ram Das goes to the extent of saying that he who worships the Guru is dear to the Lord.

He who worships and serves the Master is dear to my Lord; the Master is the servant of the Lord. He by His Grace takes one across (the ocean of the world).

In Slokas 5 to 8 of Chapter 12 of the Gita, Sri Krishna Bhagwan as the Master tells his disciple Arjun:

People have great difficulty in contemplating on the unmanifest, and this can be done only with great difficulty. Therefore, you (Oh Arjun) think of me (the form of the Guru). Still the mind and by this you will certainly dwell in me.

The worship of the Lord consists of the worship of the Master. The Master teaches the method of worshipping the Name. One day the disciple will see the Lord in all the universe, and the Lord will manifest within him.

The Master of Nanak is manifest everywhere. (Asa M5, 397)

Such a rare form of worship can only be had when the Lord Himself wishes it. Man can then reach the Master, who shares the worship of the Name with him. It is only due to great good fortune that worship of the holy feet of the Master can be had.

It is owing to great good fortune that one worships the feet of the Master; he gives up all and takes shelter with the Lord. (Asa M5, 395-19)

Maulana Rumi says:

The worship of the devout consists of kneeling and prostrating themselves. The lovers of the Lord give up their bodily conscious-

*ness. Five times a day the thought to worship occurs to the devout.
But the lovers always remain in communion with the Lord.*

The devotees who perform outer worship say prayers, but the lovers of the Lord leave the body and then say prayers by going inside. The devotees say prayers five times a day at fixed hours, but the lovers listen to the Inner Voice every moment.

CHAPTER 9. AWE AND AFFECTION (BHAË & BHAV)

Awe

The word 'Bhey' in Sanskrit and 'Bhae' in Punjabi means to be 'in fear of' or 'in awe of'. The Gurus have used this word at several places. Everyone, whether a human being or not, has some fear. No one is entirely free from it. It is only the Lord who is not afraid of anyone, as He is the creator of all. He has no co-sharer or companion.

That One has nothing to fear; He wills and makes us follow His Will. (Belawal M1, 796)

If one wishes to become fearless one should worship the Lord. As one thinks, so he becomes. The worship of the fearless One makes you fearless also. The Lord is immanent or dwelling within you.

There is no other of whom we should stand in awe. (Asa M5, 399)
There is no need to be afraid of anybody other than the Lord. Except the Lord there is none other to be afraid of. (Gauri M, 184)

Of whom can one stand in awe? Only of one about the existence of whom he is certain. There can be no fear of one whose existence is doubted. Therefore, whenever there is fear of the Lord, there is an ever present belief in His existence. When there is fear, the heart and mind are

affected. The Lord pervades both land and sea.

*You pervade the land and the sea, Your Light shines in every heart.
(Belawal M1, 795-11)*

When man is afraid of the Lord, he constantly remembers Him and he cannot commit any sin. Awe and affection are thus born. It is for remembering the Lord that all worship is performed. If, while performing actions, there is no remembrance or awe of the Lord, then these actions and duties lead nowhere.

Without awe of the Lord all actions are false and of no avail. (Asa M3, 427)

Gurus place great emphasis on awe for spiritual development. When there is awe, there is a strong desire to find means to remove it. It serves as a reminder every moment that one should strive to achieve one's object. For this reason, one makes quick progress.

The number of breaths in the life of each one is fixed. Your breaths are mentioned in your account. (Asa M1, 354)

Man's days are numbered. It is not known when they will end. Every day, every hour, every minute brings us nearer to that great final change (which is called death). On its arrival the soul leaves the gross, astral and the ethereal bodies and goes to higher regions. This body is the field of actions. One can do actions in this body alone. In this body man can know himself and become indistinguishable from the Lord. The fear that the goal may not be realized before the end of this life, and that this human birth would therefore be in vain, compels a man to become spiritual. Not to know one's own self and to spend day and night in sin is to commit suicide. He who is afraid

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of not knowing his own self and of passing his days in sin and thus committing suicide and not knowing the Lord, stands in awe of Him and takes steps to free himself from his fear and to know the Lord through himself. In this way he escapes the fear of death. Those who are not in awe of the Lord always live in fear of death and rebirth.

Those who are in awe of the Lord have no fear; those without it have much to fear. Oh Nanak, this mystery is only solved when one enters His Presence. (Suhi War M2, 788-3)

Without awe no one can cross the ocean of the world; the fear of the Lord keeps a man straight. (Majh M1, 151-5)

How is This Awe Born?

The one on whom the Lord showers His Grace lives in awe of Him, day and night.

He to whom He is merciful gets it by making the Shabd of the Master dwell in his mind. He always remains in awe of Him. He destroys other fears, and his doubts are removed. (Majh M3, 113)

Maya, the deceptive illusion of the world, is very powerful. The universe in reality changes every moment, and nothing in it is eternal or remains in the same state, although it appears to us to be eternal and everlasting. The intellect may for a moment believe it to be illusory, but the heart does not admit it to be so. When a Master is found and one takes on His color, then the curtain of Maya becomes a little loosened and he begins to see the illusory nature of the world. He begins to understand the causes of the fall of the soul, of the troubles in this world, and begins to take steps to remove them from his own life. He begins to believe that the Lord is all powerful. He begins to love Him. He then sees His Will working.

She who meets the Master stands in awe of Him and is a woman of noble family; she knows the Will of the Lord through His Mercy. (Gujri War M5, 516)

We do not see the Lord, then why should we be in awe of Him? He is manifest in the Master. On meeting a Master, awe for the Lord comes to us of itself. The Master knows everything in our heart. When we see the Master, we know Him. He knows us inside out and we become afraid of our own actions. We try to rid ourselves of them and easily become pure. On one side is our awe of Him; on the other is His remembrance and upward pull. Awe forms in the mind and is mingled with affection, and this gives us an opportunity for self-improvement.

When one meets a Master, fear develops in him, and he is embellished with love and fear of God. (Adi Granth, 788-13)

On account of the Awe (fear) of the Master many people have attained the Fearless (God) and gained spiritual emancipation.

Oh Sheikh, still thy ego and abiding in the fear (of the Lord) shed thy craziness. Yea, thru the Guru's fear, many attained salvation and living in fear, attained the Fearless (God). (Adi Granth, 551-17)

The fear of the Lord can take root within us by the Grace of the Master and when it gets settled down there, the mind gives up its improper tendencies and comes under control.

It is by Guru's Grace that one is filled with the Lord's Fear, and by good fortune God abides in one's mind. Thru God's Fear one controls the mind and thru the Word, one's sense of ego is destroyed. (Adi Granth, 645-1)

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God is Shabd (Word) and the Master is its embodiment. He reveals to us the secret of the practice of Shabd. Satsang and the practice of the Shabd firmly establish awe of the Lord in our being.

They alone are filled with the Fear of the Lord, who practice Guru's Word (Shabd). They always live in the company of the Saints, and to them are revealed the merits of the True One. (Adi Granth, 35-13)

Innumerable benefits flowing from awe of the Lord are detailed in Gurbani (scriptures). None can cross the ocean of fear (world) without awe. Lord's devotion and peace of mind are born of awe. It also helps the manifestation of Shabd within. When we remain in fear all the time there is constant remembrance of the Lord within and this purifies us. Ego leaves us, the fear of death disappears and we are freed from ignorance. It leads to attainment of salvation and our original home – Sachkhand. Gurbani also refers to the many evils that result from the absence of the fear of the Lord. Persons devoid of such fear ever remain in darkness, lead purposeless life and suffer untold misery at the time of their death. They do not deserve to be associated with. In their company we get no inspiration for the devotion of the Lord and the mind remains unclean.

How to Be Free From Fear?

The Lord is the true Father and Mother of us all. He is the real Friend and Brother. He is ever our protector. The fear of transmigration and the chain of birth and death are shattered as a result of taking refuge in Him. By His Grace all our cherished desires are fulfilled and all our fears are driven out.

Thou art my father, Thou art my mother, Thou art my kin, Thou art my brother. When Thou art my protector everywhere, why then may I be in fear, oh dear? (Adi Granth, 103-13)

And I became fearless, all fears vanished, and the Protector, protected me, yea. Such is Thy munificence, oh Lord, that all my objects are achieved. (Adi Granth, 383-4)

After meeting the true Master man begins to practice Naam and feels the presence of God everywhere. All ignorance and fear are removed.

Know ye that Truth is soiled not and thru it one is rid of fear and doubt, and it taketh one no time to break the thread of illusion. (Adi Granth, 840-2)

The Perfect Master hath dispelled all fear, and all doubts from one's mind, and one seeth the Lord everywhere. (Adi Granth, 107-14)

After the Naam becomes his mainstay and the Shabd is manifested within, all fears leave him.

Fear leaves him, he tastes the nectar and is dyed in the hue of the formless One. Pain, poverty and pollution are destroyed; the Name is his mainstay. (Gauri M5, 297-12)

Those who have the treasure of the Name inside them are free from fear. Gauri M4, 310-13

They do not forget the immaculate Lord day or night, even for a moment. They hear the Shabd from inside and see the flame of the light. Oh Nanak, all their fears are dispelled. Belawal M1, 843

Egotism is destroyed. One enjoys spiritual experiences and no fear remains. The devotees accept whatever happens with gratefulness. If there is fear, it means that one

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has not realized the Lord. When there is realization, there is no fear; where fear lives, the Lord is not. Oh Saints, remember this for Kabir has said it after great deliberation.

Affection – Love

The Sanskrit word Bhav and the Punjabi word Bhau mean confidence, faith, love, affection, respect or desire. They mean love which is mingled with respect and is full of reverence. In ordinary love, the quality of respect for the beloved is sometimes overlooked; but Gurus emphasize only that love which is full of affection and respect and which recognizes the sublimity of the Beloved. Such devotion is true. Guru Nanak Sahib says that without such affection, eating and drinking is useless and life is unfruitful. All repetitions, austerities, fasts, self-discipline and baths in sacred waters are of no use if they are performed without affection and devotion to the Lord.

What is the use of human birth if there is no devotion or love for the Lord? Eating and wearing fine clothing is useless if the feeling of otherness is in the mind. (Salok M1, 1411-7)

What is the use of repetitions, austerities, self-discipline or fasts, if one does not know how to have love and devotion for the Lord. (Kabir, Gauri, 337-13)

In order to experience God in action it is necessary to possess such affection.

This body is the field of actions, and the Gurmukh churns it to find the Reality. The diamond of Naam shines within it, and Reality is in the vessel of love. (Belawal M4, 834-15)

Such affection is an aspect of the Lord Himself, and it is experienced when it pleases Him. All ignorance and

illusion then leave the devotee and he sees the Lord face to face. Such devotional affection can come only from the Lord Himself.

You are Yourself devotion and love; You unite us to Yourself. Oh Nanak! Forget not His Name, if you wish to live within His Will. (Sri Rag M1, 62-2)

When He wills it, one loves Him; doubts and superstitions then take their departure. (Kabir, Sri Rag, 92-3)

Devotion and love spring from You; it is You who make the Gurmukh remember the Name of the Lord. (Ramkali M1, 906-5)

When we are in this gross body, we become one with it. We cannot see the Lord, who is extremely fine and unknowable. How can there be affection for someone whom we have not seen? He shows a glimpse of Himself in the person of Saints and holy men.

My consort is very wise and He alone is called a Saint. (Kabir, Asa, 476-14)

He appears in the form of Saints. (Maru M5, 1005-8)

When one finds a Master and is accepted by Him, and when the Master is pleased with him, he receives looks of affection.

From the Master he gets the food of love; he loses his taste for all else, and the Lord's love dwells in his mind. (Majh M3, 115-14)

It is the real food of affection which is revealed by the Master, and by taking it the Truth appears.

Nanak knows the Truth to be the Truth. (Sri Rag M1, 15)

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This devotional affection cannot be revealed except by a true Master.

The Master revealed the true food of love; by loving the Lord the Truth is realized. (Bajwar M1, 146-12)

Sometimes a devotee becomes intoxicated with love and begins to dance with joy. This is not affection. Affection is mingled with awe and this awe can only be generated by affection for the Master. Those only who stand in awes can have true affection.

Dancing and gesturing are the play of the mind; Oh Nanak! Only those who fear can love. Asa War M1, 465)

It is said that Majnun used to bow to each footprint made by Laila, his Beloved.

Oh seeker, your Beloved pervades every particle of the land and the skies. You should take each step with respect and bow to the Beloved. You should walk with the feet of awe and with eyes of affection and keep your attention fixed on the Beloved, so that you may merge in Him.

Walk in awe with eyes of love, keep your attention fixed; Oh Nanak, the wise will in this way find the Lord. (Magh War M2, 139)

Hafiz Sahib also hints at this. He says,

As long as traces of Your Name and company remain with me, my head will remain bowed on Your path. Oh Master, the places which have Your footprints become the places of worship for the illuminated ones.

As long as any traces of wine or the wine-shop remain, my head will remain bowed towards the footprints of the Master. The

ground bearing His footprints will remain a place of worship for years for those of illuminated mind.

Awe is inspired only by meeting a true Master. This awe, created by the Master's extraordinary beauty and magnetism, gives rise to pangs of love. One feels a peculiar sensation of love and abandon. When the devotee is in front of the Master both his heart and soul are attracted to Him.

In that state, under the influence of awe, the eyes get filled with tears, but the devotee cannot go beyond the limit of propriety. He cannot remain quiet and yet he cannot speak. He becomes tongue-tied. This state defies description. A lover may be in the room of the Beloved, but he cannot utter a syllable.

*Lovers are killed by the Beloved; no sound can come from the dead.
(Sri Rag M3, 788)*

One can only attain such a condition of affection by standing in awe of the Master.

That one is rare who finds love in awe and enjoys the Divine Intoxication. (Kabir, Kedara, 1123-27)

When a devotee attains this state of affection, the fear of death and rebirth is dispelled and because of him all of his family gains salvation. Fear and ignorance are destroyed and one becomes fearless. The devotee enjoys a real holy bath and gains everlasting life. By having affection for the Master he realizes the Name as a reality. The entire world rises higher because of his affection.

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Awe (Bhae) and Affection (Bhav)

What are called Bhae and Bhav in Sanskrit are described as Bhae and Bhav in Punjabi. These confer great benefits. By having them as an embellishment, one is able to return to one's Original Home. The Gurus direct that these should be acquired.

Oh Yogi, Awe and love are like two spheres attached to the staff of the body; if you are beloved of the Master the Music is struck and in this way the cravings are destroyed. (Ramkali M3, 608)

The soul that has awe and affection as its embellishments always enjoys the happiness of her Lord. How are these embellishments acquired? The soul uses the collyrium of awe and puts it in the eyes of affection, shows love for her Lover and becomes the ever happy wife of her Lord.

Oh Nanak, She who embellishes herself with awe and affection adorns the bed of her Lord at all times. (Asa M1, 357-8)

With the collyrium of awe she adorns the eyes of love; she is indeed the ever happy wife, who loves her husband. (Tellang M1, 722)

When the soul, decorating herself with awe, tastes the juice of the betel leaves of affection and surrenders body and mind to her Lord, it becomes indistinguishable from Him.

When the soul, decorated with awe, tastes the juice of the betel leaves of affection and surrenders body and mind to the Lord, she is ever in happiness, Oh Nanak. (Suhi War M3, 788-10)

Kabir Sahib says that if one has only a little of this affectionate devotion, it is then no wonder that he meets the Lord. Just as water blends with water and cannot be sepa-

rated, similarly, the soul that is embellished with awe and affection is drawn by the magnet of the Lord and merges in Him.

To a person conversant with the practice of love and devotion, it is no wonder that just as water mingles with water and does not separate, so the weaver (Kabir) unites with the Lord. (Kabir, Dhanasri, 692)

It is truly said that the drop by blending with the ocean becomes the ocean.

What a beautiful picture has been drawn of awe and affection in the Jap Ji. Guru Nanak Sahib uses the illustration of a goldsmith's shop. He says that in the shop of purity of body and mind the devotee should patiently beat the anvil of wisdom with the hammer of knowledge. He should kindle the fire of the practice of austerities with the bellows of awe. He should then make nectar in the crucible of affection, distilling it by constant remembrance of the reality of the Lord. That is the real factory in which the Shabd is generated.

There the goldsmith patiently hammers the anvil of wisdom with the hammer of knowledge, kindles the fire of austerities with awe, and molds the reality in the vessel of love. (Jap Ji, 8-7)

Guru Nanak Sahib further illustrates the necessity of love by another metaphor. When the time of ultimate union arrives, the tiller should cultivate the land with the plough of humility using contentment as the bullocks. In other words, he should engage in practice and irrigate the ground of love with the water of purity. The crop of spirituality will then sprout.

Let love be the ground, purity the water, truth and contentment

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the bullocks, humility the plough, mind the tiller, remembrance of the Lord the soil, and the harvest, union with the Lord. (Ramkali M1, 955-4)

Awe and love are mentioned together as well as separately by the Gurus. One always thinks of and remembers the one he loves. When one loves a beautiful and Divine Being, the remembrance of this Being always attracts him and remains present in his inner mind. Such love, which is tinged with awe, becomes true affection. When there is such love, affection grows.

Oh Nanak! When there is love, there is affection. (Asa War M5, 463-14)

Guru Amar Das Sahib says that there can be no devotion without awe.

Without awe there can be no devotion, and there can be no love for the Name. (Suhi War M3, 788)

Without awe no one gets love, and without love no one gains salvation. (Tukhari M4, 1116-1)

Both awe and love go together. Just as the sky is above the earth and day follows night, similarly, owing to one's awe of the Master, fear which is filled with reverence and affection is born. The Master is an incarnation of the Lord; therefore awe and affection for Him are awe and affection for the Lord. We should strengthen our devotion through these qualities.

He turned earth and sky into his dwelling place, and passed his days and nights in fear and love. (Belawal M1, 839-4)

Always think of the Master with love and affection, and strengthen your devotion with awe. (Majh M3, 112-16)

There should be awe and affection for no one else. The store of the Lord's devotion is limitless and inexhaustible and it is through His Grace alone that one can have awe and affection. Only that person to whom the Lord is kind can be dyed in this color.

Oh Nanak, He alone has awe, love and affection on whom You have mercy. Your store of devotion is inexhaustible. He whom You love receives it. (Tukhari M4, 1116)

He Himself dyes the devotee in His own color. Through the Shabd of the Master one is dyed in the color of the Lord. The mind and body are dyed, as is the garment. Awe helps in the dyeing process. (Majh M1, 114-5)

But he who has perverse vision cannot have awe and affection.

If vision is perverse, there is no awe and love; if you kill the ego, you can realize the Name. (Gauri M1, 153)

All the desires of the mind are fulfilled through awe and affection. Man is dyed in a beautiful color, and the false color of the world cannot affect him. The melody of the Shabd or Naam is heard, and he attains salvation. Without awe and affection, death and rebirth continue.

Affection for Others

When one has affection for beings other than the Lord, that is, for worldly objects, and so forth, it is called dwait (otherness) in Sanskrit.

There is mention of this in Gurbani. It is said that in the material universe constant change and evil tendencies are

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to be found everywhere, and the people are restless because of their bondage to those tendencies but they do not realize it.

All are engaged in the activities of the world and love of otherness; Pandits are in bondage to attachment and do not know the nature of illusion. These are obstructions due to their love of Maya. (Sri Rag M3, 23)

In the field of the world the feeling of otherness is strong. Three forces (Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver, and Mahesh, the destroyer) are working within the law of the Lord. Everyone is entangled in their net of worldly attachments and is afraid of them. No one turns away from them and looks to his real Creator and Sustainer, the Lord.

He created otherness through the activity of the three gunas, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh were created and carry out His Will. (Ramkali War M3, 948)

Until one reaches the fourth stage which is beyond the sphere of the three gunas, and this can be attained only by meeting the Master, the daily routine of his life, together with worship, fasts and self-discipline keeps him in the sphere of otherness.

Fasts, rules of conduct and daily worship lead to the love of otherness and do not bring real insight. (Belawal M3, 841)

Beyond Trikuti one meets the Master; the door of salvation is in the fourth Stage. (Sri Rag War M3, 33-12)

People forget the Creator and become entangled in His creation and forget death.

He loves the creation and not the Creator; he does not think of

death. (Dhanasri M3, 676-9)

Owing to the feeling of otherness, no love is developed, and one forgets the feet of the Lord and never even thinks of them. Owing to ignorance, one gets involved in the cycle of death and birth.

*The love of otherness makes one forget the holy feet of the Lord;
Oh Life Sustainer of the Universe! Remove the sufferings of Thy
servant. (Belawal M3, 796)*

*The ignorant bride is full of ego, and so is born again and again.
She does not love the Lord, because her mind is attached to the
other. (Suhi M4, 732-1)*

As long as the feeling of otherness is present in the heart, repetitions, austerities, fasts and worship are of no help.

*Repetitions, austerities, fasts or worship do not help the one in
whose mind there is love for others. (Kabir, Gauri, 324-12)*

According to the Gurbani, those who ignore the Lord, who are entangled in love for illusory and perishable objects, and who indulge in false conduct and eat unclean things, should be classed as dogs and pigs. They die while barking, and find no place in the Court of the Master.

*He who is false is like a pig or dog; he dies barking in fear. He is
false of body and heart and indulges in falsehood, and receives no
place in His Court. (Maru M1, 1029-17)*

The feeling of otherness can be removed only by loving the Master and practicing Naam. There is no other method. By this method one becomes attached to the feet of the Lord and redeems himself.

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Those who commune with the Master, their love of otherness disappears; their Light is pure; their life is redeemed. (Sri Rag M1, 73)

Instability of the Universe

This universe is unstable and perishable. It is continually changing. It will not be tomorrow as it is today. There is no stability in this world. It is the land of death, and like a house of sand it can be destroyed at any time.

The world is peopled by the dead; it is like a castle of sand, its destruction, like that of a piece of paper in a rainstorm, can be accomplished in a moment. (Belawal M5, 808-5)

Know this world to be false, Oh friend; Oh Nanak, it is unstable as a wall of sand. (Salok M9, 1428-16)

Everything that is seen in this world is like a cloud. It is not stable. What has been created will certainly perish one day.

He who is born will die, if not today then tomorrow. (Salok M9, 1429-1)

This creation, like a bubble in water, is created and destroyed again and again.

Just as a bubble appears and disappears; Oh Nanak! The created world does the same. (Salok M9, 1427)

The universe is like a dream. It is made of dream stuff. People come together and are separated according to the law of union and separation.

The world is like a dream; the play is over in a moment; people

come together by chance and go away in separation. (Sri Rag M1, 18-8)

Whatever is seen here is some day going to perish. Every object in the universe is short-lived. Kings, subjects, houses, palaces, those who dwell in them, all the objects of the universe, gold and silver and their wearers, this body, clothes, men and women, all are perishable. The people have forgotten the Lord because of these entanglements. No one really deserves to be loved here. Many have gone, some are going and the rest are ready to go.

Kings and nobles do not remain, nor do the rich or poor; each has his turn; there is no help for any one. (Ramkali M1, 936)

Oh, what is there to love? See with your eyes open. One is gone, and another is about to go. Everyone goes in his turn. (Belawal M5, 808)

But still one remains engrossed in this universe. Our wealth, our wife, our riches and our houses are not ours, and nothing will go with us when we leave. Why, then, is one so fond of them?

Of what are you proud? This world is like a dream; nothing is yours, as Nanak says very clearly. (Salok M1, 1428-8)

The body which comes with us at birth is also left here and does not go with us when we leave.

Wake up, oh mind, wake up from your sound sleep; the body which comes with you at birth, that also does not accompany you. (Telang M9, 726-18)

How, then, can those who are related to this body, and how can our other possessions accompany us?

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Neither wealth, wife, riches, house nor anything else will accompany us. Know this for certain. (Basant M9, 1187-1)

Wealth, wife and the possessions which you consider as yours; Oh Nanak, none of these will accompany you. Believe it to be true. (Salok M9, 1426)

Think for a moment about how your companions have gone. All are coming or going. Where are your mother, father, grandfather, great-grand-father?

Oh Farid! Where are your father and mother of whom you were born? They have passed away before you, but you still do not believe. (Farid, Salok, 1381-15)

Everyone in this universe has to leave it in his turn.

Death is certain; no one can live forever. One is certain to go: Why should Sahjo, for her short married life, get her hair dressed? (Sahjo Bai)

Where have Rama and Krishna, the incarnations, great prophets and Saints, Bhim, Arjun, Rustum and Sohrab, the warriors, gone? This universe is like a long drawn out dream.

Ram is gone; and Ravana, who had a big family is also gone. Oh Nanak, nothing is lasting in this world of dream. (Salok M9, 1428)

What reliance can be placed on this life?

How can you rely on this life? Man is like a bubble of water. (Telang M9, 726-15)

Every day, every hour, every minute is bringing us nearer to the end of the body.

Our life is ticking away every moment; like water dripping out of a broken pitcher. (Telang M9, 726)

When we accompany a dead body to the cremation ground, we shout “Ram Nam is True” but in our hearts we believe in the everlastingness of the world and are doubtful of death. It is related in the Mahabharat that when Yakasha asked Yudhishtra what was the most wonderful sight, he said:

We see people die every day, but live in the hope that we will live forever. What can be more wonderful! (Mahabharat)

When nothing is stable and whatever is to happen will happen, then why should we worry?

One should worry only about a thing that can be prevented. Oh Nanak, in the way of this world nothing is stable. (Salok M9, 1428-18)

This body and universe are both false and unreal. Only God and the particle of God which is in the body are true.

Holy men judge this body to be illusion; only the Lord that dwells in it is real. (Basant M9, 1186-8)

Know this world to be a dream or play; Oh Nanak, nothing is real in it except the Lord. (Salok M9, 1427-9)

In this perishable body and universe, the only real thing is the Lord Himself and His particle, the soul.

Oh Kabir, the soul is a particle of Rama (the Lord); like writing in indelible ink, it cannot be erased. (Kabir, Gori, 871-10)

Know and sing the praises of the Lord and be en-

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grossed in Him. Worldly attachments are futile. Turn away from them and love the Lord. Surrender every priceless breath, which cannot be purchased for any amount of money, to the Master and the Lord.

Oh Kabir, do not sleep. Wake up! Every breath is a gem, count and surrender it to the Lord. I say and am saying with the beat of drums, your breath is being wasted, although it is more valuable than the three worlds. (Kabir)

Warning

Everyone in this world is entangled in attachment and illusion and is unconscious and unaware of his own self, his soul. All that is seen here will remain behind. The objects that will be left behind appear to be stable, and we do not pay attention to the eternal.

That which is to be left is taken as eternal. That which is bound to happen is considered to be far off and uncertain. (Gauri M5, Sukhmani 267)

We are wasting our invaluable time on objects that will be left behind, and do not think of that which will accompany us. The body that comes with us does not accompany us. Its form and its youth will not remain the same. How can reliance be placed on relations and objects connected with this body? It is a question of the value of life. We should keep in our minds that which we really wish to know and the ideal we wish to reach. He who remembers death remains free from the bondage of the world and cannot do any evil action.

They who know they are to go, why should they cast their net wide. (Suhi War M2, 787-15)

We understand that death will come one day and cannot be avoided, and so why should we resort to deceit and fraud in order to live a few days longer?

We are to die, and we will die. Nobody will remember us. We will reside in the deserted land (burial or cremation ground) after leaving the populous village. (Kabir)

By sitting with spiritually awakened persons we come to know that death is real and life is illusory. Understand the body to be perishable and do not be proud of it.

How can one be proud of this body and wealth? It takes no time to leave them. The world wastes itself in the pride of ego. (Malar M1, 1274)

This body is perishable and it should, therefore, be used for spiritual development. It should be used to associate with awakened persons, holy men and Saints, and for singing the praises of the Lord.

Oh Kabir, this body will perish, whatever way may be followed. Either be in the company of Saints, or sing the praises of the Lord. (Kabir, Salok, 1365-18)

This body is precious only as long as the soul resides in it; otherwise nobody cares for the body.

As long as the Lord is living in the home, everybody calls you a lady; when the Lord leaves it, nobody will care for you. (Sri Rag M6, 50-18)

Our lifespan is decreasing every day, every hour, every minute and every second. But the man who is floating on the waves of attachment is unaware of this.

This is so far as the body is concerned. In addition, man

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is engrossed in home and family, but these also do not accompany him when he leaves, Mahatmas tell us.

You are happy with your son and your bejeweled wife; you are enjoying pleasures, making merry, and are intensely proud. (Sri Rag M5, 42-6)

Oh man! Amongst all of these things, you are like a guest for a night who has to leave with the dawn of a new day.

You are like a guest for the night who departs at dawn; then why are you so happy with your family and this pleasure garden which will not last? (Sri Rag M1, 50-13)

Even so, man continues to rely upon this universe which is like the ever-moving shade of a tree.

You are a guest for the night, but hope to live for the ages; the houses and riches which you see are like the shade cast by a tree which is constantly moving. (Gauri M5, 212-18)

Everyone has to leave in his turn. It is necessary to see this with open eyes.

Oh, what is there to love? See with your eyes open; one is gone, and another is about to go; everyone goes in his turn. (Belawal M5, 808-8)

Our body, our family, and our riches will not accompany us.

One departs after beating his drums for a little while; he does not take with him the riches he has earned or his buried treasures. (Kabir, Kidar, 1124-9)

Whatever possessions you have will be left behind; concern your-

self with the Name of the Lord and become desireless. (Sorath M5, 614-9)

Son, wife, friends and houses are bound to us by Maya. At the last moment no one will stand by us, and all will prove to be false. (Sorath M5, 609-10)

This universe is not to be lived in forever. Everyone has to pass his allotted time here and then go. One should not be misled by its golden color. Once the soul leaves the body, everything else remains behind. The body, wealth and all other worldly objects then have no value.

Oh self-willed one! You have forgotten the purpose of life; do not be deluded by the golden color of the safflower, this will last for a few days only, and its value is very little. (Sri Rag M3, 85-10)

High and low, rich and poor, all have to go. Death is always nearby and the last moment is approaching, and one never knows when it will come. Human birth is an opportunity for meeting the Lord. He who does not engage in devotion to the Lord and does not practice the Name wastes his life.

He loses the jewel of birth who does not know the ways of the Lord; he who has attuned himself to the Lord even for a moment has not wasted his life. (Gauri M9, 220-11)

Without Naam, the fear of death and the wheel of eighty-four continue. The Naam is invaluable, and can be had from the Master only. One should redeem one's life by getting Naam from a Master.

Human birth is rare. Do not waste it. Spend it in devotion to the Lord.

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In this perishable body only the soul is real and immortal, and one should care for it with true devotion.

CHAPTER 10. DIVINE AMBROSIA (HARI RAS)

In the Gurbani the words Naam and Shabd have been used for Hari, the Lord. It has the power to make one immortal. It has, therefore, been also called Nectar or Ambrosia. It has a very great intoxicating effect. Because of this enrapturing effect it has been described as Hari Ras or Divine Ambrosia, by the Gurus.

In the Divine Ambrosia of the Name or Naam there is the sweet Elixir of Life. This aspect has been explained in detail in the Gurbani. It is also called the most excellent Ambrosia. One is advised to drink it, because the sense-pleasures are tasteless. The intoxication produced by them is not real. Sense-pleasures are related to the desires of the mind. We therefore fall when we indulge in them. They do not result in any constant and lasting pleasure. The Ambrosia of the Name is the most excellent one, and unless we drink it we drown in the ocean of worldly existence and our soul remains without the lasting bliss.

Give up the love of the insipid water of evil, and drink in the Divine Ambrosia of the Lord's Name. For, because of not tasting it, myriads have been drowned, and one's soul is never in peace. (Bilawal M5, 802-19)

Nanak, sweet is the essence of the Name, through the Perfect Guru do I attain the Truth. (Gauri M1, 243-12)

The Philosophy of The Masters

Oh Lord bless us with the sweet ambrosia of Your Name. (Suhi M5, 784-7)

What is the Divine Ambrosia?

Divine Ambrosia is Naam. It is the Unstruck Music. To attain it is to attain the Lord. The Gurbani says that Hari Ras or Divine Ambrosia is another name for Naam or Shabd. Those who are not recipients of this Ambrosia are unfortunate and remain within the clutches of death.

They who tasted not the Divine Ambrosia of the Naam, they, the unfortunate ones are handed over to the messengers of death. (Gujri M4, 10-7)

The Lord redeems the sinners; He makes them meet the Master; they then taste the Divine Ambrosia. (Jetsari M4, 697-10)

Through the Guru's Word, you hear the Unstruck Music, and through the Lord's Name enjoy the Divine Ambrosia. Says Nanak, this is how I met with my Lord, who is the Creator and the Cause. (Ramkali M3, 921-18)

If you taste the Divine Ambrosia, you are purged of vice. If imbued with the Lord's Naam ever-abiding is your glory. (Basant M3, 1174-17)

It is Indescribable

He who is awakened and made to drink this Ambrosia; he alone knows the indescribable story. (Gauri M5, 13-16)

Oh Lord, be merciful to me, the poor one, and bless me with the Unutterable Word. I am blessed with the Divine Ambrosia of Your Naam, by meeting with the Saints, and You seem sweet to my body and mind. (Sarang M4, 1199-17)

It is Nectar

In the service of the Master, you are blessed with the bliss-giving vision of the Lord, and meeting Him, you drink the Divine Ambrosia. (Bilawal M4, 800-2)

Rare is the one who gets this Ambrosia; he who drinks the Nectar becomes immortal. (Gauri M5, 287-12)

Where is the Divine Ambrosia?

The holy books, Scriptures and the Vedas contain only praise of the Divine Ambrosia. They do not contain the Divine Ambrosia itself. This latter is within us. We can get it only by going within. Emerson has said, "Tap inside." This Divine Ambrosia pervades everywhere, but the eyes that can see it are opened only when one goes inside. Saints and sages advise us to go within. By studying the holy books there dwells up within one a desire to obtain the Divine Ambrosia, but it is impossible to get it by mere reading.

By reading the Vedas the people taste not the Ambrosia. Lured away by Maya, they discourse on dissent, they who revel in ignorance are forever in the dark. Through the Guru alone, one knows and sings of the Lord. (Majh M5,128-3)

The Divine Ambrosia is everywhere:

Naam pervades all divisions and regions of the universe. Its essence also pervades everywhere. It fills all corners and places. But the unfortunate ones cannot find it.

The Divine Ambrosia is everywhere, but those who are unfortunate ones cannot find it. (Sri Rag M4, 41-13)

The Philosophy of The Masters

It is in the Third Eye:

In his heart dwell the Lord's Lotus Feet, and he partakes of the Divine Ambrosia. (Sorath M5, 616-3)

The Lord breaks the chain of doubts, and the Divine Ambrosia is tasted inside. (Maru M1, 1041-15)

It is in the Tenth Door:

When the soul is withdrawn from the nine doors and enters the tenth door behind the eyes, it tastes the Ambrosia.

Beauteous is the township of the body in which one buys the Divine Ambrosia of the Lord's Naam. (Kalyan M4, 1323-14)

The body has nine doors, insipid are their tastes; and it is in the Tenth that drops the Nectar. Oh God, be merciful that we may drink the Divine Ambrosia through the Guru's Word. (Kalyan M4, 1323-13)

How Can the Divine Ambrosia Be Obtained?

Through the Grace of the Lord. The Lord is Himself the Nectar, and He is also the Divine Ambrosia. He Himself alone can make one intoxicated with it. He alone receives it to whom the Lord gives it.

He Himself is the Nectar; He Himself is the Beloved. He Himself is the Ambrosia; He Himself sings its praise. Oh Nanak, He showers Ambrosia, and the devotee's thirst is quenched. (Sorath M4, 605-16)

He whom the Lord of our destiny blesses, he alone knows the Divine Ambrosia. (Sorath M5, 624-1)

He alone gets the Divine Ambrosia to whom the Lord is kind. The Lord is, however, uninfluenced, and gives it to whomsoever He pleases.

When the Lord showers His Grace, one is blessed with the Divine Ambrosia; and then Oh Nanak, one sings the praises of the Lord, and drinks the Divine Ambrosia. Suhi M4, 733-4)

Oh Lord, bless me with Your mercy, that I may sing the praises of Your Naam, and find the Divine Ambrosia in the heart. (Sorath M4, 607-14)

When the Lord so wills it, you will receive the Divine Ambrosia, and on your tongue will be the beautiful Word. You will dwell on the Lord's Name, and be ever in peace, and be attuned to the Naam. (Gauri M3, 246-15)

It is obtained by great good fortune:

A true devotee tastes the Divine Ambrosia and is in bliss day and night. He gets it by good fortune. (Dhanasri M3, 664-3)

They taste the Divine Ambrosia and remain detached. Through good destiny they taste it. (Asa M4, 445-6)

He gathers the Divine Ambrosia and through the Guru's Word, He dwells on the Lord's Name. Thus is fulfilled the eternal writ. (Asa M4, 446-7)

It is obtained from a Perfect Master:

He to whom the Lord is kind meets a Perfect Master and obtains from Him the Divine Ambrosia. By the Ambrosia of the Name the soul of a disciple becomes fragrant and enraptured. It forgets all the tasteless pursuits of the world and becomes absorbed in the Music of the Naam.

The Philosophy of The Masters

One gets the Divine Ambrosia through His Grace when one meets a Perfect Master. Oh Nanak, all other tasteless pleasures are forgotten when the Lord dwells in the heart. (Ramkali M3, 921-11)

Fortunate is the one who meets the Master, in his heart is the Naam; and he enjoys the Divine Ambrosia. (Gauri M3, 162-2)

Oh Master! Enshrine within me the sweet Naam of the Lord, which is cool and fragrant like the sandalwood. The Naam has wholly illumined my mind and the gaze of my soul sees all. (Nat M4, 981-5)

How to find the Lord, oh Saints, by seeing whom I become alive? I cannot live for a moment without Him. Unite me with the Master that I may taste the Divine Ambrosia. (Gauri M3, 163-9)

Through the Mercy of the Master, one receives the food of Love, then one loses the taste for everything else and enshrines the Divine Ambrosia in his heart. (Majh M3, 115-14)

Sweet is the Name of the Lord, oh dear one; taste it with your whole mind; taste the Divine Ambrosia, forsaking all other tastes. (M 3 Gauri 246-13)

It is obtained by the Grace of the Master:

The Ambrosia is obtained by the Master's Grace, oh Nanak, one gets release by contemplating on the Name. (Asa M3, 361-18)

By Guru's Grace one gets the Divine Ambrosia; and contemplating on Him he is ferried across. (Maru M4, 998-8)

One obtains it by keeping the company of Saints and listening to their discourses:

The Ambrosia is obtained in the company of the Saints. Oh Nanak, blessed is the body of such a one. (Asa-M5, 374-7)

In the company of the Saints one gathers the Divine Ambrosia, and meeting with the Master, the fear of death departs. (Sorath M1, 598-17)

If one is blessed with the society of the Saints, by great good fortune one tastes the Divine Ambrosia. (Dhanasri M4, 690-12)

I seek forever my beloved Lord, and meeting with the Saints am blessed with the Divine Ambrosia. (Suhi M4, 732-14)

It is obtained by submitting to His Law:

A devotee who submits to His Law, drinks easily the Divine Ambrosia. (Sarang Var M4, 1246-18)

Who Obtains the Divine Ambrosia?

It is only rare devotees, longing for their Master, who are blessed with the Divine Ambrosia. Egotistical persons do not obtain it.

So sweet is the Divine Ambrosia! But rare is the one who tastes it, by the Guru's Grace. (Ramkali M5, 886-19)

Rare is the one who by the Guru's Grace, tastes the Divine Ambrosia, and remains in bliss day and night. But it is only through perfect destiny that one attains to the Name. (Dhanasri M3, 644-3)

The five birds then fly not out (after Ambrosia is tasted), and the tree is fruitful, yielding the fruit of Nectar. The Lord's devotees contemplate in utter poise and sing the praises of the Lord. He feeds the birds with Divine Ambrosia. (Maru M1, 1033-16)

Egotistical persons do not enjoy the taste of the Divine Ambrosia, for in their hearts is the thorn of self hood. (Gauri M4, 13-10)

The Philosophy of The Masters

Evil are the ways of the egotistic; they know not the Divine Ambrosia. They get no Nectar because of their doubts; they love the poison in their hearts. (Bilawal M4, 854-6)

The egocentric tastes not the Divine Ambrosia; he acts in ego and he comes to grief. (Suhi M4, 733-3)

Qualities of the Divine Ambrosia

To those who have tasted the Divine Ambrosia, other things are tasteless. They are fascinated by its wonderful taste.

One may have many women of exquisite charm and beauty, but compared with the Divine Ambrosia, insipid are all other tastes. (Asa M5, 385-4)

Oh brother devotee, if you were to taste the Divine Ambrosia, you would never love any other taste. (Suhi M4, 733-2)

He who has tasted the bliss of the Lord hankers not after the insipid tastes (of the world). (Gauri M5, 186-10)

If you have tasted the Divine Ambrosia, you are held spellbound by its wonder. (Gauri M5, 180-13)

To God-oriented persons the Divine Ambrosia is the greatest and the most invaluable wealth.

There are seven lands and oceans, you may drain them of their wealth; but the devotees desire them not; they ask for the Divine Ambrosia. (Kalyan M4, 1323-18)

The rishis, munis (sages), Sankadik (mythological eternally young gods) and other holy men including Sukhdev and Prahlad in ancient times reached wonderful states after partaking of the Divine Ambrosia.

The Sankadik and Brahma sing Your praise, Sukhdeva and Prahlad sing Your praise too. Whosoever drinks the wonderful Ambrosia, he is awake to the wonders of God. (Sarang Var M5, 1224-8)

Fruits of the Divine Ambrosia

In the ocean of Naam are rising and falling the waves of the Divine Ambrosia. When one hears within himself the Melody of Naam, one is spellbound. He remains in ecstasy and intoxication day and night and all the wealth of the world appears valueless in comparison. This intoxication is referred to as wine by Muslim Saints.

He is ever intoxicated, who drinks the Ambrosia. Other drinks intoxicate, but their effect soon wears off. The God-intoxicated person drinks Ambrosia; for him all other drinks become insipid. (Asa M5, 377-11)

Oh my mother, my mind is intoxicated with God, seeing my compassionate Lord I am in utter bliss, the Divine Ambrosia intoxicates me completely. (Sarang Var M5, 1225-11)

It is the Master who grants this intoxication. Hafiz Sahib and others have, therefore, called Him Saqi, the wine-server. The Perfect Master gives his disciples the cup of this Ambrosia to drink and thus frees them from the bondage of the world. Hafiz Sahib asked for this ambrosial wine, saying:

Oh Server, give me that wine which is not to be found even in heaven.

Bhai Nand Lal also prayed for this wine, saying:

Oh Server, give me a drink, a drink that will intoxicate. Oh Server, give me a drink which will solve every difficulty.

The Philosophy of The Masters

The Gurbani mentions many of the benefits of the Divine Ambrosia. All perversions and egotism are destroyed. The mind is purified. Happiness and peace are gained. The intellect is sharpened and the lotus of the heart is turned upwards. The result is that one enjoys equipoise, crosses the ocean of existence and attains deliverance. He becomes immortal and is honored in the Court of the Lord. He dwells in his Original Home and meets the Lord.

The Gurbani also outlines the unfortunate consequences of not drinking the Divine Ambrosia.

Spiritual seekers should obtain this Ambrosia and thus make their lives fruitful. The Gurbani urges us to obtain this Ambrosia.

All should enjoy this Ambrosia of the Lord - He, the Perfect One, the Master of all arts. (Gauri M5, 196-11)

Guru Naam or Gurumukh Naam

Naam is obtained through the Master by following His instructions. Only a devotee can obtain it. The Naam has also been described as Gurumat-Naam, Guru-Naam or Gurumukh-Naam. According to the Gurbani, Gurumat-Naam, Guru-Naam and Gurumukh-Naam are the same as the hidden Naam or Dhun-atmak Naam, Unstruck Music or Unutterable Sound.

Gurumat Naam

By Gurumat is meant Shabd, Divine Sound or Anhad Dhun (Ceaseless Music). It is indeed the True Naam.

If one forgets not the Guru-given Name, one attains true honor the easiest way. Within us is the Treasure of the Shabd, by finding it we shed our ego. (Gauri M1, 228-18)

Thus is love-worship of the Lord realized, through the Guru one realizes the Lord's Name. (Asa M1, 414-7)

Save me, save me, oh Lord; I take refuge with You; make my faith in the Gurumat-Naam firm and strong. (Kalyan M4, 1325-18)

It is through the Grace of the Lord and through great good fortune that one gets the Guru-Naam or Gurumat-Naam.

One contemplates on the Gurumukh-Naam; with the Lord's Grace one meets a Master; by His Grace one merges with the Lord. (Malar M4, 1265-4)

If a man is very fortunate, he is attuned to the Gurumat-Naam. He then crosses the ocean of Maya and attachment and tastes the Divine Ambrosia. (Kalyan M4, 1326-16)

The Gurumukh-Naam can be had from the Master only and it is only the devotee who can have it.

No one save the Perfect Master knows; Maya and worldly attachment delude all others. It is through the Guru that one is blessed with the Lord's Word. (Asa M5, 423-12)

The world is involved with virtue and vice, and with pleasure and pain which lead to sorrow. Only a devotee lives in bliss; he realizes the Gurumukh-Naam. (Maru M3, 1052-12)

Benefits of the Guru-Naam

The Gurbani mentions various benefits of Guru-Naam.

The Philosophy of The Masters

These are as follows:

All desires are fulfilled and happiness is obtained.

*He ever repeats the Guru-Naam, and all his desires are fulfilled.
(Gauri M5, 202-11)*

*The Lord is the giver of all happiness; the Guru-Naam leads to it.
(Kabir, Bilawal, 856-6)*

Sins, perversions and egotism are destroyed.

*All your sins and sorrows are destroyed; all your dirt is cleansed
by the Guru through the Naam. (Bihagara M4, 539-7)*

*If one forgets not the Guru-given Name, one attains true honor the
easiest way. Within us is the Treasure of the Word, by finding it
we shed our ego. (Gauri M1, 228-18)*

*Self hood and intense love of Maya are deep afflictions, for them the
cure is the All-powerful Lord's Name, with which the Guru has
blessed me. (Gujri M4, 502-7)*

*He is detached: attached yet separate. He does what He likes; all
that He wills comes to pass, when one dwells on the Lord's Name
by Guru's Grace one's separation from the Lord vanishes. (Gujri
Var M3, 514-3)*

It gives equipoise to life.

*When one obtains the Gurumukh-Naam, one sleeps in poise and
also wakes in poise, and one is merged in the Gurumukh-Naam,
Oh Nanak, one contemplates on the true Naam. (Maru M4, 1069-
18)*

CHAPTER 11. NECTAR (AMRIT)

That thing is called Amrit (Nectar), Ab-e-Hayat (Elixir of Life), or Maha Ras (Divine Ambrosia) the partaking of which makes one immortal, and frees one from birth and death.

To obtain it, many ascetics have carried out severe penances and have undergone untold privations. They sought for it in sacred places, mountains, forests, rivers, rivulets and lakes.

But they failed to find such a spiritual life-force anywhere. In fact, this wonderful Nectar cannot be found in the gross world. The botanist and other scientists have given up the search. They have not discovered it.

This Nectar is mentioned in the scriptures of all religions. Muslim Saints have called it Ab-e- Hewan or Ab-e-Hayat (Water or Elixir of Life). They have sung the praises of drinking it.

According to Hindu Rishis, Mansarovar is a Pool of Nectar, by drinking which one becomes immortal. In the Vedas, at many places a mention is made of Som Ras, by drinking which the Rishis used to become immortal. Saints call this Mansarovar, the Sacred Pool or Chashma-e- Kausar, Spring of Immortality, Amritsar, Pool of Nectar.

The Philosophy of The Masters

It is said in the Bible that Christ rose up from the dead and brought the dead back to life. He also promised to give the Water of Life to a certain woman. This shows that he had the use of the Divine Nectar. Guru Nanak, his successors and other Saints drank deeply of this Nectar themselves and gave it to their disciples also.

What is Nectar?

We should ponder over the nature of Nectar. What is the Nectar referred to by the Gurus? The Gurbani mentions it. On considering the matter, it becomes clear that they have called Shabd or the Name, the Divine Nectar. They have advised their devotees to drink of it.

The Nectar is the True Name; it cannot be described. He who drinks it is accepted. He merges in the Shabd. (Sri Rag M3, 33-3)

Nectar-sweet is the Name of the Lord, one gathers it through the Guru's Word. (Bihagara M4, 538-12)

The Lord's immaculate Nectar-Name is the cure-all for all the maladies of the world. Says Bhikhan, by the Guru's Grace, I reach the Door of Deliverance. (Bhikhan, Sorath 659-15)

The Guru blesses with the Nectar-Name of the Lord. (Suhi M1, 729-15)

The Name of the Lord is the Nectar; he who drinks it is rid of thirst. (Malar Var M3, 1283-3)

The Name of the Lord is Nectar in the Iron Age. (Gauri M5, 318-16)

Very sweet is the Guru's Word, which, as the Nectar of God, I find within myself. And whosoever tastes it attains the Blessed State,

and his mind is cooled, his body is comforted. (Parbhati M1, 1331-15)

The Name of the Lord is Nectar; quench your thirst with it. The mind is then dyed in the Truth; and it merges in the Truth. (Sri Rag M3, 35-8)

Nanak, the Word is the only Nectar, and through the Guru it is received. (Sorath M4, 644-6)

When I lived on the mountain of ego, intense were my sensuous cravings. But when I saw I was so near the Lord's presence, I accepted the Word, and stilled my thirst; I filled my soul with the Lord's Nectar. (Ramkali M1, 933-15)

The term Nectar has also been used to describe the Truth and the Unending Music.

The Nectar is the treasure of the Name; a devotee finds it. Fortunate are the devotees. In whose heart it dwells. (Ramkali M5, 961-11)

The Unending Music showers the Divine Nectar, peace fills the mind and body. (Majh M5, 105-15)

The Nectar has also been called Hari (the Lord), Hari Kirtan (singing praises of the Lord) and also the Supreme Ambrosia.

Give up the three attributes of this world, and merge in the Shabd. The Lord and the immortal fruit are one; the Lord Himself makes one eat it. (Sri Rag M3, 66-6)

False are the colors of Maya; all that is apparent turns to ashes. Sweet as nectar is the Lord, go into the company of Saints and drink the Nectar. (Majh M5, 134-12)

The Philosophy of The Masters

I am blessed with the Nectar of the Lord which has quenched all my thirst. (Suhi M4, 731-10)

Nectar-sweet is the Lord's Name, it is through the Guru that one dwells upon it. Purifying is the Lord's Name, and contemplating on it one is rid of one's pain. (Kanra M4, 1316-9)

The Lord's praise is Nectar-sweet, but rare the one who tastes it. Nanak is rewarded with the One Name. And contemplating on it he lives. (Asa M5, 400-2)

Sweet is the taste of the Nectar-Name, which the Master makes us drink. (Majh M3, 124-6)

The Gurbani tells us that this Nectar is unique and that it is the only True Nectar. It is the Naam of the Lord. There is no other Nectar. By drinking it, one is dyed in its color.

They who are blessed with the Glory of the Naam, their mind is imbued with Your Love. Oh Nanak! There is only One Nectar; no, there is not another. (Sarang Var M4, 1238-17)

In the Iron Age, the Naam of the Lord is the only Nectar.

What is the Nectar in the Iron Age? The Naam of the Lord and naught else. This is a great treasure, and it is found with the Saints. (M5 Ramkali M5, 888-15)

In the Nectar There is the Sound Principle

There is a sweet Melody and unending Music in the Nectar and this supports the entire universe. The Nectar is the Bread of life, the food of the soul.

The mind strays and wanders; on meeting the Master it is stilled;

one then enters the tenth door; there Ambrosia is the food, and the Melody of the Shabd resounds, which supports the entire universe. The Unending Music plays there; and one merges in the Truth. Oh Nanak, on meeting the Master the wandering mind is stilled, and one dwells in the Eternal Abode. (Asa M3, 440-19)

When a Saint meets a Saint, contentment reigns supreme. The unutterable Truth is dwelt upon if one merges in the Perfect Master. One drinks Nectar and is contented; one is honored in the Court of the Lord. In all hearts rings the Music of the Lord's Flute; and one loves the Shabd day and night. Rare are they who know this; through the Guru this is made clear. (Sri Rag M1,62-13)

There is Light in the Nectar

The power of inner sight is located behind the eyes. If one turns one's attention towards the inner sky and makes it still there, Light appears. In the beginning one sees flashes of lightning, a starry sky, sun, moon and several other kinds of Lights. When the soul crosses these regions and reaches Trikuti and Par-Brahm, it sees the sun and moon of the regions of Brahm and Par-Brahm respectively.

Tulsi Sahib and other Saints have mentioned these Lights in their writings:

The Lord's Gospel is Nectar-sweet and glorious, and one tastes it through the Guru, the natural way. One's mind is illumined and dispelled is one's darkness, as the night is ended by the rising sun. And the Invisible, the Imperceptible and the Unknowable; He is seen by the true devotee. (Sri Rag M4, 87-18)

Nectar-sweet is the Guru's Word; but rare is the one who tastes it. Into him comes Light, and he drinks the Ambrosia; and he hears the Melody at the Door of the Lord. (Majh M3, 113-13)

The Philosophy of The Masters

Pure is His Light, Nectar-sweet is the Lord's Naam; and whosoever partakes of it, becomes immortal and desireless. (Ramkali M5, 886-19)

Where is the Nectar?

1. It is found within the body.

The Nectar or the Elixir of Life is not to be found in the outer world. It can be found in the inner or spiritual regions only. By drinking it, one becomes immortal. In order to drink it one has to go within one's body. What do the Saints mean when they talk of going within where the Nectar is found?

This body is the home of the soul. There are windows and doors in it, through which the soul wanders out into the outer world. It is, however, imprisoned within the body. Nine doors of the body, namely the two eyes, the two ears, the two nostrils, one mouth and the two lower apertures are visible.

So long as the soul is busy in these nine doors, it remains without the Nectar. Besides these nine doors, however, there is another one, a secret door, behind the eyes. When the soul, after leaving the nine doors or withdrawing from them is concentrated at the tenth door, it then drinks the precious Nectar.

Oh maiden fair, You tried all the nine doors, but you did not find the precious Treasure. Oh Kabir, the nine doors hold it not; the pure essence is realized in the tenth. (Kabir, Gauri 339-13)

The body has nine doors, insipid are the tastes of their pleasures; it is in the tenth door that one gathers the Lord's Nectar. (Kalyan M4, 1323-13)

Through the True Guru the Nectar drops into one's mind, and the Lord becomes manifest in the Tenth Door. There rings the ceaseless Melody of Shabd, and one merges in equipoise very easily. (Mam M4, 1069-10)

I gave up searching for Him without; for the Guru has revealed Him in my own house; the Unending Music plays at the tenth door; there I was fed with the Nectar of Naam. (Maru M5, 1002-3)

The Nectar is obtained by going within the human body. There it yields its nine treasures. It simply cannot be found by means of any external observances.

The Nectar-Name of the Lord is to me the nine Treasures, and it dwells within the body. (Gauri M5, 293-16)

Every heart is overflowing with this Nectar. Not one is without it.

The Nectar is in every heart. Through the Guru's Word does one drink it. (Kabir, Kedara 1123-17)

The lake of Nectar is in all hearts. But it can be drunk through the Shabd only.

Within is the well full of Nectar; through the Word does one draw it out and drink it. (Vadhans M3, 570-18)

This Nectar is inside of man himself, but the world seeks it outside. It is like the musk which is in the navel of a deer, but the deer searches for it outside in the forests and does not find it.

The Nectar fills the house; but the proud ones know not its taste, as the deer knows not the musk within; and wanders about in delusion. (Sorath M3, 644-2)

The Philosophy of The Masters

A Sufi says,

Our Friend is in the house (our body) while we ceaselessly search for Him outside. The Nectar-water is full to the brim in the pitcher the inner sky but we wander in thirst.

My Friend is in the house, but I am wandering in the world. The vessel is brimful with water; but I am wandering about athirst.

There is an inverted well in the sky (the top of the head) and its mouth opens towards the Kunj- lotus behind the eyes. The current of the Nectar is flowing from that well into the body. But the soul, forgetting that current, is wandering in the world outside and is suffering many privations.

Everything is in the house of the human body and there is nothing outside of it. Those who have received the Grace of the Guru are at peace both within and without. The current of the Nectar is falling in showers inside them and by drinking it they remain in bliss and ecstasy day and night. The soul that has been separated from the Nectar for many lives attains this state through the help of the Saints.

Guru Arjan Sahib says:

All things are in Your home and not one is without; he who searches without is lost in doubt. The one who realizes the Lord within by the Guru's Grace is at peace both within and without. When the Nectar drops into one's self, and the mind hears the Shabd and drinks the Nectar, the devotee is ever in joy, and ever sports with the Lord. He who was separated from Him birth after birth, is united with the Lord. By the Master's Grace the dry tree blossoms into flowers; the seeker gets right advice and praises the Name; he becomes a devotee and unites with the Lord. (Majh M5, 102-3)

The Nectar is Behind the Covering of the Mind

The nectar lies behind the covering of the mind. When the mind becomes still, the Nectar manifests itself. On attaining it one becomes immortal.

I long for the Name of the Lord, I can live only if I get it. There is Nectar in the mind, by the Guru's Grace the Lord gives it. (Gauri M4, 175-9)

Oh Nanak, the Nectar is within the mind, but one attains it by the Guru's Grace alone. And they alone drink it with abandon, in whose lot it is written by the primeval God. (Sarang Var M2, 1238-8)

When the mind is rid of its perversions and is purified, it obtains the essence of the Nectar.

By the Guru's Grace the mind became pure, and now it sings the praises of the essence of the Nectar. (Parbhathi M3, 1334-8)

Who Can Taste the Nectar?

According to the Gurbani, he alone can drink the Nectar who dies while living or in other words, becomes dead (unattached) to the world while still living in it.

They who are dead to their self and so alive, taste the Nectar; their mind through the Guru's Word is attuned to the Lord's Love. (Asa M4, 447-5)

Our outer senses have free play while the subtle and causal senses are dormant. When the soul puts an end to the activities of the outer senses and travels within to the subtle and spiritual regions, it is called the state of dying while living. If the soul leaves the nine doors and becomes

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concentrated at the tenth door behind the eyes, it can then drink the Nectar.

How is the Nectar Obtained?

Through the Grace of the Lord:

This Nectar can be had through the kindness of the Lord. A man by himself can do nothing about it. Everybody may try to get it, but it is only when the Lord wishes that this fruit grows in the ground of one's heart.

The Lord is the Nectar-Name, it is through His Grace that one attains it, Nanak, the Lord's Name is the Treasure of Bliss; so be ever attuned to it. (Mal M3, 1258-15)

All may sow the seed for their good; but that alone germinates which the Lord wills. The devotee of the Master sows the seed of Nectar, and he reaps the fruit of Nectar-Name. (Gauri M4, 304-7)

Through one's destiny:

It is only when it is so ordained and inscribed on the forehead that one can taste the Nectar of the Lord within.

He for whom it is ordained, keeps it in his heart, the Lord's Gospel is Nectar-sweet and glorious, and he tastes it through the Guru's Word, the easy way. (Sri Rag M4, 87-17)

Through the Perfect Master and His service:

The Nectar fills all space. No place is without it. But the proud and the vain people cannot have even a drop of it. "Water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink" – is their lot. The Nectar which is sought for by gods and goddesses and sages and hermits can be had only from

the Master.

The angelic beings and the sages search for the Nectar, but it can be had from the Master only; it is when the Master blesses one with the Nectar, that one enshrines the True One in the heart. (Ramkali M3, 918-14)

The Nectar cannot be had by one's own unaided efforts. Unless we take shelter with a Master who dispenses it, we cannot come upon it. This boon is the reward of serving the Master.

The Nectar-Name, the cure-all, the immaculate water, one attains at the Guru's door. Oh Nanak, he who is so fated, receives it from the Master, and is cured of all diseases. (Sorath M5, 616-19)

I drank the Lord's Nectar-Name from the Guru, the Lord's Name became my food, my garment, I loved the Name and reveled in it; oh Nanak, wonderful was its joy. (Majh M5, 99-14)

Oh my dear Master, beloved one; pray, let me be a sacrifice to You. Bless me with Your sight; You have blessed me with the Nectar-Name. (Sri Rag M5, 52-4)

He of Himself guides; and we dwell on the Lord's Name. By good fortune, we meet the True Guru, and taste the Nectar-Name. (Gauri M3, 163-1)

Nectar-sweet is the Divine Sound, Nectar-sweet is His Word. By serving the True Guru, it abides in our hearts. (Majh M3, 119-3)

By surrendering to the Will of the Master and acting on His advice:

The Nectar is obtained by surrendering to the Will of the Master, acting according to His advice and by listening to His discourses.

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Oh mind, walk in the way of the Lord, then will you dwell in your Original Home, drink the Nectar and be in peace. (Sri Rag M3, 37-2)

In the Will of the Master lies the giving of the Nectar. Only a rare one obtains it. (Sri Rag M3, 31-14)

In the company of Saints one tastes the Treasure of the Nectar-Name. (Sri Rag M4, 91-6)

The Divine Nectar is delicious to the taste; it is only when you meet a Saint that you drink it. (Majh M5, 134-11)

Oh Nanak, he alone is alive who meditates on the Name; he keeps the company of Saints and drinks the Nectar. (Gauri M5, 200-12)

This Nectar permeates every pore of a Perfect Master. A single glance from Him can transform a sinner into a Saint.

Nectar abides in the Master; He is sublime, His station is high. Says Nanak, we worship our Lord by His Grace, those turned Godwards alone attain Him. (Gauri M3, 300-16)

The Master is a Pool of Nectar. Only by great good fortune can one bathe in it and become pure.

The Guru is a Pool of Nectar; those who are fortunate bathe in it. The dirt of all their births is then washed away, and they are attuned to the pure Name of the Lord. (Sri Rag M4, 40-10)

The object of human birth is to obtain this Nectar and it can be had from a Perfect Master only. Different kinds of robes and garments and cunning are of no help. Through them one cannot obtain the Nectar-Name. And without the Nectar-Name, there is no escape from delusion.

You have come into the world to gather the Nectar-Name; you obtain it through the Master. Give up then your cleverness and your ochre robes; in duality you gather not this Fruit. (Sorath M1, 598-4)

Who Obtains the Nectar?

Only one out of several millions may get this Divine Nectar to drink.

The Lord distributes the Elixir of the Nectar-Name; but only one in millions receives it and partakes of it. (Parbhathi M3, 1335-1)

Sweet is the Nectar-Name of the Master; but rare is the one who tastes it. (Majh M3, 113-13)

The True Nectar is falling in showers; and the devotee drinks it. His mind is ever refreshed, and he sings the praises of the Lord. (Asa M3, 428-11)

They, the devotees who contemplate on the Lord, are blessed with His Nectar and are purged to purity. Dwell on the Lord's Name so that you are cleansed of the inner dirt. (Malar M1, 1254-7)

Softly fall the showers of the Nectar-Name; and through the Grace of the Master I see my Beloved Lord. (Asa M4, 442-19)

The Lord's Gospel is Nectar-sweet and glorious and one tastes it through the Guru's Word, the natural way. His mind is illumined and his darkness dispelled, as the rising sun ends the night, and the invisible, the imperceptible and the unknowable is seen by a True Devotee. (Sri Rag M4, 87-18)

The Nectar fills the body, but egotistical persons and those without a Master remain without it.

Within one's self is the Nectar; but those puffed up with pride

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know not its taste. (Sorath Var M4, 644-2)

I am a sacrifice to my Master who revealed to me the Truth. The world is deluded, the Nectar is wasted; the egotistical people know nothing of it. (Malar M1, 1262-3)

Benefits of the Nectar

The Gurbani mentions numerous benefits that accrue from tasting the Nectar. As a result of enjoying the taste of the Nectar one gives up all other tastes and becomes truly detached.

His mind is content, he hungers not, nor thirsts; he sees the Immaculate One in all hearts, only a detached one enjoys the Nectar; one steeped in the Love of the Guru's Word. (Mam M1, 1039-3)

The Nectar fills everybody. He who tastes it knows its intense sweetness. By tasting it, one becomes immersed in it and is made fearless. He is not troubled by Kal (the Negative Power). He becomes free and brings about the release of his family.

The Nectar fills everyone within; he who tastes it knows it. He becomes free of fear and is filled with the Divine Ambrosia. He receives it by the Lord's Grace, and thereafter is not afflicted by death. (Maru M3, 1092-12)

The Lord created the fourteen regions wherein men carry on their trade. They who are God-wards reap the profit. Death does not touch them who drink the True Nectar. They gain release for themselves and their kin; the whole world is saved for their sake. (Sri Rag M4, 83-17)

The Nectar gives the nine Treasures and also occult and spiritual powers. It leads to happiness and peace. Fear, doubt, perversions and sins are destroyed. Egotism

disappears and the craving for the illusory pleasures of Maya is quenched. The mind becomes still and pure, and one gains salvation and tranquility. One is accepted in the Court of the Lord after drinking the Nectar.

From this it is evident that the Nectar, so much praised by the Gurus, and the Nectar which one is urged to drink, is the Name or Shabd (Inner Music) which pervades all hearts. A Perfect Master with his loving and kindly glance can plant the Nectar-tree within us and enable us to drink the Nectar.

The Sikhs use Nectar prepared with the help of a sword. On looking into this matter, we find that this is prepared after repeating bani or a name. While repeating a name, its power permeates the materials or objects upon which one is concentrating. The Saints who are lovers of the Name are filled with Divine Light.

When the full Light shines in their hearts, the Immortal One knows them to be pure. (Pat Shahi 10)

Such Saints, by their Nectar-filled glance, can raise the dead. They bestow the boon of the Name upon barren minds. The glance of Saints has Nectar in it. One can become a Saint by a mere glance from one of them.

By a Master's Nectar-glance one becomes a Saint. (Sukhmani 287-7)

One can drink the Nectar only through the Grace of the Master. Those persons are indeed fortunate who become immortal by partaking of it. They become like a bee at the Lotus Feet of the Master and enjoy lasting bliss.

Drink the Lord's Nectar and gain life-eternal. Remember Him and

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be ever in bliss. Live in joy, with desires all fulfilled; let not care approach you. Be like the black-bee, hugging the lotus feet of the Lord. Oh Nanak, find bliss in His service, as the rain bird finds joy in the rain-drop. (Gauri M5, 496-6)

CHAPTER 12. HUMILITY

Outer Humility

In order to be deserving of the Lord's Grace we have to empty the heart of vainglory, for, unless a vessel is empty, it can contain nothing. Because of humility Kal and Maya cannot affect us. All the Saints have adopted it and adorned themselves with it.

What is false pride or vainglory? To be proud of a virtue we do not possess, or we possess merely as a gift from someone else, is false pride. We do not deserve to be respected or honored because we belong to a noble family of great deeds or because our ancestors selflessly gave in charity. We can understand it from an example. The Lord makes someone a treasurer. He has in that capacity heaps of money. How can he be proud of that? They are in trust with him and have to be disbursed according to the directions of the owner. If the treasurer is proud of this money, it is false pride. The owner can remove him whenever he likes. Similarly, a man maybe riding a horse while putting on a costly costume and may feel proud of it. All this pride is misplaced. In reality, it is the horse or the costume or the tailor who made it, who should feel proud. It would be meanness on his part to snatch and appropriate the credit for this. Another person is proud of his beautiful hair, fair face, soft hand or healthy body and walks about the streets like a bloated bag. Such pride is false; pride

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such as this is due to that all powerful Creator and nature which made him or to the soul granted by the Lord. The Guru has said:

Oh Nanak, those who are proud without virtue are really donkeys. A man who is proud without possessing the virtues is really a donkey. One should be thankful to the Lord for His gifts.

By whose Grace you have a beautiful face, always remember that wonderful Lord. By whose Grace you have got this good species, always remember that Lord day and night. By whose Grace you have a diseaseless body, contemplate that Lord with love. (Gauri M5, 270:3, 5)

Another person is proud of his knowledge and talent. He is not entitled to this pride. This is due to the teacher who taught him and the intellect given to him by the Lord. Of what should a man be proud in this world? People are proud of wealth and property. These are evanescent like the declining shade. People are proud of youth, which is lost in disease and old age. In the first place, these do not remain the same but if they do, it is only for a short time. These fall like leaves of a tree.

Wealth, youth and flowers last for a short time, like the Pabban (a small lotus plant) leaves, they wither away as they sprout. (Sri Rag M1, 23-5)

Let those who are proud of family and its members see with their open eyes the value of getting entangled in the attachment of children and lured by their sweet talk and antics. Man is like a guest for the night who has to leave in the morning. Being here for a night it is useless to build schemes for ages. Houses, temples and wealth change like the shade of a tree. This world is like a sarai (resting place) visited by persons who constantly give place to others.

Body, son, wife, family, etc., which he considers eternal, are with him for a few days only and would then have to be given up. None of these would accompany him. It is therefore useless and in vain to be proud of them. These are like a dream.

*Why are you falsely proud of this world which is like a dream?
Nothing is yours in it, says Nanak. (Salok M9, 1428-8)*

Worldly pride and grandeur is like the saffron plant which multiplies when trampled upon. If one turns his back on worldly pride and pays attention to Reality, its realization increases constantly. The real beauty belongs to the soul in which dwell love, coolness, peace and calmness and through which the body is glorified. The body in which the Lord dwells is indeed beautiful.

The body is the beautiful bride with whom abideth the Lord. Eternally she enjoys the love of her spouse catching hold of the Master's Word. (Suhi M3, 754-6)

That knowledge is blessed and really praise-worthy which is utilized in trying to understand the Lord and in singing His glory. All other knowledge becomes the cause of our shame, for by swelling our ego it leads us millions of miles away from the reality and only the pride of knowledge remains.

It is generally observed that people parade their qualities in order to attain position and honor. In this way they become seekers after honor, titles and positions. Only that position or prestige is praiseworthy which springs in the heart of others because of our being full of virtues and owing to the tall stature of our simplicity and humility and not that gained by propaganda or spending money. Such pride and glory is to be despised.

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The flowers that grow out of earth are beautiful. They however wither when plucked and rubbed between the fingers. They lose their freshness. Their scent and color disappear. Those who enjoy the smell and color of the flowers from a distance are happy. When they bring their noses in contact with them and smell them for a long time it has a bad effect and sometimes the hidden poison makes them deleterious. Similar is the case with worldly rank and honor. To love virtues and to make an effort to acquire them make us full of them. But to run after honors and positions and to try for them keeps us away from reality and makes us despicable. It leads to the fall of our soul. We should aim at realizing the Lord and not try for that which keeps us away.

*Give up worldly pride. When the Beloved is found one feels happy.
(Bilawal M3, 808-10)*

It is true that one who finds pearls does not amass heaps of shells. Those who seek the Lord do not run after outer show and glory. They remain happy in the Will of the Lord and the greatness of their soul can be glimpsed in whatever work the Lord puts them on.

Inner Humility

From the previous discussion it is clear that it is not proper to be proud of worldly pleasures. The thought of countless bounties of the Lord and our innumerable sins and defects makes us beggars at His Door. We should therefore think as to which of His bounties we are acknowledging and what we are doing for them. As long as we believe that whatever good or evil we possess is not because of us but from Him, we cannot be proud of anything. What are the bounties which we have not received

from the Lord! Having received them, what have we done to show our gratitude and in respect of which of them? If this line of thought leads to pride then the thought of our defects and ingratitude is a sure remedy. We always say that we are nothing, we are of no consequence and others are better. But if others say the same thing about us, we would be very sorry as we think that our state is quite the reverse. Those who really inwardly believe that they are the lowest are really spiritual.

Oh Kabir, I am the worst, everybody else is good. He who thinks so is my friend. (Kabir, Salok, 1364-17)

We try to make a show of avoiding the gaze of the world and hiding ourselves but in reality desire that it should run after us and find us out. We sit in meetings on a back bench or on a low seat so that we may be seated in the front or on a high seat. True humility never makes a show nor indulges in humble words. A really humble man not only wants to hide himself and his virtues but also tries to keep himself out of the sight of the world. With this end in view, he sometimes does acts which bring him a bad name so that he can hide himself under their cover. Yogis and Saints have behaved in this way. Gopichand and Bharthari lived in the house of a potter and engaged in austerities, but in order to keep off the ruler of that place and other people, they put up a show of quarrel over articles of food and invited criticism. Guru Nanak put on the garb of a hunter and took a dagger and dogs with him. All others stepped aside but Lehna Ji stuck fast to him.

Kabir Sahib took bottles in his hands and in the company of a woman disciple and Ravidas, the cobbler walked through the bazar singing hymns. There was water in the bottles but people thought it was wine. The water was

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poured before the Rajah. Ravidas said this had been done to extinguish the fire at the temple of Jagan Nath. Rajah sent his man to Jagan Nath. The man made enquiries and reported that on that day the temple had in fact caught fire and Kabir Sahib had extinguished it.

It therefore behooves us not to utter words of sham humility. If we do utter such words they should represent our real inner feelings. We should not lower our eyes unless our mind accepts humility and poverty. Unless we feel a genuine desire for humility and poverty we should not express it. Of course, as truly civilized and civil persons we should address others with respect and in accordance with good manners. We should behave humbly and to show regard for the guest, utter words in humility. This befits us as human beings. There can be no doubt that we should utter words which come from our heart to our guests. A truly humble heart desires that instead of his saying so, others should say of him that he is the most inconsequential and unimportant person. If anyone says this of him he does not feel offended but is happy to feel that there is at least one man who thinks of him as he himself does.

Some persons under the cover of humility give up inner prayers because of being imperfect. They do not think themselves fit for them. Some say that they do not advise others as they themselves are not perfectly faultless. Some do not wish to use their talents in the service of the Lord because they know their weakness best and are afraid, lest while doing service they should feel proud and while showing light to others may ruin themselves in the fire of pride and conceit. These thoughts do not arise when one is truly humble. These are only attempts to justify one's idleness and cowardice. They, on the one hand make a great show of feelings for the Lord and his incarnation, the

Master, and on the other hand, under the cover of humility, want to keep themselves deprived of the great humility which He in His mercy wishes to shower on them.

The Lord and Master desire that we should be perfect like Him and thus obtain His Grace.

Oh Kabir, it avails not if one is cold or hot like water. The devotee should be like the Lord. (Kabir, Salok, 1372-9)

The man who has no confidence in himself puts forth arguments and reasons for not doing his duty but a man of prayer, although he feels utterly incompetent knowing fully well that he is not fit for it and cannot perform it, surrenders with full faith and fortitude everything to the Lord and His incarnation, the Master, and engages himself in carrying out the directions for fulfilling the task given to him by the Master.

The truth is that to think we know what we do not know is sheer ignorance. When we do not know a thing, it is absurd to make others believe that we know it. We should not exhibit our knowledge, skill and know-how. It is, however, not proper to feign ignorance. Of course, when we meet a person desirous of knowing that thing, we should not hide anything from him and tell him everything for his guidance. Humility should hide our virtues and perfections till such time as the need for redemption of our own soul exists. This is not a moral or worldly quality but a godly virtue.

In true humility we need not pass ourselves as fools or parade ourselves as wise men. Just as pride is opposite of humility, so deceit, pretense, cleverness, show, hypocrisy, cunning and worldly crookedness are opposite of calmness and right conduct. If the worldly wise, in order to gain their ends, dub right conduct as mean and foolish,

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the truly humble person should bear the backbiting and criticism cheerfully, the cause of this backbiting is not in him but in others. The Master has said:

If you care for your good, do good to the mean persons. (M1 Asa War 465-15)

Signs of Humility

True humility produces sweetness in our heart and the words uttered by us would be sweet. All life currents would also be delicious. The sweetness would be the same for all. Our neighbors and others would feel its sweetness. All our sayings and actions, whether great or small, would be full of humility. They would dye their relations and others in the same hue. Guru Nanak says that sweetness or humility and meekness is the essence of all virtues. He who has this virtue is the fountain-head of all virtues.

Oh Nanak, sweetness and meekness are the essence of all virtues. (Asa War, 470-13)

The Method of Acquiring True Greatness

In order to get true respect and prestige it is necessary to have humility and meekness. Only he who has them can worship and treat others with courtesy. Kabir Sahibsa-ys:

Have humility, purity and meekness and treat others with courtesy. Oh Kabir, he is truly great who is good tempered.

Some persons consider humility and meekness as weakness and helplessness. They believe in tit for tat. However, what can be achieved with humility cannot be had by using harsher methods. Fire has its own place but

it is only when in humility it is reduced to ashes that it can be applied to the forehead. Those who wish to attain true greatness and glory should develop the above- mentioned virtues. Jesus Christ says:

He that is least among you all, the same is great.

He who considers himself to be the meanest is the greatest. Guru Arjan Sahib also says to the same effect:

He who considers himself to be the meanest, consider him to be the highest. (Gauri M5, 2661-7)

The tenth Guru has said that as a man progresses, he grows in humility also.

Lao-tse, the great Chinese Saint, while describing the virtues of a good man has mentioned love, sympathy, gentle disposition, frugality and humility or meekness amongst them. It is due to humility that such a man becomes a leader of men.

If one gives up these virtues and tries to become great through wealth, selfishness, pride, falsehood, deceit, cleverness, pretense, exhibition of knowledge or propaganda, it is conclusive proof of his being mean. He is like a date tree which can provide no shade to a traveler nor can its fruit remove the hunger, as being very high, it is out of reach. Kabir Sahib says:

What does it matter if you are tall like a date tree? It provides no shade to the traveler and its fruit is too high.

Fruits of Humility

We should make our hearts the source of love for the

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entire universe and should have so much humility that even if a person does evil to us, we should return love for the same. In truth, one who is embellished with humility loses the capacity of stinging others. Even if anyone harms him, he does not think evil of him. Sheikh Sa'adi says,

I have imbibed so much humility that people trample on me like an ant and I do not sting like a honey bee.

I am like an ant which is trampled. I am not like a bee which stings.

Egoism or pride is not liked by the Lord. He showers His Grace on those whose mind is full of humility and meekness. Water does not gather at the top of hills but flows down and accumulates there. He who bends drinks water but he who holds his head high remains thirsty.

Kabir Sahib says:

Water does not accumulate at high places but does so at low places; he who bends, drinks; the stiff-necked remains thirsty.

In order to obtain the bounty of Grace of the Lord the ground of our heart should be dyed in the hue of humility. The Lord does not like proud persons but showers His mercy on the humble. Saint James says:

God resisteth the proud but giveth Grace to the humble.

Hafiz Sahib says,

The devout was proud and did not tread the path safely. The devotee, owing to humility, reached the destination.

Humility is a good means of imbibing the virtues of

others. If we wish to imbibe them, we should be humble and poor.

Guru Arjan Sahib says that you should come to him when you have become the dust of the feet of others.

After becoming the dust of the feet of others come to me. (Maru War M5, 1102-11)

The path of finding the Lord consists in becoming humble and meek because we cannot deserve His Grace and carry out wishes of the Indescribable unless we give up pride and vainglory and meet some God intoxicated Saint and become His servants.

Those who are the Lord's own, live as servants of His servants. They surrender their mind and intellect at the feet of the Master and by His Grace carry out the directions of the Indescribable. (Belawal M4, 834-16)

When we give up all pride and bow at His Door, our souls become pure and we are saved from being burnt by the fire of passions. When we become servants of His servants, we find a place at His Door.

Wash His feet and serve the Master. He takes away the suffering and fever of the soul. When he becomes servant of His servants, he finds a place at His door. (Asa M5, 377-17)

Pride goes before a fall and a proud man does not imbibe the virtues of others. The humble and the meek can get spiritual wealth from the spiritually-minded persons. After finding the path, he in all humility assiduously treads it. This is due to the Grace of the Lord and the Master. If we do not take a humble and meek attitude before doing a good deed, do not retain it while doing

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and do not consider it a gift by the Grace of the Lord and the Master after it is done, it is snatched from our hands by pride amidst our rejoicings. The way to God is firstly humility, secondly humility and thirdly humility. Again, unless humility precedes, accompanies and follows every good action which we perform, pride wrests wholly from our hands any good work on which we are congratulating ourselves.

How to Win Over the Lord

What is that knowledge, virtue, or best amongst diamonds we should get and which is that dress, by putting on which, we win over our Lord? Guru Arjan Sahib answers that that knowledge is humility, that virtue is simplicity, and that pure diamond is a sweet tongue. Wear the dress of these three and your consort will be in your power.

What is that knowledge, virtue and thing which is dear to the spouse? What dress should be put on to win over the Lord? Humility is the knowledge, simplicity the virtue, and sweet-tongue the winning chant that are dear to Him. If the dress of all these three is put on, the Lord is won over. (Farid Ji, Salok, 1384-14)

The saying of Saints and holy men give glimpses of this humility, meekness and simplicity. Hafiz says that on the path of love there is no difference between the rich and the poor. He prays:

O Master, you are a Beauteous King. Look at this beggar at Your Door also. I am very sinful, please pay no heed to my deeds; but as a King, be kind to a beggar and cast a look of mercy on this sinner also.

On the path of love, there is no difference between the rich and the poor. Oh Beauteous King, say a word to this beggar. I am a great

sinner but look not at my sins. In kingly manner speak to this sinful beggar.

A true spiritual seeker, being humble and meek, considers himself to be so inconsequential that he hesitates even in the presence of the Master and employs others to convey to Him the feelings of his heart. Hafiz uses even air as his messenger.

Oh Wind, carry a message of love to that King of Beauty that besides the hundreds of Jamsheds and Kai Khusros have me as His slave. You may guide like Khizar this broken-hearted. I am walking on foot, while others are on horse-back.

Oh wind, carry the message of my humble love to that King of Beauty at whose doors kings and monarchs are standing. Request Him to help me as my companions are mounted while I am tottering on foot on the way.

Sheikh Sa'adi says that a branch laden with fruit bends towards the ground. The Cyprus tree which is devoid of fruit stands erect. In truth when a horse-man reaches his destination, he gets down and walks on foot. He alone can derive full benefit from a Saint who goes to Him in humility. He who is full of pride of his wisdom seldom reaches Him and if he does so by mistake, what will he gain? If you want to be admitted to the Court of Saints, go with the cup of humility without any pride, as it is only when the cup is empty that the flagon bends towards it. If the cup is full to the brim, how can it contain anything more? Respectful humility is accordingly very necessary.

The empty-handed have a higher rank than the rich. The flagon bends its neck to the empty cup.

The Grace of the Lord and Master cannot be had forc-

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ibly. He melts only on hearing humble prayer. If you are meek and pray to him in humility, He may turn His face towards you and you obtain His Grace. Therefore give up all pride and vanity and place the cup of humility before Him, then it would not be surprising if He fills the cup of the beggar.

Give up force and take to weeping; mercy is drawn to supplicant, oh mendicant! If you weep, you will gain His Mercy. Seek His mercy in your wailing.

Give up reliance on your strength and take to weeping as mercy is drawn towards wailing. If you adopt wailing you will get mercy. Always pray for His mercy while weeping. To many persons humility is natural and some learn humility from the sufferings of the world but true humility can be learnt only in the company of the Saints. They are free from egoism. Humility is their true embellishment. On the removal of egoism, true wisdom dawns. Shams Tabrez says,

Give up pride and become like dust, as from dust springs green grass. If you become ash because of Divine Fire, then this ash will act as alchemy which would turn your iron into gold.

Give up egoism and become dust so that green grass may spring out of this dust. If you are reduced to ashes because of fire of yearning, your ash will become alchemy.

There are verses in the hymns of the Saints which show their humility. After getting boons of high spiritual order they have expressed feelings of humility.

Oh Lord and Master, whatever is happening is due to Your Grace.

Guru Nanak gives a beautiful illustration of humility.

Oh Lord, all the faults are in me. I have no virtue. How is union with the Lord consort possible? I have no beauty or shine in the eyes. I do not belong to a noble family and cannot utter sweet words. If a woman (soul) dresses plainly and is liked by her Lord then is she the ever happy wife. That Lord has no form or color and He is beyond the reach of thought. I am neither beautiful nor wise nor clever. Oh Lord, give me a place at Your feet.

I am full of defects and have no virtue; how can I meet my Lord? I am not beautiful and have no shining eyes. I am not of noble family and have no sweet tongue. A woman may dress plainly, she is ever a happy bride if dear to her Lord. He has no form or delineation, His limits no one can find. I am not beautiful, wise or clever oh Lord! Be kind and unite me to Yourself. (Suhi Ashtpadi M1, 750-12)

He further says,

I am a fool, without wisdom and being full of filth, how can I go and unite with the Lord? Others are full of virtues. No one knows my name even. Those of my friends who have won the love of the Lord are sitting under mango tree and enjoying its sweetness. They are happy. Those virtues are not in me. How can I blame anyone?

I am unwise and full of faults, how can I go to my Lord? Others are far better. No one knows my name. Those who have won the love of the Lord are enjoying it in the shade of the mango tree. These virtues are not in me: how can I blame anyone? (Suhi M1, 762-6)

We are unwise, foolish and deluded. Oh Master! Show us the way. Oh Nanak! A Gurmukh loves the Shabd and always sings the praise of the Lord. (Gauri M3, 246-6)

Thou knowest what would be our state without Thee oh True Guru. We would have roamed about helplessly, without support. Oh Blessed Thou, who hath raised us worms to Thy own state; oh

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Blessed, Blessed, is the Guru; Nanak, on meeting whom all our woes depart. (Gauri M4, 167-11)

I am a poor unrespected orphan. The Lord held me to His bosom and made me His queen. (Asa M5, 394-8)

I was a low caste unknown orphan without virtue and merit. Oh Nanak! He was kind and made me His slave. (Belawal M4, 815-1)

Another Saint prays to the Lord in humility:

My intellect was topsy-turvy, the Master set right my soul! (Sar Bachan)

Paltu Sahib has shown his humility in a peculiar manner:

There was another Paltu. I was mistaken for him and given devotion. Devotion was given to me by mistaking me for another of my name. I took the wealth meant for another and secreted it. It was fated for another but was given to me. I alone know it, nobody else does. I offered to return it, but it was not accepted. This was a mistake by the Great One; what He said I did Oh Paltu! You are a great sinner and the Lord committed a mistake. There was another Paltu. I was mistaken for him and given devotion.

The humility of Tulsi Sahib appears from the following verses:

I am unwise, helpless and of humble heart. By taking refuge in the Saints, I have recognized the Master. The Master is an unfathomable ocean of peace. He put me on the right path. I bow at His feet again and again. I humbly sing the praises of the Saints.

I am Thy slave with the whole of my mind. Considering me low you have found me. I am your slave forever and forever. No one can cross without a Saint.

Saints are merciful and compassionate. By taking refuge with them even the low caste swim across. There can be no beginning or end without a Saint. Tulsi the helpless has taken shelter with you. Whatever is done, is done by Saints. Without the Saints, the path cannot be found.

Shamas-i-Tabrez expresses his helplessness and inability with humility. He says,

Oh Master! I am a lame and humble beggar. I have not as yet been able to quench the thirst of my longing soul to my satisfaction by drinking the intoxicating water of the river of your compassion and mercy. You know my deeds full well. My weaknesses and helplessness are before you. When I committed any fault I was helpless. After all I was ill. I have come to the door of the perfect spiritual healer for treatment. A healer treats the patient through mercy. Now is the time for giving bounty. Give me some out of your treasury. No doubt, I am a thorn but a thorn also grows on flower plants. An intelligent gold dealer uses grain of barley also with mashas to make up tolas (weights for weighing gold).

No doubt I am a thorn, but thorns also grows on a flower plant. An intelligent gold dealer puts barely in scales.

Give a place to this unworthy being in Your Court although I am not fit for it.

We are not fit for Your Court, but we are called Your slaves.

The Results of Humility

The Lord is always present in person with those who pray in humility and with meekness. They play in the ocean of the Lord like fishes in water. The Lord is immanent in land and sea. If there is humility in heart, the Lord meets up openly.

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He pervades land and sea everywhere. If there is humility in heart, He meets openly. He who observes humility, poverty and praying, the Lord is with him like fish in water.

The Lord is like a piece of candy which pervades you. Only an ant can pick up sugar from the sand, no elephant can do so. Similarly persons proud of caste, race or family cannot gain any virtue or learn any lesson from the creation of the Lord. Only a humble person can derive this benefit. Kabir Sahib says:

Lord, in the form of sugar spread over the sand, cannot be picked up by an elephant. Oh Kabir! Give up caste and race, become an ant and pick it and eat it. (Kabir, Ramkali, 972-10)

Guru Amar Das says that you should give up egoism and become slaves of the Master. Then you will realize the Lord.

He who is slave of the slaves of the Lord finds the Lord after giving up egoism. (Sorath M3, 600-13)

Guru Arjan, the very source of humility says,

Poverty is our mace and becoming dust of all is our sword. These are our chief weapons of defense. No evil-minded person can stand against them. This has been so said by the Perfect Master.

Poverty is our mace, to be dust is our sword. No one can withstand them, the Perfect Master has said it. (Sorath M5, 28-14)

He who considers himself humble is really very noble. He whose mind has become dust of all, recognizes the Name of the Lord in every heart.

He who knows himself to be low, he is to be counted as highest.

He whose mind is the dust of all, he recognizes the Name of Hari (God) in all hearts. (Gauri M5, 266-7)

The Lord, in His Grace, makes poverty dwell in his heart. His mind becomes humble. He is always happy. He enjoys bliss. He is not happy if the world lauds him, nor unhappy if it speaks ill of him. He is a redeemed soul and obtains bliss in the Court of the Lord hereafter. Guru Arjan says,

Oh my mind! become the dust of all so that you may live in happiness and bliss.

Oh my mind, become the dust of all so that you may have bliss, happiness and joy. (Sorath M5, 614-11)

He in whose mind dwells poverty, by His Grace, is emancipated here and enjoys bliss hereafter, oh Nanak. (Gauri M5, 278-9)

When mind becomes the dust of all, they are all friends. The Lord pervades all and all beings are sustained by His Mercy. (Asa M5, 379-5)

It is Extremely Difficult to Give Up Pride

The world is worshipping woman and wealth. Their power is increasing. The rich and the poor are equally affected. Their influence affects all walks of life. It is extremely difficult to give them up, but still we come across persons who have done so. It is, however, far more difficult to give up pride and vainglory, partisanship and envy. Those who do so are very few. To give up Maya is difficult, but it is to no purpose if inner pride is not surrendered. Pride has brought about the fall of many great ascetics and destroyed them. If one gives up pride and sets fire to the considerations of vainglory, he then unites

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with the Name. Kabir says:

It is easy to give up gold, or love of woman. It is rare to give up pride, vainglory or envy. What if one gives up Maya while pride is there! Pride humbled many ascetics, it devoured them. Blacken the face of pride and set fire to vainglory. Give up pride and vainglory and unite with Naam.

There is always suffering where egoism or pride is present. Where there is doubt, there is grief. All these are chronic diseases. Kabir Sahib asks as to how they can be removed.

There is suffering where there is egoism. There is grief where there is doubt. Oh Kabir, how can these be cured! They are chronic diseases.

Kabir Sahib further says that by repeating the True Name the soul becomes happy. Alms giving or giving of food is charity. To cross the ocean of the world, humility acts as a boat. There is none worse than pride to drown us.

Take to True Name and give alms - humility to cross and pride to drown.

Guru Arjan teaches us to pray thus:

Oh Saints! Tell me that which leads to removal of pride, to seeing of Transcendental One in all beings and to becoming the dust of the feet of all. I may see the Lord present in person within me and my doubts may vanish.

Saints show this way to those who give up egoism. Those who see the Transcendental One in all elements and become the dust of all, they feel the presence of the Lord within them and their doubts vanish. (Sorath M4, 616-17)

Guru Amar Das also says,

Oh Mind, do not think you know anything. A Gurmukh is always without pride.

Oh mind, have no pride of knowing anything, a Gurmukh is devoid of it. (Asa M2, 441-9)

Oh creature, if you wish yourself well, then, while doing charity, be humble and meek. If you want your good, do charity and be meek. (Asa War M1,465-16)

If in the balance one weigheth a thing, that which is heavier, alone toucheth down. (Asa M1, 470-14)

To consider oneself humble is for his own good. This humility leads to greatness just as all bow to the phase of the moon on the second day.

It is good to be small. Smallness (humility) achieves everything. Just as it is the moon on the second night to which all bow. (Kabir Sahib)

A humble person can see all others but none notices him. He who can see him becomes a god from a man.

The humble one can see all, no one looks at him. He who looks at the humble becomes a god from a man. (Kabir Sahib)

Humility is not weakness. It is such a powerful thing that all the powers of the world have to bow to it. Man conquers himself with pridelessness. No one can defeat a prideless man; as behind his humility is acting the secret power of the Lord. Humility is an ornament of greatmen.

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The Ideal of Spiritual Seekers

The aim of a seeker after spirituality should be high. In order to acquire spirituality one's aim should be high. Unless there is some definite object or aim, it is useless to hope to achieve it. When his aim or object is certain then every effort brings him nearer to it.

The condition of a common man is like that of a drifting man who floats in any direction the current takes him. We are floating in the river of traditions of this world. We follow the traditions. We do as our ancestors have done. We waste time in superstitions connected with the body. We never think of wants other than those of the body. We do not think of the soul or its plight.

It is necessary to give up false beliefs. Adopt right beliefs. Follow the right principles. Understand the reality. If you do not understand it, inquire about it, so that you may clearly see the place you are to cross and there may be no obstruction in treading the right path. Those who follow a path followed by others without due consideration get involved in some superstition.

Their progress stops and they do not get spirituality. It is, therefore, an essential condition of success to keep before you the ideal. Ask of yourself as to what you want to be. What ideal have you set in life?

A large majority of persons are without an ideal and even if you find a man with an ideal he would consider the world as the ultimate goal. The seekers after spirituality would be only a few. Have a peep inside yourself. What do you want to be? You ask for spiritual wealth with your tongue but wish for other things in your heart. Intellect says that it is good to attain spirituality, but mind is involved in the body and bodily pleasures and does

not wish for anything else. How then can one seemingly engaged in spirituality obtain success?

In the first place, you should have a clear-cut ideal and then a keen desire to attain it. It is only under such condition that there can be a hope of success, but in order to obtain it you should lessen your love for wealth, woman and world.

The Religion of Humanity

The man in whom the desire to know the mystery of life has awakened, has first to be a man. A man should possess the high virtues of a human being, otherwise he cannot be called a man.

He cannot be man by simply having the form of a man or dressing like a man or behaving like him. There are many human robots but there are few who have virtues special to a human being. They are called the top of the creation because of their human virtues. A man devoid of humanity is worse than an animal. It was owing to these human virtues that he was considered higher in rank than anybody else and they were asked to worship him. He was, therefore, called His representative. He who is devoid of human virtues is really an animal in human form. It is therefore necessary that he should be a man of principles. This should be his ideal. This is the working principle. The highest duty of man is to imbibe human virtues.

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BOOK 3

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BOOK 3

CHAPTER 1. SERVICE (SEVA)

Cheerfully carrying out the orders of elders and rendering them physical help for their comfort and convenience is one phase of service. Another phase of it is rendering loving help to the poor and the needy.

The reward of selfless service is great indeed. The saying goes:

Render service and reap the fruit thereof.

Human beings can even become Saints and Swamis through service.

If we render service with an ulterior motive or with pride and arrogance, we are deprived of its real reward. But if we perform service without any desire for reward we can attain great heights.

It is said that the performance of service is one of the methods by which we can achieve glory in the eyes of God. Bhai Gurdas has gone so far as to say that our hands and feet are useless if they perform no service. And Guru Nanak has stated that a person engaged in selfless service is always highly esteemed in the society of men as well as

in the eyes of God.

Those who render no service to mankind cannot hope to achieve anything in this world or hereafter. One who does not serve his fellow beings is worthless.

According to the Guru Granth Sahib, there are four kinds of service:

Physical or manual service – that rendered with the body.

Service with wealth.

Service rendered by mind.

Service rendered by soul.

Physical Service

What type of service should be performed? Guru Amar Das has said that one should render service in the same manner as does an elephant which obeys the directions of the goad of his mahout (driver). In other words, we should consider the command of the Guru as a goad on our head. We should place our forehead at the feet of the Master and render service to Him with love and devotion, and without hesitation or murmur.

In one of his famous verses Guru Arjan Dev, the 5th Sikh Guru says:

God, I wish to serve the Saints not only with my hands but also with my eyes and indeed with every hair of my head, which I may use to cleanse the feet of the Saints. At all times of the day and night I long for the Darshan of the Saints. This is the only bliss for which I yearn. I would be happy to make a fan of the hair on my head and wave it to produce a breeze for the comfort of the Saints,

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and put my head on their feet to receive the dust of their feet upon it.

Guru Ram Das says:

This is my only prayer to Thee, Oh Lord: That Thy servants (Saints) may be the recipients of my service. I should be happy even to offer my mind and body at the altar of the Saints. In other words, I should rejoice to get rid of pride and arrogance. Whatever I receive from the Saints, I regard as nectar. Lord, I am ever prepared to sacrifice myself to my Master and to fall at His feet, for I am poor and helpless and am constantly pining for Thy Darshan (sight), that only the help and Grace of a Master can bestow.

A true disciple is ever eager to visit his Master and adopts all possible means to be in His presence. Even if it is bitter cold and snowing heavily, he is not deterred; for the pull of his Guru (for His Darshan) is so strong that he will go just to have a glimpse of Him. He constantly longs to meet Him and to have His Darshan day and night.

The highest type of service is that to the Master. Guru Arjan Sahib says:

Whatever service is possible for you to do with your hands for the Master, you should do it, because it is the Master who gives us the protection of His Hands and saves us from the fire of transmigration. You should work for Him, because through Him you will know the Lord. You should ceaselessly serve the Master, because it is by His Grace alone that all foes are transformed into friends.

We are elated by such type of service as are described above. It is a unique joy that can not be achieved by power and pelf. It is therefore necessary that we should not hanker after worldly pleasures.

Service by Means of Wealth and Mind

Service to the Master will be rewarded only if it is performed with one-pointed attention, because then we achieve concentration of mind. By serving the Master, our heart attains unison with His Heart. Thus Naam will become manifest in us and we shall be able to meet the Lord without much further effort. All our desires will be fulfilled because we shall have no desires left.

Who can serve a Master? In other words, who can attain God-Realization? Only such persons can do so who sacrifice their mind and their wealth for the service of their Guru(Master).

You should therefore serve such a person who perceives the great devotion and the inner longing of your heart. Such a one is none other than a True Master. You should make an offering of your mind at the altar of your Guru, and worship Him because He is the incarnation of that Deathless One. (Guru Arjan)

He achieves everything who lives near the Master (is ever conscious of His Presence within), who obeys Him with selfless devotion and without pride, who subdues his mind's reasoning and surrenders himself to his Master.

Service by Soul

This service consists in withdrawing one's soul current from every pore of the body, and connecting it with Shabd, the Audible Life Stream. By doing this, all practices – devotion, repetition, penances, austerities, etc. – are automatically accomplished and the ego is destroyed. The aim of all such practices is realized when one surrenders himself to the True Master, who is really God Incarnate.

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And one can truly surrender only through His Grace and by means of the spiritual practice which consists in listening to the inner Shabd, the Word or the Audible Life Stream.

We are by now aware of various types of service by the soul. But the soul can render service only through the Grace of God. In order to win His Grace, we should pray to the Saints who are God Incarnate. Thus, it is with the Grace of the Master that the soul is able to render service.

The ability to merge oneself with the Name of God – Naam, Word, Shabd or the Audible Life Stream – is beyond the comprehension of the intellect. It is therefore only through the Grace of a Master that the soul can render service. And the Master's Grace is invoked when – by means of devotion – the disciple completely renounces his ego.

How can we achieve this? It is possible only when the soul, by means of repetition of the Holy Names given by the Master, goes within by withdrawing itself from the nine outlets of the body, pierces through a star, the sun and the moon, and beholds the Radiant Form of the Master. It then merges in the Shabd – Word, Sound Current – and gradually rises by stages until it reaches its final Goal. That is the True Service by soul.

Physical and monetary service is easy to perform, and hundreds of people can afford to do so. Mental service is difficult to perform, and there are very few people who are capable of performing it. But service by the soul is much more difficult to perform and rare to achieve.

All these types of service can actually be performed only if carried out in accordance with the instructions of

a Master. The mind is rendered pure by service and then becomes worthy of devotion to Him. Everybody is busy in service of the world. We serve the world, our family, our community and our country. All this is good so far as it goes and should be performed as a duty, but it cannot help in attaining salvation. On the other hand, if we are attached to these ties, they become the cause of our coming back to this earth again and again.

The highest service is that of the Guru, and it is also the purest. The Guru is free from all ties and attachments. He is an ocean full of the surging waves of love. By serving Him, we become free from ties and attachments to the ephemeral world. Then intense love of God is awakened in us.

One who loves the Lord also loves His creation. Thus the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man are realized, and in this manner love is developed in us not only for God but for His creation.

By serving the Master we really serve ourselves, because by so doing each and every part of our body is purified. Scriptures mention that by serving the Satguru (Master) we obtain all the four values, Dharma (Righteousness), Arth (Wealth), Kam (Desires), and Moksh (salvation). In order to accomplish this, we have to surrender ourselves to a Master.

Dharma is that which binds and guides. The world is sustained by Dharma, which is created out of Grace, and is the source of contentment and social harmony. Dharma has ten attributes:

Kshima -Forgiveness.

Ahimsa - Non-Violence,Compassion.

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Daya - Mercy, Piety.

Mridu - Sweet Nature and True Behavior.

Sat Vachan - Truthfulness.

Tap - Self-control, Penance.

Dan - Charity.

Sheel or Shil - Continence.

Suouch - Cleanliness.

Bina Trishna - Desirelessness.

All these are achieved by keeping the company of Saints. Each religion has its own commandments, but the commandments of all religions include the above ten imperatives. And in all religions, the founder held devotion to the Lord as the ultimate aim. It is therefore noted with regret that nowadays religious places often breed disputes and wrangling, and encourage bigotry and fanaticism. Thus, instead of helping us to reach the highest goal, such institutions become the cause of much evil.

Arth means wealth. Kam means desires in general. By the Grace of the Master, all types of desires – whether worldly or spiritual – are fulfilled. By being in His company the worldly desires, which are ephemeral, are all effaced; and spiritual desires become very strong. These ardent spiritual desires are fulfilled by His Grace, and are the only desires we should entertain.

Moksh means salvation. Saints have themselves achieved salvation and they are able to bestow salvation on their disciples who faithfully follow their instructions. Salvation really means freedom or non-attachment. In other words, attachment consists in mentally binding oneself to something. Releasing oneself from that attachment is salvation. Remaining unattached while living in the world of attachment, such is the salvation of the Saints. That is to say, living in and performing our duties in the world, but

not being of it.

Salvation in the above sense of non-attachment is a means and not the goal, because it can be achieved by mental control and by certain practices leading to it. Saints and seers, while living in this world, preach that true salvation (salvation of the Soul) is attained by means of a certain spiritual practice. This practice is called “Surat Shabd Abhyans,” which means the practice of uniting the soul with the Shabd (Word, Sound Current or Audible Life Stream). By means of such practice one can achieve true salvation even while living in this very body.

As the lotus flower remains above water while its roots are in the water, and the swan – although it is constantly in the water – flies away with its wings dry; in the same manner, one who performs Surat Shabd Yoga remains detached from the world and from its influence while living and working in it. Kabir says:

One who has been dyed in the Dye of Naam cannot be stained. He may live in the world, perform his worldly duties and activities, but his heart and mind will never waver.

Such a person has drunk so deep from the Fountain of Naam and Guru that while living in this world he remains unattached to it. Such devotees are so much attached to their Lord and Master that for them salvation does not have much fascination. They are so happy in being near the Lord that they do not yearn for salvation.

Man has a physical body. He also has a mind and an intellect, as well as a soul. With the body he accumulates wealth and all other physical amenities. Body is served by body, and mind is served by mind. But soul is by far the most precious of the three. And it is a Master who gives us

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the gift of the knowledge of the soul. That is why a person should offer his body, his wealth and his mind to the Master in order to achieve the gift of Naam.

By serving the Master we serve our Lord. The Scriptures go so far as to say that if you wish to serve your Lord, you should worship your Master, because by so doing you worship the Lord.

How to worship the Master? The Scriptures tell us that we should serve the Master with body, wealth, mind and soul. Above all we should worship Him by Dhyān – contemplation/ beholding His Radiant Form inside. That is the highest form of worship. It is so comprehensive that all other forms of worship are included in it and no other form of worship is necessary.

Worship of the Master consists of inculcating in one's mind love for and faith in Him, and devoting oneself to spiritual practice as instructed by Him.

The best type of service to a Master is devotion to Him. But it is very rare. The Master is actually Shabd Incarnate. Therefore, the best service to the Master is through the soul's union with Shabd. This is done by filling one's mind with Naam and thereby attaining a state of bliss.

Holy Scriptures enumerate various advantages which accrue from service to the Master:

Peace and bliss are achieved. The mind is steeped in the dye of Naam and becomes conscious of His immanence. Liberation from Kal (the Negative Power) and his punishment. Various bad karmas and their effects are erased. One achieves all one's desires. All desires are fulfilled. In the end, one attains freedom from birth and death.

Without service to the Master it is not possible to give devotion to the Lord, nor can the mind reap the fruits of concentration. Man becomes eligible to get a human body in his next birth by service and devotion to the Master. Those who serve the Master are invariably sustained by Him at the time of their death, while those who do not serve the Master waste their life in vain.

Method of Service to the Master

One should serve the Master by withdrawing oneself completely from the ego, and thus attaining humility. Such service alone is pure, and only he can perform it who himself is pure in heart and mind. Those who have crooked natures, who are fraudulent or have bad or ulterior motives are unworthy or unfit to serve the Master.

Guru Arjan says:

We should worship God day and night. In this there should be no lethargy or negligence. And the way to worship the Lord is through worship of the Master with love and devotion, having abjured pride and obduracy.

The service should be incessant and not spasmodic. One cannot calculate its worth in terms of money; and if thus calculated or done with any ulterior motive, it is worthless and merits no reward.

Which Kind of Service is Desirable?

Everybody serves a Master in his own way. But what kind of service is gainful and deserving of merit? Guru Ram Das says:

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Only such service as is acceptable and pleasing to the Master is rewarding. And if He is pleased, all our evil karmas are obliterated. Indeed, by serving the Master we achieve God- Realization. But if a person serves the Master for his own personal gain, that service goes unrewarded.

How do we know that our service to the Master has been rewarded? Any service which helps us in listening to the Sound Current within is a real and rewarding service. The Adi Granth Sahib states:

He who serves the Master is sure to hear the Shabd.

Of all types of service in the world, service to the Master is acceptable in the Court of the Lord, because by such worship one can gain admittance into His Court.

Such persons as serve and worship the Master, thereby worship the Lord and gain His favor. If you ever wish to please the Lord, worship thou thy Master. (Adi Granth)

We should worship the Master and thereby throw all responsibility for our salvation on His shoulders. Truly speaking, the Master is God incarnate, and by worshipping the Master, we worship the Lord.

Who Can Serve the Master and the Lord?

Only such a one is in a position to serve the Master who has an abundant Grace of the Lord, because this service is imprinted on the individual's forehead and was preordained as the result of his previous life's actions or karmas.

He is fortunate indeed who devotes himself to the service to his Master, because the Lord Himself is manifest

in Him. And only that person can serve the Master whom the Lord ordains.

Service has many rewards, but the unique one is that a person imbibes the qualities of the person whom he serves.

Service should be performed with devotion and reverence. When there is love in the heart and reverence in the eyes, then God-Realization becomes easy to achieve.

A disciple should serve his Master without arrogance and without any idea of reward, and always with the aim of pleasing the Master. By this method his mind will always be contemplating the Master. And if you contemplate on a person intensely, you will one day imbibe the qualities of that person.

A person who destroys his ego, implicitly obeys his Master and worships the Lord with focused attention, is always dear to Him.

Actually, a true disciple is one who serves his Master and works according to the wishes of his Master. And it is in him that Shabd becomes manifest. All the difficulties of such a person are automatically resolved and his desires are fulfilled. However, it is very difficult to attain such a state because it can only come with the unbounded Grace of the Master.

Serving the Master is superior to all types of penance, all types of prayers, all types of recitals, and all types of pilgrimages by which man tries to purify himself.

Whose Service Should be Performed?

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It is written in Scriptures that we should serve Him who has created the entire world and who has given life to us, because through His service alone can we derive true benefit and gain honor in the Court of the Lord. Therefore, we should serve only the one Lord who has no equal, who provides us with food and shelter, who gives us father and mother, family and children, who is present in water on land and everywhere, and who grants livelihood to all. We should sacrifice everything in favor of His service, because by serving him we shall be free from the cycle of births and deaths.

Except for the service of the Lord, all pilgrimages, all holy baths in sacred waters, and all other types of worship are meaningless. If you serve other beings, you serve with some ulterior motive, but real service to God is not for material or other gains. Therefore, we should serve God out of sheer love for and devotion to Him. Otherwise, it is just like drinking a cup of poison while discarding the cup filled with Ambrosia, and putting ourselves to all kinds of difficulties and privations. All other kinds of service lead nowhere and are without any profit or purpose.

Man should, therefore, search for a Perfect Master who is able to give him the gift of Naam, the greatest of all Gifts, because by this gift we are freed from the shackles of coming and going. And we should have, as our aim of service, only the love of God and His Saints, who are God Incarnate.

The house (the body) that is devoid of such service is like a cemetery. But the service of the Saints is possible only through the abundant Grace of the Lord. And those who perform this service without ego, receive all the blessings of the Lord as well as of the Master, who is the embodiment of the Lord.

A study of the ancient history of India will reveal that in Sat Yuga (the True or Golden Age) and in Treta Yuga (the Silver Age), education was imparted by the Masters in places far removed from human habitations, and the student was wholly occupied physically, mentally and spiritually in the service of his Master. In the third yuga, that is the Dwapar (Copper or Bronze Age), this type of education began to disappear slowly and in its place idol worship started. In Kali Yuga (the Iron Age), which is the present age, such rendering of service to the Master has altogether disappeared except in the case of a rare few.

Even in the epic poem, Mahabharat, Arjuna was told by Lord Krishna in the famous Song Celestial known as Bhagavad Gita, about objective and subjective actions. In a nutshell, it amounts to saying that if a person offers all his actions at the altar of his Master, then whatever action he performs is without any punishment, and he will without doubt obtain release from the cycle of transmigration.

But now, in this formidable Kali Yuga (the Iron Age), God Almighty, in His abundant Grace, has sent His own Incarnations and Param Sants namely, Kabir, Guru Nanak and others, into this world to preach the doctrine of Master-Disciple Service. This tradition of Master-Disciple relationship continues today.

Sant Kirpal Singh, Baba Sawan Singh

CHAPTER 2. POSTURE (ASANAS)

Posture signifies sitting in a particular position and maintaining it firmly and for a certain length of time. Hatha Yoga describes numerous postures, and of these, eighty-four are well known. The practice of these postures confers many advantages because they are an aid to concentration.

They help to eliminate all bodily ailments and weaknesses. The organs, veins and arteries remain healthy and vigorous. There is no loss of heat in the solar plexus. The food is well digested and the respiration is regular. By this practice the body is brought under control. Further, a number of mental advantages also accrue, such as concentration, clarity of thought, deep insight, etc.

Every human being has body, mind and soul. By the intake of food the body does its work; through the body the mind is activated and through the mind the soul functions. The main purpose of human life is to know the self and to attain God-Realization. For the control of body and mind, the practice of Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga have long been in vogue among the Hindus. Hatha Yoga deals with the principles for breath control and of different postures. In Raja Yoga, on the other hand, the mind is stilled and its power is increased through contemplation and firm resolution to create a proper attitude of mind. Both of these methods aim at collecting the soul force at the eye center or the Third Eye.

Yoga has eight aspects:

Yam -Restraint

Ahimsa - Non-violence or abstinence from injury in thought, word or deed.

Satyam or Sat -Truthfulness.

Asteya or Astaiya - Not stealing, or abstaining from theft.

Brahmacharya - Continence or Celibacy.

Apregreha - Freedom from greed and covetousness, or negation of desire for possessions beyond the necessities of life.

Niyam -Observances

Suouch or Souch - Cleanliness or internal and external purity.

Santosh -Contentment.

Tapa - Self-discipline of the body, tongue and mind.

Swadhyaya - Study of self; also of Scriptures.

Ishwar Pranidhan - Self-surrender to the Will of God.

Asan -Posture

Pranayam - Practice of inhaling, holding the breath, then exhaling, ultimately holding the breath at one of the centers in the body for a longtime.

Pratyahar - Control of sense organs.

Dharma - Resolution or firmness for creating a proper attitude of mind for contemplation.

Dhyan -Contemplation

Smadhi - Super-consciousness or mystic trance.

The third aspect of yoga, viz., Asan, is relevant to the subject under consideration, namely, assuming a correct posture for meditation. If one does not remain steadfast in a particular posture but frequently changes position, the mind currents do not become concentrated. It is therefore essential that the desired posture should be maintained.

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Otherwise, the yogic exercises cannot be performed successfully.

In yogic practice, the blood vessels have to be first cleansed and purified. This is done by means of four types of postures: standing, sitting, lying flat on the floor, and standing on the head (with head on the floor and legs vertical). These four postures have their respective advantages, but, for our present purpose, it is not necessary to give a more detailed description of them.

Yogis have performed all the eighty-four postures without gaining the ultimate goal. They do not rid the mind of erratic or vicious thoughts. They are primarily for the benefit of the physical body, and do not lead to God-Realization. Obviously, if a medicine does not cure the ailment, it is useless. These postures require sustained effort without much profit. Sant Mat, therefore, deprecates such practices.

We have first to see which is the easiest posture by means of which our soul currents can be brought to the eye center and concentration attained, and, which a child, a young or an old person can adopt with equal ease. It is essential to be alert before starting the spiritual practice. The practitioner should take a bath to get over sloth and drowsiness. If for some reason this is not possible, one should at least wash the hands, feet and face. One should then sit cross-legged, keeping the back straight but neither stiff nor loose. It is essential that the spinal column remains erect. When doing the practice, one should sit on the floor or on a wooden cot. The practitioner should not support his back against a wall or a chair. He should be careful not to fall asleep. If one has to sit for a long period, one can use a Bairagan (arm rest) with advantage.

[In meditation instructions for Western disciples, Sant Kirpal Singh would later emphasize the need to sit in a comfortable position, not necessarily without the support of a chair:

He tells you to sit in a position most comfortable to you, one in which you can sit the longest without moving...].

Whatever posture one may adopt for his spiritual practice, he must satisfy himself that it causes no restlessness and that he can easily forget the body. The Saints have adopted a posture that is both easy and natural. They do not regard the different postures of Hatha Yoga to be essential for spiritual uplift. The posture adopted by the Saints is that by which the soul currents can be withdrawn from the nine apertures of the body to the soul's headquarters between the two eyebrows. And the consciousness has to be separated from the body. The mind is thus rid of all its ramblings.

The center between the two eyebrows is the spiritual heart center of the Saints. To free the consciousness from the body, it is necessary to still the mind and concentrate the mind's currents at this point. All cares of the mind are obliterated by this means.

One can obtain outstanding results by this posture, for the soul currents, which are scattered into the world through the nine apertures of the body, namely, two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth and two lower outlets, can collect at the eye center and descend upwards. The soul then contacts Naam or Truth at the Tenth Gate (Daswan Dwar), and finally it reaches Sach Khand, where ego, attachment, greed, desire, and lust leave it, and the cycle of births and deaths is ended.

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The Lord, who is formless, has His everlasting abode in the spiritual regions of Sach Khand. He is permanent and sustains the entire universe and the upper realms. His true abode is eternal and imperishable. He remains in the Sahaj state, which is attained by merging oneself into the Shabd or Sound Current (the Word or the Audible Life Stream).

His abode is free from fear. Reaching there, one transcends birth and death and the cycle of transmigration. It is beyond the three gunas or attributes, and lies in the fourth stage where there is neither sorrow nor fear. By attaining this state, the soul enters into communion with the Lord. The devotee and the Lord become one and never separate again. The cycle of birth and rebirth ceases. All doubts and suspicions come to an end.

The physical postures of the body end with death. The postures in the subtle regions above vanish with the dissolution of these regions, but the highest posture of 'Sahaj' is not subject to dissolution. It is endless and immortal, and by attaining it, one does not fall again. This posture is regarded in Scriptures as lasting and true. It can be realized by listening to the Shabd, which is also called Panj Shabd (Five Sounds), Guru Shabd or Naam. Its attainment is possible only through the Grace and the Guidance of the Master.

CHAPTER 3. REAL SATSANG

Today Satsang usually means a gathering where either music and singing, or the recitation of epics and stories, or discussions of spiritual subjects take place. A discourse by a learned person is also referred to as Satsang. When four or more persons sit together and sing the praises of the Lord, with or without the aid of an instrument, even this is known as Satsang.

But in the eyes of the Saints, Satsang connotes a much deeper meaning and has a much higher and purer aim. The gathering of worldly-minded people is not termed Satsang. Sat means Truth, and Sang means company. One who has the ideal of Truth established in his heart is the image of the Lord.

The Hindu Scriptures affirm that one who has the knowledge of Brahm is himself also Brahm. Similarly, one who has inculcated 'Truth' within himself is himself the Truth. There is no difference between the Truth and the True Lord (Sat Purush). Satguru is the light of the Truth.

Different persons exert different kinds of influences. The virtuous create an atmosphere of virtue, while the wicked create an atmosphere of evil.

The mind is a wonderful thing. It takes on the color of the company it keeps. It imbibes the attributes of what it dwells upon. If it keeps the company of worldly people, it

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also becomes worldly. On the other hand, if it lives among spiritual people it acquires spiritual tendencies. Therefore, if one is keen to gather spiritual knowledge, he must keep the company of those who are spiritually advanced and must keep his mind fixed on them.

Where a Satguru live, the entire environment is spiritualized by his body, mind, intellect and the mode of His life. His very presence greatly influences the people around Him. When a Satguru speaks or makes a movement of the hands or confers a gracious look, a special current of attention emanates from Him and creates a powerful influence on the minds of the audience.

This is subject to the condition that those in the audience are not entirely devoid of loving devotion or, like pieces of flint, are not incapable of understanding or accepting it. Such a current of attention helps the soul to ascend, and the person listening to such spiritual discourses greatly expands his esoteric knowledge.

We are like children who are ignorant of Spirituality, and the Satguru is a teacher par excellence of the subject.

Oh Ram! We are all children before God. Praise be to our Master who, through His teachings, has made us aware of Him. (Adi Granth, Moh. 4)

The audience that partakes of the fragrance of the Spirituality of Saints becomes saturated with its sweet perfume. The greatness of Satsang is unique indeed. All Scriptures and holy books sing its praise. In the Mahabharat the advantages of Satsang are described as follows:

Just as fragrant flowers spread their perfume to all things that are

nearby, be they earth, water or clothes, even so the company of the virtuous makes people noble. The company of the wicked creates an atmosphere of evil, while that of the Saints enlightens the soul with Truth and religion. It therefore behooves people to seek the company of the Saints in order to imbibe the blissful atmosphere that they radiate.

In this connection Maulana Rumsays:

I discovered one day scented earth in my bathroom. I asked it whether it was musk or amber, for I was completely fascinated by it. The earth replied: 'I once was merely earth, but because of my association with flowers every particle of my substance has been saturated with their fragrance and I have become scented. Without this association, I would have remained the same earth.' Therefore, O heart, sit for a moment in the company of the wise, with faith and purity of mind, or take to the association of a highly spiritualized soul in utter humility. If, however, you fail to find such company, do not waste your time but sit alone in meditation on the Lord.

We should so mold our lives that all our actions, namely, seeing, hearing, talking, eating, drinking, reading, writing, working and meeting with people, should ensure our progress. The company of evil people produces in us 'rajasik' and 'tamasik' tendencies, while the company of good and spiritual people engenders in us the 'satvik' tendencies that lead to spiritual awakening.

The following advantages accrue from Satsang:

By listen to God's Name and His attributes, one gains happiness and longs for union with Him.

By thinking of the Lord and reciting His Name, one begins to lose worldly attachments, gives up desires and sense pleasures, and earnestly longs for meeting the Lord.

Our mind is rid of lust and anger, and we become fear-

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less.

Our mind is filled with the love of the Lord and His creation. In the company of the Saints, none remains alien to us, none is our enemy. We become one with the universe.

By constant devotion and practice we become worthy of union with the Lord and begin to perceive His presence everywhere – both within and without.

An ocean of happiness, bliss and love wells up in our hearts.

By crossing the three gunas (qualities) and Turiya Pad, we attain Sahaj and thus reach the highest spiritual abode.

In the end, we merge into the Lord.

Through Satsang a person becomes free from the influence of the Negative Power and the evil designs of his mind. Yama – the Angel of Death – does not come near him and he is emancipated.

A person who keeps the company of Saints gains his object and is sustained at the time of his death. The company of evil persons leads to ruin. Therefore, we must abjure such company.

Oh Kabir, keep the company of Saints to obtain succor at the time of death. Shun the company of the wicked, which causes dismay at the end.

One who enjoys the Satsangs of spiritually-advanced souls goes beyond the domain of matter and mind. Whoever attends Satsang forgets himself. Just as a melon takes on the color of its neighbor, so does the Satsang – a fountainhead of Spirituality – bestow its benign drops on all who join it, and they become the embodiment of love. Where love abides, there appears a strange and unworldly love-intoxication. Whoever partakes of it burns away his cares and the dross of his mind, and begins to shine in his

pristine glory.

Satsang is a unique boon which the Master distributes free to both the learned and the ignorant. His overpowering grandeur, His refulgence and magnetic force attract each person according to his merit, with the result that they become oblivious of the world and its objects and completely lose track of time and the manner of its passage.

Lord Krishna has described Satsang in the following words:

Oh Udho! Neither yoga nor knowledge nor study of the Scriptures; neither austerities nor renunciation nor service to other; nor charity, nor worship, nor recitals nor pilgrimages, nor even suppression of the mind and senses can ever reach me with the ease that Satsang or the company of Saints does, freeing one of worldly influence.

Satsang is so unique that even God is enamored of it and it is incumbent on one therefore to try to find a Saint and either attend His Satsang or keep His company. For this alone can be the means of his salvation. If one obtains the company of a Saint and develops faith in Him, the fulfillment of his life's mission is ensured. So long as one does not find a Perfect Master one should prepare oneself by leading a chaste life, studying religious books and keeping the company of those who are spiritually inclined. But if by the Grace of God one is able to find a Saint who has attained God-Realization, one should imbibe His teachings and mold his life accordingly. This is real Satsang.

Sat (Truth) is another name for God. It abides in the Saints and their gatherings. In communities where per-

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sons who profess a particular faith live together, there are institutions for imparting their faith. As it is true that education can be had only in schools and colleges, that medicines can be procured only in hospitals, that heat is associated with ovens, and that moisture is inseparable from water, so also God resides where His devotees live.

Christ also said:

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (St. Matthew 18:20)

There rise the waves of love and devotion. There bliss and grace confer peace upon all. The world is a furnace ablaze, where all creatures suffer torture. Their pitiable condition is deserving of mercy. The Satsang of Saints is a priceless blessing, and is the heaven of the agonized. Those who depend on it with all their being cross the ocean of the world and realize Naam.

If the waters of rivers and rivulets, on joining the Ganges, lose their own identity; if the knife of the butcher turns into gold on touching the philosopher's stone; if a margosa tree growing near a sandalwood tree imbibes its fragrance; if it is true that whatever is kept in a salt mine becomes salt; then there need be no doubt that whoever goes to Satsang is dyed in its color. You may be good or bad. There is nothing to worry about. You should gain the company of a Saint and listen to His Satsang. The fresh air of His invigorating Spirituality will bestow upon you the same spiritual health and freshness, and in a short time you will become good yourself. Then the qualities of virtue will manifest themselves within you. Listening to the Satsang with your mind and heart, and relishing it, you will easily gain control over your sense, and your soul will become steady in the company of Saints and Sadhus.

Maulana Rumi says:

The desires of the mind will never die without the perfecting hands of the Master.

Tulsi Sahib, the Saint of Hathras, says:

The soul can be steadied only in the company of a Saint. When this happens, the mind becomes motionless. There is no other method for controlling the mind.

By drinking the drops of nectar that flow from Satsang, you will become an innocent child of Spirituality.

Bhai Gur Das says:

Satsang dyes both the good and the bad. They imbibe its color, just as an evil-smelling fluid poured into the fast-flowing Ganges becomes Ganges water and takes its form. In the same way, a person inhaling the perfume of Satsang becomes stable of mind.

Again Bhai Gur Das says:

A disciple becomes a Saint in the company of Saints, just as water thrown into the Ganges loses its identity and becomes the same as the water of the Ganges. A river flows into the ocean and becomes the fathomless ocean itself. Similarly, the ocean-like company of a Saint makes His disciples become like Him. Just as the sweet fragrance of flowers gives serenity and peace to the mind, similarly the sight or Darshan of a Saint brings peace and calmness. Just as the Anahad Shabd is the bestower of all gifts, similarly the company of the virtuous transforms even a man of utter ignorance into one of high spiritual consciousness.

A Dhak tree growing in the vicinity of a sandalwood tree takes on the fragrance of sandalwood. The effect of

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association is indeed great. The tree that grows near a sandalwood tree is indeed fortunate. In all the four castes and the four religious orders, no matter how greatly a person has fallen, he will give up his bad habits and tendencies and imbibe the hue of Satsang. By repairing to Satsang the lowly gain high status. Just as iron becomes gold on coming in contact with the philosopher's stone, so does a person gain in value and honor by coming in contact with a Saint.

The ever-merciful Lord abides within. Through following the precepts of the Master, we are released from the cycle of birth and rebirth. Such is the greatness of Satsang that, like the philosopher's stone, it transforms the iron-like sinner into a gold-like being of virtue. The lowly is raised on high. One who is worthless becomes precious.

Go to Satsang and lovingly contemplate upon the Master and the Lord. Your thoughts, words and deeds will automatically become pure. You will find that through Satsang the spiritual wealth that can be obtained as a result of following the various kinds of yoga will come your way without any difficulty or effort on your part.

Those who attend Satsang automatically listen, ponder over, and visualize the form of the Satguru who is giving the discourse. They do not need to read any outside books, because Satsang deals with them in a practical way. It is not the books alone that are medium for attaining knowledge. Knowledge can be gained by listening to Satsang.

Look at a blind man. By listening alone he has become learned. By intently listening we can imbibe new knowledge. When a particular subject is discussed in Satsang all the listeners think of the same subject simultaneously,

with the result that the entire environment is saturated with the thought-currents. The entire audience benefits thereby, and the subject leaves an indelible impression on the minds of those present.

Together with the thought-currents, the waves of spirituality that emanate from the Master during His discourse help to make the subject matter clear so that everyone can comprehend it thoroughly. In this way the dirt of evil thoughts gets washed away, the gloom of ignorance vanishes, and in its place emerges the light of knowledge.

If a person is able to attend the Satsang of a Master with attention, steadfastness and faith, the filth of his mind is easily washed away and he becomes capable of increasing faith and understanding.

So long as the mirror of one's mind is not cleansed, the words of the Master do not have their full effect. As the purity of mind increases, the words of the Satguru begin to have a more penetrating effect within. By listening to His words, one becomes absorbed in them, so much so that he even beholds glimpses of the Master's radiance within. It appears as if there were two bodies, but only one breath. The vision of the same Light enlivening both comes into view. A melon takes color from another melon. Likewise, one who attends Satsang begins to assume the form of the Master. When this is accomplished, no lack of anything remains. Whatever wealth of goodness one has gathered, it is entirely the fruit of the company of the virtuous. Satsang is a very powerful means, and through it one rapidly gains emancipation.

Sat also means life. The company of a living person is Satsang. The Scriptures point out that wherever there is a Master there is Satsang. Satsang is dependent upon a

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Master, and it can be had only through Him.

By remaining in the company of a spiritually awakened soul one is virtually reborn. The animal life in him comes to an end, and he begins to realize his spiritual kinship with God. He becomes karmaless (actionless), and the dross of evil wears away. A person who boards the ship of Naam easily crosses the ocean of phenomena.

Even as iron floats when it is in association with wood, so also, by keeping the company of Saints, one is automatically filled with the remembrance of the Lord and develops an intense yearning to realize Him. In Satsang the Master, through His spiritual currents, bestows the gift of new life on the devotees, with the result that like moths they sacrifice themselves on the Fountainhead of Light and become one with it. For then, their life does not remain their own. It becomes that of the Master. Thus they attain the state of completely merging in the Master.

Kabir says:

When I was, He was not. When He is, I am not. The lane of love is so narrow that it can hold one but not both.

There is no Satsang worthy of the name without a Master, because the Satguru is the bestower of Shabd, and without Shabd nobody can cross the ocean of life. While eulogizing Satsang, the Scriptures hold that, that alone is Satsang where Naam alone is exalted and discussed. Such a Satsang can be obtained only from a Master. By devoting oneself wholly to the Master with mind and body, and completely surrendering to the Will of the Master, one can easily realize Naam and merge in it.

By touching the philosopher's stone iron turns into

gold. It gains in value, but it does not become a philosopher's stone. How can one adequately exalt Satsang? Whoever abides by Satsang becomes a Saint. Joining Naam, one merges in it and gains life everlasting. Then is one forever freed from the treadmill of life and death.

There is no Satsang without true Saints and Sages, but it is hard to recognize them. The only touchstone we have is our limited intellect, and it is dyed in the dye of the world and is filled with the poison of sense pleasures. This touchstone is incapable of assaying the transcendental Lord who is free of all worldly blemishes. Although Saints are innocent of all evil, still we cannot comprehend their eminence, bereft as our intellect is of love and faith. We often attribute things to them that have no basis whatever in reality.

Saints display no signboards by which they may be known. In the world we have many persons who are not Saints, but who go about ostentatiously with an air of saintliness about them. On the other hand, a real Saint leads an ordinary life and does not reveal Himself to others. We can recognize Saints only when, through their Grace, they reveal themselves.

How can a blind man ever recognize anyone by means of his eyes? Our inner vision is shut. So long as it does not open, we cannot perceive the glory of the Saints. Lack of faith and perseverance stand in our way. Short of faith, we test them with our imperfect touchstone and fail to recognize True Saints. There is many a Saint who keeps concealed so carefully that it is very difficult for anyone to detect them. As a consequence, only a few people go to them. At the same time, the world is full of deceit and wickedness. For this reason, the seekers of Truth are enjoined to make their search with care so that they will not

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regard each and everyone as a Saint.

The lives of Saints exercise a powerful influence. They possess a magnetic force. Their mind, body and spirit radiate waves of noble and virtuous thoughts. They have complete control over their mind and senses. In their company our own mind and senses become stable and no longer wander, with the result that we begin to be dyed in the Lord's Grace.

Where we perceive this to be taking place, it is there that a real Saint resides. Keep His company. In contrast to this, however noble a bearing a person may have, if in his company evil thoughts continue to exist or increase, or a longing for the remembrance and the love of the Lord does not emerge, it is best to shun his company.

In the Bhagavad, Kapi Rishi, (God Incarnate) describes a genuine Saint thus:

Whom poverty does not dismay, nor pleasures make happy; who are models of calmness and mercy, who are the selfless friends of all and regard none as their enemy; whose minds are marked with singleness of purpose; who accepting the Truth about God offer Me loving devotion, renounce the fruits of all their actions for My sake and turn away from their worldly relations; who having complete faith in Me sing My praises, and have their minds fixed on Me. Such people are free from all worldly ties and do not run after sense pleasures. It is they who are worthy of My association.

He says further:

Who is merciful, who is the enemy of none; who is steadfast and true; who is pure of mind and regards all alike; who tries to do good to others; whose mind is rid of desires and cravings; who has control over his senses; who is tender-hearted and of noble and pure character; who is humble and devoid of desires; whose hab-

its are under control; who has a serene and firm mind; who has surrendered himself to Me; who is constantly dwelling upon My transcendental attributes, who has no weaknesses; who is sober and contented, who has conquered hunger and thirst, sorrow and deception, life and death, and the other ills of life, etc.; who does not wish to be venerated by anybody but himself; who respects everybody; who fulfills his obligations and responsibilities; who is a friend of all; who is full of kindness and knowledge; such a person is verily a Saint.

In the Mahabharat, Bhisham describes to Yudishtra the characteristics of those in whose company one loses the fear of life and death, and gains salvation.

They are vegetarians. They love or hate no one. The virtuous life is dear to them. Their senses are under control. They regard joy and sorrow alike. They are truthful and benevolent. They accept no charity from others, while they are themselves charitably disposed. They serve their guests. They afford comfort to everybody. They help everybody. They are courageous. They follow the path of Truth. They are the friend of all, and in time of need are prepared to sacrifice everything. They remain steadfast on the path of Truth. Their conduct and bearing are in accordance with the tenets of their religion. They talk ill of no Saint nor Seer. They are a menace to none, nor are they frightening. They live a noble life with determination, and bear a feeling of non-violence towards all. They are free from lust, anger, attachment and ego. They do their duty and follow religion for its own sake, and not for securing fame and wealth. They are naturally inclined towards religion. Just as they have their daily bath, eat their daily food and satisfy other physical needs, so also is religion part and parcel of their daily life. They have no fear, sorrow, or ire. They are truthful and honest. They do not rejoice over gains, nor do they grieve over losses. They are of Satogun temperament and maintain their equanimity under all conditions.

The pairs of opposites such as gain and loss, joy and sorrow, love and hatred, life and death, fail to perturb

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their mind. They are firm and strong in their resolve. They attain a high stage and tread the path of Truth with great resolution.

The Gita also gives the criterion for recognizing the Saints, describing them as those who have crossed the three gunas, and describing the attributes of those who have become one with the One Lord.

Jar Bharat (King of India/Bharat) says:

It is not possible to gain the esoteric knowledge and the love of the Lord through good deeds, charities, reading Scriptures, or worship of water, fire or sun. It can only be had by sitting at the Lotus Feet of a Saint and manifesting His radiance within.

Lord Krishna says in Bhagavad:

Oh Udho! Just as a person near the fire is free from cold, fear and darkness; so a person in the company of a Saint is free from the evil effects of his sins – the fear of life and death, and the darkness of ignorance. Just as a boat saves a drowning person, so do Saints – the embodiment of peace – rescue drowning humanity from the fearsome phenomena of the world. Just as food sustains a man, so am I the support of suffering humanity. Just as the wealth of Dharma (religious life) comes to our aid in the world beyond, so does the company of Saints save frightened souls from this vast ocean of the world.

Rishi Kapil says:

This everybody knows, that association is the cause of eternal bondage which is difficult to break; but if association is made with the Saints, it throws open the gate of salvation.

Satsang is of two kinds:

Outer Satsang by Saints, by means of which the mind is cleansed, the recipient becomes worthy of a spiritual life and takes to the practice of Naam.

Inner Satsang, by means of which the soul unites with the Lord and merges in Him.

The Bhagavad says:

Association with those who have become one with the Lord is far more elevating than the celestial pleasures of the heavens or even the happiness of salvation. The kingdom of this world and the pleasures of this life are as nothing compared to their exalted company. But association with such Saints comes only with the infinite Grace of the Lord.

Tulsi Sahib, the Saint of Hathras, says:

The company of Saints and the Name of God are both rare. They alone can get them who have the Grace of the Lord.

The Sikh Scriptures also point out:

The company of Saints is true devotion to the Lord. This is the highest form of worship. But it is the privilege only of those on whom descends the Grace of the Lord. Saints who value the love of the Lord even above salvation are not altogether absent from this world, but they are rare.

Kabir also says:

Just as in a forest one does not find herds of lions, nor flocks of swans, nor bags of diamonds, so one does not come across a group of Saints.

When one has an intense desire to meet a Saint, then he does so with the infinite Grace of God. Seeing them by their Darshan,

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touching them, listening to their words, keeping their company, and remembering them are all means of making spiritual progress. Even if we do not know them, one moment's attentive Darshan is enough to dispel ignorance and wash away sins, and is highly rewarding. It is superior to the devoted worship of many years.

Maulana Rumi also asserts:

One moment of the company of a Saint is more rewarding than a hundred years of devoted service.

The two kinds of Satsang, outer and inner, may be explained thus: One -outer Satsang - is an effort to kindle a fire, while the other - inner Satsang - is like sitting near a fire and escaping from the cold while also accomplishing many other tasks. One who associates with a Saint has his soul awakened by the spiritual currents emanating from Him.

The second state - inner Satsang - is therefore supremely superior. Although even a glimpse of a Saint is productive of great benefit, it is also essential for the disciples to render physical service, to obey implicitly the Saint's instructions, and to carry out fully the spiritual discipline taught by Him. If a person renders service to a true devotee, even that has some merit. Such service does not connote keeping company or doing service with the body. Keeping company with the Saints is doubtless beneficial. Even the Mahabharata lays down:

The very company of a Perfect Saint is conducive to spiritual progress, even when the devotee does little else. It is only natural that in the company of the virtuous we acquire virtue, and in the company of sinners we acquire sin, even if we partake of nothing.

The highest service is to mold one's life according to the

directions of the Saints and to follow the Path marked out by them.

Service is of four kinds: with body, with mind, with wealth, and with the soul. Of these, service with the soul is the best. Those who keep the company of Saints but do not mold their life as enjoined by them, render no service in the real sense of the term. But those who live in their company with their permission and carry out their directions gain much from their company.

Even if one does not see much evidence of the benefit from such company, there is no need to be discouraged, because the impressions of previous lives on our minds are so thick that they take time to wear off. The impressions of past lives become passive in the first instance, and then gradually become altogether obliterated. So long as these impressions do not entirely vanish, a person should continue to render service to the Saints. He should have implicit faith that one day they will altogether disappear.

Ibrahim Adham, the King of Bokhara, had to remain with Kabir Sahib for a number of years. After serving him for some time, he appeared to be very calm, quiet and serene in nature. One day Kabir's wife, Loi, requested the Saint to initiate him. Kabir, who was aware of Ibrahim Adham's inner progress said,

The receptacle is not yet ready.

On Loi's insistence the Saint said:

When Ibrahim Adham goes out of the house throw a basket of sweepings over him from the roof.

When this was done, Ibrahim exclaimed:

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Oh! How I wish I were in Bokhara. Then I could have taught the guilty person a lesson. When Kabir was told of this he remarked: Did I not say that the vessel was unclean?

After a few more years had passed, the Saint one day told his wife, The vessel is now clean. Loi said, Outwardly he is still the same and renders service as quietly as he did before. On hearing this Kabir said,

The previous time you merely threw house sweepings on him. This time throw a basket full of filth and, concealing yourself, listen to what he says. When Ibrahim came out of the house the Saint's wife threw the filth on his head, spoiling all his clothes. Looking up quietly he said,

I am grateful to the person who has thrown this rubbish on my head. May God's Grace be upon him.

It takes a long time to eradicate the inner impressions. It simply cannot be hurried. One should continue to have the daily company of Saints and their Darshan. Kabir says:

Oh God, I ask not supernatural powers. I only want the Darshan of Saints daily. Every time I fold my hands to pray I make this request, 'Grant me, Oh Lord, the company of Saints every day.' That day is really a memorable one when I meet a Saint! I embrace Him heartily and burn away all my sins. The day I do not meet a Saint is wasted. Life without love is no better than that of a beast. And there can be no devotion without the Lord. God hearkens to me but I begin to weep, for the bliss that comes from the company of Saints is nowhere to be found in heaven.

Blessed is that moment when I have a glimpse of a Saint. Living with the True Naam, I attain the goal of my life.

One Special Advantage

We come across many charitable and philanthropic persons who try to remove the suffering of people in the world. When someone is ill and suffers privation, these persons give them medicine. They render service. But we see no one who can take upon himself the pains of others. This is the greatness only of the Saints. To be with them is indeed a pilgrimage where all sins are washed away.

*They bestow happiness, alleviate suffering and remove all faults.
Oh Kabir! Where can I get the company of such loving Saints?*

In the Sar Bachan, Swami Ji also reiterates

Saints are merciful, but we do not heed their advice. They reveal to us the secret of life and put us in contact with the Word. They take the human form and live in the world. Through their grace they help humanity to find the true path. They even carry the load of karmas. Even then no one follows them.

Remember this well: Saints are free from the wanderings of the mind and from sense pleasures, for through rigid discipline they have washed away all their past impressions. They do not have even the faintest tinge of them. We should try to find such a Saint and take refuge in Him. If the seeker is truly sincere, then by the Grace of God he will certainly come across one and will be redeemed. Therefore, we should try to have the company of Saints as much as possible. Rishi Narad laid great stress on the benefit of the company of Saints. He says:

Worship only the Saints.

Satsang is a powerful spiritual school or college where practical lessons are imparted in spirituality and love.

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Satsang is a wonderful workshop where the tangles of the mind are set straight, and one is so chiseled that he can realize himself and God. Sahjo Bai has beautifully described the greatness of Satsang in the following words:

Satsang, or the company of a Saint, ushers in Light and dispels darkness. But such company is difficult to obtain. Satsang is a sacred place where flow the waters of discernment; and bathing in them brings all the four salvations. Whoever comes to the Satsang of a Saint loses the sense of caste, creed and color, like the muddy waters that become pure and clear by joining the Ganges water. By the company of Saints a crow turns into a swan. Giving up filthy food, it picks up pearls as its repast.

Guru Arjan eulogizes Satsang in the following words:

In the company of Saints the face brightens and ugliness vanishes. In their company arrogance is shed and humility takes its place. In their company God becomes near and the mission of life is fulfilled.

The spiritual influence of Saints is indeed great. By their magnanimity, which acts like the philosopher's stone, the wicked become virtuous, thieves give up stealing, the drunkard gives up drinking, and evil-doers abandon their evil habits. History is full of instances of such a nature. Through the glory of Saints, Sadana – a butcher, Ganika – a prostitute, Valmiki – a dacoit and Sajjan – a thug, all became Saints.

Satsang is an exalted place of pilgrimage. It removes millions of sins of numerous past lives, making the mind pure and clear. Just as fire burns away the dross of gold and makes it pure, so does the company of Saints burn away the sins of past lives and make a person pure.

There is no more complete and useful a machine for

transforming evil thoughts into noble ones than Satsang. In the company of the virtuous, one imbibes virtue and becomes free of all blemishes and sins. Spiritually evolved souls always fill the environment in which they live with currents of purity. Even the worst of sinners cannot escape their influence but turn noble; and in the company of Saints, one is dyed in the hue of the Lord.

Maulana Rumi says:

The face of a Saint is the answer to every question, because in His presence all our difficulties are automatically resolved without our even mentioning them.

Bathing in the holy waters of Satsang proves immediately fruitful. Maulana Rumi says:

If you wish to meet the Lord go and sit at the Lotus Feet of a Saint, because His company, even for a moment, is better than a hundred years of sincere prayer.

The true Mosque lies within the Saints, and that is the place for our worship. Crows and cranes, like us, that live on the filth of sense pleasures become transformed into swans by partaking of the Ambrosial Name.

Tulsi Das says:

Do not be surprised to hear of such transformations, because the value of the company of Saints is hidden.

The very sight of Saints rids us of sense cravings. History speaks of instances where the sight (Darshan) of Guru Nanak, Kabir, Naam Dev and Jesus Christ purified the hearts even of fallen women. Master Kirpal Singh giving Satsang with Hazur

CHAPTER 4. CLEANLINESS

All the religions place emphasis on observing cleanliness. Amongst the Hindus purity or cleanliness is the last rule of the eightfold yoga (Ashtang Yoga) and some other yogas. In preparing for the eightfold yoga, the body is cleaned in various ways:

Nasal Douche (Neti Karam). A piece of thin cotton cord is softened by dipping it in some fat. One end is inserted in one nostril and is then passed out through the other nostril. The two ends are then pulled up and down. By this process, the inner nasal region is cleaned.

Cloth Stomach Douche (Dhoti Karam). A bandage of fine cloth 3 to 5 inches wide and 10 to 20 yards long is used. It is wetted with water. A portion of it is daily swallowed until the whole can be swallowed. The upper end is held firmly by the teeth. The cloth is then slowly taken out. The internal part of the stomach is cleaned by this process.

Enema (Wasti Karam). In this process one sits in water up to his navel. A hollow bamboo stick about one finger broad and four fingers long is passed up the anus. Water is drawn up through the stick and then thrown out. The internal portion below the stomach is thus cleaned. In a way, it is like taking an enema.

Intestinal Douche (Neauli Karam). In this process one sits with his shoulders level and back straight. The stomach is drawn in and the intestine is churned from right to left. The inner air is expelled and the inside is cleaned.

Stomach Water Douche (Guj Karam). In this process one drinks as much water as one can and then vomits it out through the mouth. By this the inside is washed clean.

Sex Organ Douche (Bajroli Karam). In this process water is drawn through the penis and is then expelled. The inside is thus cleaned.

After performing these processes a yogi practices fixation of the gaze. In this practice the gaze is first fixed on the tip of the nose, and is then withdrawn to its root. When this practice is perfected, the attention is taken to the inner chakras. By this practice divine sight is obtained.

The thoughts of other persons can be read and the foundation is laid for access to finer regions. By this practice the obstruction of Bhujang or Kundalini Nari to Sushumna Nari is removed. The tongue is lengthened until it can touch the eyebrows. It is then taken inside and is used to close or plug the palate. The nectar which drops from the moon which is seen on the left side of the region of Trikuti is then enjoyed.

Gurus do not say that the performing of these acts results in salvation. All of them, in fact, are considered to be useless if one does not practice devotion to the Lord. The Gurus say that even if one does all the six practices to perfection but has no devotion to the Lord, he is like a sweeper. No knowledge is obtained without a Master. The follower of these practices still remains drowned in ignorance. In spite of all this purification, the inner defect is not removed. Without Naam these acts are no more than

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the feats of mystery-mongers.

If one does six prescribed deeds but if in him there is no devotion to the Lord, no praising of the feet of the Lord or reciting of His merciful actions, such a man is like a sweeper. (Ravi Das, Kedara, 1124)

One who engages in cleaning the intestines (Neauli Karam) and works like a furnace by practicing inhalation and retention of breath gets no knowledge without a Master and is drowned in ignorance. The blind one washes again and again but the inner dirt is not removed. Without the Name all actions are fruitless like the misleading tricks of magic man. (Prabhati M1, 1348-5)

Amongst the Muslims, ablutions are compulsory before saying prayers. By this the outside of the body is cleaned. By keeping fasts the inside of the body is cleaned. Both Christians and Buddhists pay great attention to cleanliness. Amongst the Sikhs, the Nirmalas and Namdharis (puritan sects of Sikhs) place great emphasis on frequent bathing. Of the three principal religious practices (Naam, charity and bathing), bathing or cleanliness is one. It includes purity of the body, mind and intellect.

The elderly orthodox ladies consider bathing at sacred places to be cleanliness. One should put the sacred mark on the forehead, do worship, and not touch the clothes or other belongings of sweepers or others who belong to low castes. If one happens to touch them, one should bathe.

If one happens to take food from a person of low caste, he should also do penance. Then alone he becomes purified. It cannot, however, be denied that baths are necessary for cleanliness and good health.

But how can external cleanliness be of any help if the inner pot is dirty? One should speak the truth and have

truthful conduct before he can be said to be pure. To be proud of being a Brahmin by birth is useless. He who knows the Lord (Brahm) is really a Brahmin. He who knows the Truth (God) is truthful and pure. The key to knowing the Truth can only be obtained from a Master. Real purity cannot be had without serving a Master. Guru Arjan Sahib says,

He alone is a king who gathers the wealth of Truth.

Guru Nanak says:

Nanak considers the True One to be True. (Sri Rag M3, 1518)

Truth can only be known through the Truth which is with the Saints alone. He alone is rich who gathers the true treasure of the Lord's Name.

Nanak gathers the true purity which is with the Saints. (Gauri M5, 250-16)

Guru Nank Sahib says that only the bathing of those who practice Truth is fruitful.

Only the bathing of those who practice Truth is approved. (Wadhans M1, 565)

Purification cannot be achieved by external bathing alone. It can only be had by bathing in the internal pool of nectar. This is possible only by searching within one's own body.

Inside the body is the true Pool of Nectar. The mind can drink it with devotion. (Maru M3, 1946-5)

By reaching the Pool of Nectar the three covers of the

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soul (gross, subtle and ethereal) and the bondage of the gunas (qualities), mind, Maya and the five elements are all removed and the soul becomes pure.

By bathing in the inner Pool of Pure Nectar the mind becomes cleaned and absorbed in Truth. (Asa M3, 363)

Man is full of the poisons of his defects. By washing the body the inner poisons are not removed. It is recorded that Guru Amar Das Ji, in his early years, led a clean and well regulated life as prescribed by the Scriptures, and visited the Ganges every year with his companions.

After he had surrendered to Guru Angad Ji, his companions, when they were on their way to the Ganges, came to see him. In order to make them understand true purity, he gave them a bitter gourd bowl and asked them to dip it in the Ganges whenever they bathed. When they were returning from the pilgrimage they met Guru Amar Das Ji and gave the bowl back, telling him that they had bathed it in the Ganges as he had requested. Guru Sahib cut it into two, put water in it, and then gave the water to them for drinking. It tasted bitter. Guru Sahib asked them why its bitterness had not gone in spite of its having been bathed in sacred waters. Kabir Sahib asks,

What is the good of cleaning the body as long as the mind is full of poison?

A bowl may be bathed in the sixty-eight sacred spots of the Hindus, but it still will not lose its bitterness.

What is the good of cleaning the mind if there is poison inside? The bowl was bathed in sixty-eight sacred spots, but its bitterness was not removed. (Kabir, Sorath, 656)

In the same way, merely cleaning the body does not result in removing the poison from the inner body. Guru Nanak says that by washing the body one does not become pure. Only they are pure in whose hearts the Lord dwells.

They are not pure who wash the outer body. Oh Nanak, only those are pure in whose heart He dwells. (Asa War M1, 472)

Guru Arjan says that one cannot become pure by bathing at sacred spots while ego still reigns in the heart.

How can one become pure by bathing at a sacred spot, when the mind is full of the poison of egotism? (Bharoen M5, 1149)

He further says that a man may go on cleaning himself day and night, but he will not remove the dirt of the mind by washing the body. He may take great pains to clean the body, but the poison of the mind is not removed. He may wash this impure body with water again and again, but how can the mind become pure?

He cleans the body day and night, but the dirt of the mind is not removed. By cleansing or washing the body in any way the poison of the mind is not removed. He washed the body with water constantly. How then can the mind become pure? (Gauri M5, 265)

Kabir Sahib says to the same effect that one who is full of the poison of sense attachments cannot obtain salvation by bathing at sacred spots. If bathing could lead to salvation then the frog which bathes constantly would not be born again and again.

If one with inner uncleanness bathes in sacred spots he does not go to heaven. Nothing comes from trying to please the worldly people, for the Lord is not unaware. Worship the one Lord God. Practice the true Name and serve the Master. If one were to gain

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salvation by bathing, then the frog which bathes constantly would not be born again and again. (Kabir, Asa,484)

Guru Nanak Sahib says that when the heart is full of untruth and attachment, what is the good of bathing?

When the mind is full of the poison of avarice and falsehood, what is the use of bathing? When the devotee constantly repeats the pure Name, then only is the inner mind purified. (Sorath M1, 593)

The dirty clothes of the body can be cleaned with water, but the dirt of sins can only be washed away with the dye of the Name.

When the hands, feet and the body are besmeared they are washed clean with water; when the clothes get dirty and polluted, they are cleansed by soap; when one's mind gets defiled by sin, it can be purified only by communion with the Word. (Jap Ji, Stanza 20)

Gurus say that outer cleanliness or untouchability is false cleanliness. If the inside is impure, no good can be achieved by washing the outside. The uncleanness really pertains to the mind. By telling a lie the tongue and the body both become impure and untruth flows out of the mouth.

How can that man then be pure? One who indulges in evil thinking, cruelty, backbiting, lust, anger, fear, attachment, pride or bad company becomes degraded. In order to gain real purity one should avoid these things. It is of benefit to keep away from bad company. What is the use of remaining in such company and sitting with evil people?

If the mind is impure, the body is also impure, and so is the tongue. He who is false of mouth speaks untruth, and how can he be pure?

(*Sri Rag M1, 55*)

Evil intentions are drummer women, heartlessness is a butcheress, backbiting is an untouchable. What is the use of drawing a circle around yourself when all these are within you? (Sri Rag War M1, 91)

Until all these things stop entering our mind, the heart cannot become pure. It is only by getting such purity that we are able to attain Truth.

Oh Nanak, only the true and the pure know the Truth. (Sri Rag M1, 15)

Guru Nanak Sahib says that one should contemplate on Truth, but it is only when one is pure that Truth can be had.

Oh Nanak, Truth should be contemplated, but only the true can find the Truth. (Asa War M1, 472)

By simply reading the Scriptures or having discussions about them one cannot become pure. True purity can only be obtained by love and devotion for the Lord.

One does not gain salvation by mere discussion or recital, or by reading many books. The body becomes pure only when there is love and devotion for the Lord. (Sri Rag M1, 59-4)

In reality, persons of low mentality are untouchables, rather than sweepers, cobblers, minstrels and bards. The real seeker should therefore give up rituals and undertake inner purification according to the directions of a Master and thus realize the Lord. He should drive out all thoughts except those of the Lord, so that the Lord may reveal Himself. Tulsi Sahib says that one should clean the

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cell of the heart so that the Lord may enter it. He should exclude thoughts of all others from the heart so that the Lord may dwell in it.

Clean the cell of the heart for the Beloved, banish all thoughts of others to make room for Him.

Gurus describe the clean body as one in which the true Name of the Lord is dwelling. True cleanliness is achieved by the inner practice of the Shabd. That heart is pure in which there is devotion for the deathless Lord and Master.

*That body is pure where dwells the true Name; that one is true who fears the Lord; and that tongue is true which sings His praises.
(Sri Rag M1, 19)*

Real cleanliness is achieved by good fortune by being absorbed in the Shabd, or by the Lord coming to dwell within.

When one unites with the Shabd one becomes possessed of right conduct, and gets glory in the True Court; he becomes absorbed in the Jewel of the Name; this is true from age to age. (Prabhati M1, 1332)

He who has great good fortune, oh Nanak, repeats the true and pure Name. (Asa M3, 377)

It is necessary to be clean both inside and outside. Have a clean body, speak good words. But unless pure thoughts arise inside, nothing pure can come out. It is, therefore, very necessary that the thoughts should be pure. Out of the fullness of his heart a man speaks. Therefore, be pure of heart and tongue. Outer cleanliness is the beginning of inner purity. Unless the body is clean the mind cannot be pure. If the heart is not clean, how can the soul be

clean? The body can be kept clean by bathing and putting on clean clothes. Cleanliness is next to godliness. Do not utter any unkind or harmful words. Use words that sound sweet to all. Cleanliness of the heart consists in not entertaining any evil thoughts. Unite yourself with the Name and thus get rid of all impure thoughts and attain cleanliness or purity of the soul.

CHAPTER 5. DHARMA

Duties

What are Duties (Dharma) and how can they be recognized?

The word “Dharma” is from the root “Dhar” which means to adopt or to sustain. The principle which sustains the entire universe and keeps it in equilibrium is Dharma. Some say that earth is resting on the horns of a bull; others say that it is balanced on the head of a snake. Guru Nanak in Jap Ji has explained that all the universe is sustained by Dharma, which springs out of mercy and is kept in harmony by contentment.

*Dharma born of mercy keeps it in equilibrium with contentment.
(Jap Ji, 3-12)*

Religious scriptures (Shastras) have enumerated ten organs of Dharma:

Forgiveness, non-violence, mercy, sweetness, truth speaking, austerities and charities, character, purity and contentment, know them to be the ten organs of Dharma. (Saruktvali)

All creeds have their own principles but these are common to all. Those who are fond of Name, to them Name is Dharma.

Dharma is the treasure of all comforts and benefits all.

That Name sustains all.

The Name sustains all the regions and universes. (Gauri M5, 284-12)

The followers of Name are conscious co-workers and understand the Will of the Lord. They in a way get connected with Dharma. All these acts are within its sphere and they are the embodiment of Dharma.

Mind is united to Dharma. (Jap Ji, 3-9)

Hindu Shastras mention four feet of Dharma. Manu Ji says, "Dharma has four feet." In Vishnu Puran the four feet are stated to be truth, sacrifice (charity, etc.), worship (right conduct, etc.) and remembrance (Sirnran). Ravidas says to the same effect.

In Satyug truth, in Treta Yajna sacrifices, and in Dwapar worship and piety reigned supreme. After the three Yugas they fell into abuse and in Kali Yuga one's only mainstay is the Name. (Ravidas, Gauri, 346-10)

Bhai Gurdas also mentions four feet of Dharma.

The four feet of Dharma are four varnas but all have become one. (War, 6-23)

In the Sanskrit dictionary known as Shabd Kosh Chintamani, the four feet of Dharma are described as follows:

The first foot of Dharma is truth. This is so said in Vedas. The second foot is purity, the third foot is mercy and the fourth foot is charity. The Puranas say to the same

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effect.

Bhai Mani Singh has described Name, charity, bathing and knowledge as four feet of Dharma. Its chief principles are:

Name.

Charity: mercy and sacrifice are included in it. To wish well of all with the heart, to forgive all, to consider all wealth as belonging to the Lord and to enjoy it by sharing it with all, is real charity.

Bathing: it includes worship, right conduct, purification, etc. Cleanliness of body also falls within it. Cleanliness is next to godliness. To rid the mind of evil tendencies (falsehood, killing; deceit, etc.), the intellect of evil thoughts, and reason of doubts, and to still the mind is real purification.

Knowledge: to procure real good. Guru Ram Das says that when the mind gets fixed, all the four feet are achieved by the seeker.

In the Sat Yuga all were embodiments of contentment. The Dharma (Religion) then rested upon all fours. (Asa M4, 445-5)

The comprehensive name for the above virtues is humanity. This is the appearance of the virtues of the Eternal One and His knowledge in the mind, intellect, reason, action and speech in some pure-hearted person who wishes well of everybody. He, out of grace and compassion, does not mind the faults of the people, lightens their burden of hardships and sufferings and strengthens their souls.

Dharma comprises those deeds, by knowing and right-

ly performing which, peace in the world and union with the Lord is obtained. Those actions which benefit either the doers or others are included in Dharma, but not if they lead to sufferings. The true criterion for recognizing Dharma is also the same. If suffering results from observing Dharma, there is some mistake in understanding it.

In Mahabharat, when Karan destroyed the army of Yudhishter, there was great panic. He sent for Arjun and reprimanded him and spoke ill of his bow. Arjun placed his hand on his bow. Lord Krishna, who was with him, understood the move. He asked, "Arjun, what are you going to do?" He said, "I will kill Yudhishter. He has spoken ill of my bow and I have vowed to kill anyone who does so. Dharma has to be followed." Arjun said further, "It is the Dharma of a Kashtriya to fulfill his word. I will kill him." Lord Krishna asked, "Would you be happy by killing him?" He said, "No." The Lord said, "Dharma leads to happiness. It is clear that what you are about to do is not Dharma, but the reverse of it. Do not do it."

For worldly progress our duty consists in so performing the actions that we remain within the bounds of laws of the caste and society and sustain each other so that society may not split asunder. The rules of this path include bodily, family, social, national and political rules.

Similarly, the path of spiritual progress and emancipation has its laws. It comprises pure detachment.

Sant Mat gives true guidance, both in worldly and spiritual matters, and while strengthening the human virtues, turns his thoughts to his Lord and takes him to Him.

Love is a Human Virtue – Adopt It

Humanity simply means love for the Lord and His

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creation. Its other name is sympathy or compassion, fellow-feeling or heart-felt attraction. Its proof is that one's heart melts like wax on seeing the suffering of another. The other man's suffering appears to him as his own. He heartens him, feels sympathy for and is attracted to him, and takes steps to remove his sufferings. A man should feel for others and consider their sufferings as his own. Sheikh Sa'adi says that if there are no feelings of kindness, mercy or love, then there is no difference in such a man and the figure of a man on the wall. Both are useless.

If there is no mercy or gratitude in a man, what is the difference between him and a figure on a wall.

Kabir Sahib also says that the man who has no love is like a graveyard while living. He is like the bellows of the ironsmith which breathes even though lifeless.

The heart without love is like a graveyard; just like the bellows of an ironsmith which breathes though lifeless.

The fire of love being kindled, other virtues and gifts come of themselves.

Love, and all things shall be added unto you.

God is love and the world lives by love. It is, therefore, the duty of a human being to love. One who loves never injures the feelings of others. A thorn that injures the heart is removed.

Do Not Injure the Feelings of Others – Keep All Happy

In order to tread the path of spirituality it is necessary to abstain from injuring the feelings of others and to

imbibe the virtue of sympathy with others and to hearten them. Injury to the feelings of others produces darkness in the heart, while sympathizing with others and keeping them satisfied fills the heart with light. Injury to feelings of others results in impurity and disfiguration, while sympathy leads to beauty and decoration. One leads to hardening and difficulties, while the other leads to softening and simplicity. Injury to the feelings of others means causing pain to their hearts. This takes three forms:

Mental: Control your mind so that the thought of injuring others does not enter it.

Vocal: Keep watch on your tongue so that it may not utter any improper words. It should not be soiled with impolite or abusive words. Abuse is one, but its reverberations are many. Evil words lead to disputes, disharmony and sufferings. An angry man in uttering improper words uses the basest of abuses and wants to win the field, but a Saint admits defeat and keeps silent. Abuses are like live coals and emit smoke of anger, rage and backbiting. One can be called a sadhu only if he gives them up.

The abuse is one when it comes, but many when it reverberates. Oh Kabir, if it is not returned, it remains one only. Abuse leads to disputes, sufferings and disharmony. He who admits defeat is a Saint; he who quarrels is mean. Abuse is a live coal and anger, deceit and backbiting are smoke. He who remains aloof from them is called a holy man. (Kabir Sahib)

Drink wine and burn the carpet. Set fire to the Ka'aba. Become the dweller of the idol house. But give up injuring the feelings of others.

Bodily or Physical: Control the body so that none of the organs, hands or feet may cause harm to anyone. To cause

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pain to another man's heart is violence which is forbidden. He who wounds the heart of others by his words or actions is a great sinner. A society, tribe, religion or nation which injures, either openly or secretly, another for gaining its own ends can be classed as a sinner. Among the various classes, violence in the shape of mutual opposition is taking place. This is so even in religious institutions. They go on working for or against each other and hurt the feelings of others. Meat eating is bad, but the religious leaders are in reality man-eaters and drinkers of the blood of the people. They are cutting them to pieces by talking ill of others, calling them parsimonious and other bad names. They are sowing sin at the root of duties (dharma) and increasing suffering and unrest in the world.

The heart is the true mosque of God. It is the temple of the Lord. Everyone's heart is the Lord's tabernacle. He who causes pain to hearts strikes and breaks that temple. He who causes pain to others not only desecrates and ruins the temples of others, but demolishes the temple of his own heart also. The world is like a machine and we are its parts. Even if one part is injured, the machine cannot run properly. Even if one organ of the body ails, the whole body becomes restless.

The world is like a body of which we are parts. How can we be happy if we injure any organ? If one understands this, he does not injure any living being or any other inanimate object, to say nothing of injuring a man. His whole way of thinking, speaking and acting changes. Mind, speech and body are the means of doing both evil and good. A man becomes the doer of evil and good through them. To think ill of others is a sin of the mind. Jealousy, hatred and enmity are evils of the mind. Harsh words, criticism of others, speaking ill of them and abusing them are sins of speech. Wrong actions are sins of the

body. These include adultery, killing and violence.

Non-violence is the just duty. Not to hurt the feelings of others by thought, word and action is a good principle. This can only happen when we have love for the Lord who pervades all. A seeker after spirituality never hurts the feelings of others, as he believes that all are His creation. On the other hand, he sympathizes with them. Guru Arjan Sahib says that he who wants to attain complete happiness should practice truth and consider the Transcendental One as pervading everywhere. Contemplate on Name and by becoming dust of all merge in the Lord.

He who wants complete happiness should practice truth, should consider the Transcendental One as present and contemplate on Name. By becoming dust of all he merges in the Lord. He does not cause sufferings to anyone and sympathizes with all. (Gauri War M5, 322-8)

He who knows the Lord is not proud. Violence and greed leave him. He who is proud does not give up violence and greed. (Sarang M1, 1198-2)

Guru Nanak says that we should be compassionate to the Lord's creatures and engage in charity.

Be kind to all creatures and do charity. (Asa War M1, 468-11)

Kabir says a man should always be kind-hearted and should never be hard-hearted. From ants to elephants, all are creatures of the Lord.

Be kind in heart and never be hard-hearted. All are creatures of God - from ant to elephant.

What is meant by keeping others happy or pleased?

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This does not mean that we should follow like a shadow, or should improperly cajole or flatter them. We should have sympathy and compassion for all. Sympathy is nothing but pleasing others. We should, as far as possible, not think ill of others by speech, act or thought. The vessel of the heart should not be polluted by thinking ill of others. If one has love for the Lord and sympathy and good wishes for His creation, then all thoughts of hatred, jealousy, enmity and stinginess disappear of themselves. The path of the Saints is that of love, and true dharma (duty) is to love all.

To love the Lord and His creatures and not to injure anyone (non-violence) is the duty of man. The learned have included the virtues such as Mercy, Contentment, Forgiveness, Truthfulness, Sweetness, Austerity, Charity, Purity in dharma. Only a Dharmatma (dutiful person) is endowed with these virtues. He is the best among men.

He to whom truth is fasting, contentment the sacred place, knowledge and contemplation the baths, compassion the Lord and forgiveness the rosary, is sublime. (Sarang War M1, 1245-9)

Guru Nanak says that the true sacred thread is made of cotton of compassion, thread of contentment tied in the knot of continence and spun with truth. Such a thread never breaks and is not soiled.

When with compassion as cotton, thread of contentment is spun with twist and tied in knot with continence, such a sacred thread is fit to be put on. Oh Pandit, wear it. (Asa War M5, 471-2)

Those who wear such a thread are really blessed.

Compassion

Compassion means mercy, grace, sympathy or kindness. When on seeing the suffering of a person, one's heart bleeds and he is really sorry for his suffering, then one is said to have compassion. A compassionate person cannot bear the sight of the sufferings of another and shares his misery involuntarily. He tries to alleviate his sufferings by all means and does not feel at ease till this is done.

The Lord is compassionate. He is described as highly compassionate by the Gurus. He is the sustainer and showers Grace on all.

*The mighty compassionate One sustains and showers mercy on all.
(Gauri M5, 249-7)*

The inward-seeking soul realizes the color of the Lord. The soul is a particle of the Lord.

Oh Kabir, soul is a particle of the Lord.

The soul that takes on the hue of the Lord awakes in the inner soul and has compassion for all beings and treats all compassionately. It has a friendly feeling for all and loves them. It has, therefore, sweet words for them. This is the essential basis of all virtues and desires.

Oh Nanak, humility and sweetness are the basis of all virtues. (Asa War M1, 470-13)

Dharma is born from a compassionate heart. That bull of dharma is born of compassion. (Jap Ji, 3-13)

Only a compassionate man can be Dharmatma (high-souled one). Patience and forgiveness are born of compas-

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sion. When there is no compassion, there is no Dharma or forgiveness.

Compassion and Dharma (duty) are strongly interconnected. As long as there is compassion, godly virtues like dharma, truth, contentment, forgiveness and patience remain. With its disappearance they also leave and their place is taken by the five robbers, namely: lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Tulsidas says that compassion is the root of Dharma and pride is the root of all sins. We should not, therefore, give up compassion until our last breath.

Compassion is the root of Dharma and pride that of sins. Oh Tulsii! Do not give up compassion till there is no longer breath in the body.

A compassionate person is full of loving compassion and is like a cup full to the brim which spills over. There is no thought of violence in him. Such persons are blessed.

Guru Arjan Sahib says that the merit of performing pilgrimage of sixty-eight spots is obtained by showing compassion to living beings. Such purity and merit cannot be earned by charity and pilgrimage. This merit is not gained by all. The boon resulting from compassion is Grace. That person is blessed, and compassion resides in his heart.

Better than the pilgrimage of sixty-eight sacred spots is compassion. He who gets it by His Grace is indeed blessed.

The compassionate person has an aura of bliss about him. He has a shining forehead, kind and merciful eyes and a sympathetic look. He gives his heart to the depressed and suffering persons. His sweet words act like healing showers on thirsty and parched hearts. He can

be called a man in the real sense of the term. The living things become happy because of seeing him and many sins perish. Persons without compassion have human forms but do not deserve to be called men, as they are ruled by animal passions. Obstinacy, selfishness, cruelty and injustice are a part of their nature and they are a cause of unrest in the world. Their pastimes and enjoyments become the cause of misery to the living things. Such evil persons consider it an ordinary matter to bleed any number of persons for their selfish ends. They are sinful persons and more venomous than serpents. One is poisoned by merely looking at them, to say nothing of touching them. A serpent stings occasionally, but such cruel, irreligious persons, by their words, wrinkled forehead and gaze, sting those around them hundreds of times, which results in forcible separation of human beings and sundering of united hearts. It is better to keep at a distance from them.

Oh Kabir, do not associate with evil ones. Keep away and run from them. (Kabir Salok, 1371-9)

One ought to be very wary in exercising compassion. We sometimes, owing to ignorance, use compassion which becomes cruelty. No farmer sows seed in the ground without mature consideration. If he does otherwise, it is wasted. The same is true of charity also. It is necessary to discriminate between the deserving and the undeserving. The results of doing otherwise are before us in the shape of Sadhu Samaj (societies of ascetics), associations and sacred spots which have become places of irreligion, lust, anger, Maya and jealousy.

Oh Nanak, Glory be to the Lord. Let all prosper within His Will. Peace be unto all the world.

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A compassionate person sacrifices his interest to alleviate the suffering of others. He who surrenders his life to the Lord for His service and that of His creatures, earns eternal true life, and he who tries to save his own life loses it.

Whosoever shall lose his life, shall save it, whosoever shall save his life, shall lose it. (Bible)

Lust, anger, Maya's wine and jealousy cling to my mind. Compassion, dharma and service of Master enter not there even in dreams. (Kabir, Ramkali, 971-3)

Bhagat Parmanand says that these hypocritical dacoits are filling their bellies by looting others. Those actions which degrade us in the life hereafter are being performed by them. They have not given up violence. They have no compassion for living beings. They enjoy not the company of the holy men and do not accept their ancient teachings.

By looting the house of others or breaking them down, he fills his own belly. He does that by which he earns a bad name hereafter. Violence has not left his mind and he has no compassion. Oh Parmanand! He does not enjoy the company of Saints or follow their teachings. (Parmanand Sarang, 1253-6)

A compassionate person is very anxious in his heart to do good to others and he wishes well to all within the Will of the Lord.

The observance of truth, contentment and compassion is the basis of purity. One should efface himself and become the dust of the feet of others. But it is not everyone who can get this wealth. He gets it who enjoys the Grace of the Transcendental Lord.

Truth, contentment and compassion are the basis of purity. Give up ego and become the dust of others through the Grace of the Transcendental One. (Sri Rag M5, 51-10)

He only can understand this compassion who considers all living beings as his own self. One can reach this stage only by dying while living. Guru Nanak Sahib says such a man receives honors at the door of the Lord. This stage is easily reached by one who dies while alive.

He who dies while living receives compassion inside him and knows all. Oh Nanak! All glory to him. He recognizes himself in all beings. (Sidh Gosit M1, 940-17)

When one sees the Lord as pervading all, controls the senses, listens to the Melody of Naam, practices contentment and has compassion for all living beings, then his vows are fulfilled.

When on the day of Ekadashi one sees the Lord in every direction, when he controls the senses and listens to Lord's Name, when he is content in his mind and showers compassion on all living beings, then, in this way, his vows are fulfilled. (Gauri M5, 299-3)

Contentment

Contentment means satisfaction, agreement, being contented with what one has and being satisfied with it. If one does not gain his object in spite of effort, or succeeds to a very small extent only, and yet remains calm and collected and does not feel troubled in his mind, he is said to have contentment. When one is surrounded by troubles on all sides, is not honored by anyone, is talked ill of by everyone and is faced with defeat on all sides, but does not feel aggrieved by the thought that others are happy, then it is a sign of contentment.

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It would however, be a mistake to infer from all this that contentment means idleness or slackness. To seem contented and to grieve in secret and to feel jealous is to show oneself in different colors and to deceive the public. A contented person on getting nothing even after making efforts does not blame the Master or the Lord. He tries seriously to accomplish the task. Failure or success leaves him unaffected.

When one fails in spite of effort, know it to be the Will of the Lord.

Only a contented person can put in ceaseless efforts for serving others. He observes truth, never attempts evil and does good actions and earns merit.

They earn contentment who sincerely contemplate the truth. They do not do any evil acts and earn merit by good acts. (Asa War M1, 466-19)

He is very patient. Even though possessed of respect, prestige and strength, he forgives the faults of others. He feels happy when others progress and get honor, and has clean intentions. Even on getting honors and glory he loves others and treats them kindly. Although learned and wise, he respects other learned men and tries to imbibe their virtues as a duty. He is beautiful, but does not indulge in sensual pleasures. He is always patient modest and scrupulous. Such a person is not only contented, but has other virtues also. He is satisfied with his wife and considers those older than he as mother, and younger ones as sisters and daughters. He lives on the income earned by him by his own labor. He enjoys his simple fare as a sumptuous dinner, and drinks water as if it were nectar. He is not envious of the good life led by others.

Sheikh Farid says:

*Take the dry and unbuttered bread and cold water. Oh Farid!
Tempt not thy mind on seeing buttered bread of others. (Farid,
Salok, 1379-8)*

Umar Khayam also says to the same effect, that one who is getting bread and some space for sitting is not anybody's slave or master. He should be told to be happy as this much is sufficient.

In this world, he who has half a bread and has a place to sit, he is not anybody's slave or master. Tell him to be happy as he has sufficient in this world.

He does not covet the riches of another. He deems it to be dirt. He considers the usurpation of the right of others as poison and ever obeys the wishes of the Master.

He considers usurping the rights of another what eating beef is to Hindus or pork to Muslims. He obeys the Master and does not eat the dead animals. (Sri Rag M1, 141-1)

These principles of spirituality are the same for all. If he is a follower of Mohammed, he considers the rights of others as pork, and if he is a Hindu, as the beef. Only the money earned by dharmic (meritorious) actions can lead to happiness, peace, patience and contentment. Money earned otherwise leads to ever increasing greed and covetousness.

Guru Arjan Sahib says that if a man earns a thousand rupees, he hankers after getting lakhs; he is never satisfied. He is deluded by Maya. He cannot feel satiated by having pleasures. On the other hand, he dies hankering after them. All this running about passes like a dream and he gains nothing. One cannot feel satisfied except by con-

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tentment and is never satiated. He cannot be content with what he has.

He earns a thousand and hankers after a lakh. He is not satiated and runs after Maya.

He enjoys many pleasures. He is not satiated and dies hankering. He cannot be satisfied except by contentment. All his acts are useless like a dream. (Sukhmani Gauri M5, 278-19)

Money, wealth and other paraphernalia are related to body, and do not accompany us. Qarun, who had forty rooms full of gold, and Ravana, who had Lanka of gold, took nothing with them from this world.

What did the foolish Ravana take with him? (Kabir, Bhairon, 1158-2)

Money earned by sin and injustice leads to suffering. It acts as poison on the person using it. His mind is never at rest and his mind wanders. In course of time the money is wasted. In fact, it leads to destruction of the wealth already accumulated. Money earned by evil means is spent on evil deeds.

The money earned by meritorious deeds leads to happiness here and also hereafter. If one is poor while doing meritorious deeds and the Lord has given him contentment, he is really rich. A rich man without contentment is a beggar and very poor, for the hunger of such a man would not be satisfied even if he got all the good things of the world, as none can be satisfied without contentment. His hankering increases every day, just as adding of fuel makes the fire blaze all the more. Guru Arjan Sahib says:

One cannot be a king without contentment. All his acts are like a

dream. (Gauri Sukhmani M5, 279-2)

Contentment is had from Naam. He who gets the jewel of Naam gets all the treasures. On getting contentment the mind gets all and asks for no other boon.

The man who has got the boon of the Jewel of Naam that man is the most blessed among men. On getting a contented mind he meets the Lord, it does not wander anymore. (Ram Kali M5, 891-13)

All desires vanish on getting the wealth of contentment. Owing to his being desireless, worry disappears and the mind becomes restful. Those who desire nothing are real kings.

Wealth, cattle, elephants, horses, jewels and their mines are very valuable, but seem like dust on getting contentment.

Kabir says:

Desire is gone, worry is ended; mind is carefree. Those who require nothing are kings. Cows, elephants, horses, jewels and their mines are precious, but, when contentment is got, all this wealth is like dust.

The human body is the best of all. Man should use his reason. He should see as to what he has earned for himself and what he has done for pleasing the Lord and His creation. One should, therefore, put on the garment of effort and try to attain the three ideals. It is, however, necessary to put on one particular virtue, and that is to put on the ring of contentment.

Put on the ring of contentment and garment of humility. (Jap Ji, 6-16)

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This is necessary so that while trying, he may not become ungrateful or blame the Lord, or he may not slowly wither on getting less than expected or by being a failure, or he may not give up the effort and admit defeat. One should be content with what he gets from his meritorious deeds. One should patiently attend to his duty. He should ward off the attacks of greed and covetousness by the shield of patience, so that, in the end, the drop of the soul may mingle with the ocean of the Lord and become blessed, and may not become dry like a rivulet. Sheikh Farid says that contentment naturally makes a man a true creature of the Lord, and he unites with the Lord and grows into an ocean and does not become separated and a dried canal.

It is in the nature of contentment that if one is steadfast he becomes united and grows into an ocean and does not become separated and a dried canal. (Farid, Salok, 1384-6)

Guru Nanak Sahib says,

Be truthful and contented and adopt forgiveness. In this way, know yourself and realize the Lord.

Those who are truthful and contented, those who are truthful and take refuge with the Master, they know the self and the inner self. They remain in the company of the Lord and get released. (Maru Sohle M1, 1030-11)

Again he says that a contented man attains the truth. He speaks the truth and is dear to the Lord. He is never separated from Him and merges into Him through the Master.

He observes truth and contentment and leads a truthful life and

speaks the truth. He is dear to Him. Oh Nanak! He does not become separated and by the Master's Grace merges in the Lord. (Suhi M1, 764-3)

Practice truth and contentment. Remember the Lord and become one with Him. (Sri Rag M1,18-12)

The contented persons who have reached this stage always use sweet words. By mixing and remaining in their company, peace and calm is attained. They are really blessed who come across such persons.

Sweet are the words of the contented holy men; on seeing and touching them, peace and tranquility reign in the mind.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness means to forgive the faults of others, and to have no thought of it in the mind thereafter. Persons without forgiveness fight each other and exterminate themselves. Millions of persons perish because of lack of this virtue. Guru Nanak Sahib says:

Without forgiveness, millions have perished. No one can count them. Numberless persons have died. (Ram Kali Onkar M1, 937-5)

A holy man wrote a book. His dog upset the lamp. All the manuscript was burnt. The holy man forgave the dog and only said, "You do not know the damage caused by you." He then rewrote the entire book.

That man can be embellished with forgiveness who has a compassionate nature. Unless there is compassion, there can be no forgiveness. By forgiveness quarrels are resolved and means for removing the suffering are found.

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A person of forgiving nature is calm, humble, patient and forbearing. Even in the face of great difficulties, he does not give up forgiveness and is always cheerful.

There are two powers in the world. One is justice and the other is forgiveness born out of mercy. Justice is good, but that which can be achieved by forgiveness cannot be had by justice. To err is human. It is not at all uncommon for man to err. If errors are to be invariably punished, it would result in extirpation of the erring individuals. How can blood be washed with blood? If we demand justice, it punishes the guilty. The guilty man undergoes the punishment. This, however, does not remove the hatred against the complainant and the spirit of revenge is there. There solve to take revenge for getting him punished is very much strengthened. Whenever he passes by the complainant, the mental desire to take revenge always springs. He gets no rest until he avenges him. This leads to retribution by the other side. The dispute thus increases, justice cannot remove the thought of ill-will and revenge. But if we forgive any person out of kindness and mercy, it has great effect. The dispute is settled. The thought of revenge does not arise.

On the other hand, the person forgiven feels grateful to the person forgiving him, and has a feeling of friendship for him. The feelings of inflicting punishment and taking revenge are spreading unrest, uneasiness and disorder in the world. The reaction correspond to the thoughts sent out, and they would affect us accordingly. If you send out currents of love you will get those of love as reaction. If you have thoughts of hatred against anyone, you will get the same in return. Actions beget reactions. If you propagate thoughts of love, you will get the fruits of love. If you sow thorns only, thorns will grow. Do not expect grapes if you sow thorns. Practice forgiveness, and people will

forgive you. You reap what you sow. To hope for silk after giving wool for being spun is useless.

Oh Farid! How can you expect grapes after sowing thorns; how can silk be the product of spinning wool? (Farid, Salok, 1379-3)

If we do not think ill of anyone, our love will be universal. When we forgive the guilty and do not wish them ill, we will have no enemy. A forgiving person is always happy. It is impossible to describe happiness, calmness of mind and peace which results from forgiveness.

It is only a brave man who can forgive. This is beyond the power of a weak man. The Lord is kind and compassionate. Where there is compassion, there the power to forgive can arise. For this reason, the great Saint Kabir has assigned a very high position to forgiveness. He goes to the extent of saying that the Lord Himself dwells in a forgiving person. Where there is forgiveness, the Lord is there in the form of mercy.

Oh Kabir, where there is Gian (knowledge), there is Dharma (duty); where there is untruth, there is sin. Where there is attachment, there is death; where there is forgiveness, He is there Himself. (Kabir, Salok, 1372-13)

Forgiveness has a glorious form. All say that forgiveness is good. He who has no feeling of forgiveness in his heart drowns in the ocean of this world. Kabir Sahib says:

All say it is good. The form of forgiveness is glorious. He who has no forgiveness in his heart is drowned in the well of fear.

By adopting forgiveness, one gets contentment. A forgiving person is not attacked by disease and he is not afraid of death. He gathers the wealth of truth through

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forgiveness.

Forgiveness includes fast, good conduct and contentment. He is not attacked by disease and is not afraid of death. (Gauri M1, 223-16)

Forgiveness extinguishes the fire of anger. There is no other way to calm it. Man remains ignorant of the reality, owing to the veil of egoism. This can be understood on meeting a Perfect Master only. The fire of desires and egoism is extinguished. Anger can be given up by giving place to forgiveness in one's mind by the Grace of the Master. Egoism and anger leave the mind wherein contentment dwells. Guru Amar Das says:

On meeting the Master I have come to know the secret of the body. Egoism and desires are all gone. Anger has disappeared on adopting forgiveness. (Gauri M3, 233-8)

An egoistic and angry person loses fear of the Lord. He acts like a reinless camel and commits sins and perpetrates very mean acts. We can learn the lesson of forgiveness from a mother. She does not punish her children for innumerable faults. The greatest merit of a mother is that she does not even think of the faults of her children.

Many faults are committed by the sons. A mother however does not mind them. (Kabir, Asa, 478-14)

The highest embellishment of forgiveness is the divine glory of the Saints and they preach its practice. A forgiving person forgives everything except breach of duty. It is generally seen that people do not forgive small matters. The spirit of non-forgiveness is the chief cause of unrest in the world. Forgiveness is most sacred. By practicing it, unrest disappears and man is saved from being burnt in

the fire of anger. A man should therefore, always practice forgiveness.

Truthfulness - Satya Vachan

Satya means Truth — a thing which is eternal and is not perishable. The same meanings have been assigned to it in the Vedas 'that which is not destroyed in the three divisions of time'. By the Gurus, 'Sat' or 'Satya' has been used for a Being which existed before the beginning of the universe, at its beginning, and will exist forever. It has been used for Sat Punish (Eternal Being). Truth is His quality. God is Truth.

Oh Nanak, know the True One to be True. (Sri Rag M1, 25-18)

The Truth is the Lord of all. One realizes it by His Grace. (Ram Kali M3, 913-14)

He existed before and at the beginning of ages, oh Nanak! He exists and shall ever exist. (Jap Ji, 1)

All our efforts are incomplete without truth. Truth is the crown of all. This is the secret of all practices. All other worship is mere hypocrisy.

Mind, Hatha Yoga, intellect and study of Vedas lead to bondage of man. Gurmukh finds release in truth and right conduct. (Sri Rag M1, 62-11)

Keep the truth in mind as the basis. All other worship is hypocrisy and degrades. (Parbhati M1)

To have a truthful life is the goal of human life. Truth is everywhere. It should be separated from untruth and experienced inside. The heart wherein it dwells also takes its form. God is Truth.

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One should be truthful in His eyes as He loves truth. It does not matter what religion you follow.

The truth is known to the Lord, He loves it. You may keep long hair or be clean shaven. (Kabir Sahib)

We have to consider here as to what is truthful speech, i.e. speech which is made by a truthful person. To describe a thing exactly as seen or heard is truthful speech. Besides speaking the truth, our dealings should also be truthful. We should have truth as our ideal while thinking and base our conduct on it. In this way, our hearts, thoughts and conduct become truthful. Kabir Sahib says that he whose attention is true has right conduct. He is in communion with the Lord all the time.

He who has true attention has right conduct. He is in communion with the Lord at all times.

Such a person in a way becomes related to truth. Whatever he says comes out to be true. He is happy in the enjoyment of bliss of truth, both outside and inside. Owing to leading a truthful life he becomes fearless and peaceful as he is connected with truth which is eternal and never changing. All the world is happy in having him. By speaking and seeing the truth, his mind and body become true. He preaches truth and is embellished by it. Those who do not observe the truth are worried. Tulsi Das says:

There is no other duty like the truth; this has been so said by the revealed Scriptures and the Puranas.

The opposite of truth is untruth. Not to relate what one has seen or heard or done is called falsehood. A false person is a hypocrite. He looks with his eyes down and

has no light on his face. He is always planning and scheming. He is always afraid that his falsehood may be detected. In order to hide one lie he has recourse to hundreds of them. He loses his peace of mind in scheming all the while. Doubts and suspicions become his second nature. He accordingly trusts no one. His relationship with others is based on selfishness. He is not confided in by anyone owing to his conduct, nor does he confide in anyone. Deceit, fraud, hypocrisy and cunning become staple food of his life. His life becomes a burden to the world. If a liar meets a liar they like each other, but if a liar meets a truthful person, their relationship snaps.

When a liar meets another liar their mutual attraction increases. But if a liar meets a truthful man, their relationship snaps. (Kabir Sahib)

Truth is eternal while untruth is perishable. Mind should always be fixed on an eternal object so that it may never be destroyed and there may be no pangs of separation.

He never dies and there is no pang of separation. (Asa War M1, 349-10)

Truth can stand on its own legs but not so the untruth. A truthful man is steady, patient and firm in his determination. An untruthful man falters at every step and is not steadfast. While the truthful man is fearless and has no qualms or hesitation, an untruthful man is always afraid and never looks anybody in the face. He always hesitates to speak the truth. He tries to hide the truth. The truthful man is brave and courageous. But the untruthful man is a coward and an idler. A truthful man is free from cares because of his fearlessness, which produces detachment in attachment. The truthful man gives up flattering, cajoling,

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theft and secrecy while these characterize an untruthful person.

From the above it is clear that a truthful man can succeed in the spiritual field. As truth dwells in him, he speaks the truth. He himself treads the path leading to the Lord and guides others to it also.

He in whom the truth dwells, practices Naam truly and speaks the truth. He himself treads the path of the Lord and guides others on this path. (Majh War M4, 140-2)

One who is truthful and contented and speaks the truth is dear to the Lord. He never suffers separation from Him. Truth has nothing to fear. It is not affected by curses nor can Kal harm it. When a true devotee meets the Truth (Lord), he merges in It.

The true devotee is not affected by curses or touched by Kal, when he meets the Truth (Lord); he merges in It. (Kabir Sahib)

The mind of an untruthful man is never calm and is always planning and scheming lest the reality may become known. Therefore, all his worship and recitation, remembrance, austerity, charity and devotion, knowledge and contemplation pilgrimage and fasts, etc., are wasted just as seeds do not germinate in barren soil.

Without truth there can be no remembrance of the Lord and there can be no devotion without awe. If there is a veil between the iron and the touchstone, how can the iron turn into gold? By not describing the fact as it is, the veil between us and the truth becomes thick and it becomes impossible to realize the truth. The heart of an untruthful person experiences it in a particular manner. The mind wants to represent it in another way. He hides the truth

and describes it differently. He indulges in sin secretly and deliberately turns his back on the Lord.

He incurs sin secretly. However, it becomes known to the public and never remains hidden.

We sin in secret enormously, but the Lord is nearer than the nearest. (Jaitsri M5, 704-10)

He does his deeds in the dark but the same are known in all the four directions. (Majh War M3, 138-14)

There is no austerity like the truth, and no sin like the untruth. He who has truth in his mind, the Lord Himself dwells in him.

There is no austerity like the truth and no sin like the untruth. He who has truth in his heart, in him dwells the Lord. (Kabir Sahib)

In the beginning truth is bitter and untruth is sweet like sugar. Truth may be bitter like quinine, but it washes the sins.

Truth is the panacea for all. It removes the sins by washing them. (Asa War M1, 468-16)

Kabir Sahib says if you are a truthful trader, then deal in truth only. Sweep and throw out untruth.

If you are a truthful trader, trade in truth, sweep the inside and throw out the untruth.

An untruthful man does not retain consciousness of what he has uttered; hence his falsehood is discovered from his own inconsistent statements.

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An untruthful man does not remember.

All the Saints and holy men lay emphasis on speaking the truth, performing truthful actions and conduct. Upanishadas say,

Speak the truth and live righteously.

In other words, speak the truth and do meritorious deeds. Tulsi Das says:

Speak the truth, be humble and regard the wife of another as mother. If you do not even then realize the Lord, hold me responsible.

Guru Ram Das told Bhai Tirath that the first requisite for redeeming the soul was to speak the truth, and that it was by speaking the truth that one could realize the eternal Lord.

Sheikh Farid says,

We should speak the truth as our duty and never tell lies. Speak the truth as a duty and never tell lies. (Farid, Ji Asa, 488-15)

The merciful Prophet has said,

Never refrain from speaking the truth even though you may suffer thereby.

To speak the truth is good. But that is good which leads to the good of others. Narad Ji told Sukh Dev firmly in Mahabharat that is truth which is for the good of all beings. That which leads to happiness of others is truth. Truth is a constituent of Dharma. That is Dharma which is born of mercy. In speaking the truth, compassionate considerations should be kept in mind. In fact truth is that

which does not injure the feelings of others. Whatever is uttered should come from the heart and should not injure anybody's feelings.

Many persons think it right to speak the untruth in politics or to save the life of another or to protect the chastity of a woman. It should, however, be remembered that truth is truth and falsehood is falsehood. Falsehood, however small or spoken for any purpose, is a sin even though it results in far greater good.

Guru Arjan therefore says that one should trust in truth to gain acceptance in the Court of the Lord.

Engage in trade of truth so that your merchandise may be accepted in His court. (M 5 Gauri 293-6)

Sweetness

By sweetness is meant sociability, civility, broad-mindedness, polite speaking, cheerfulness and forbearance. It is necessary for a beautiful face to have good habits, otherwise the beauty is useless. If there is a beautiful bungalow in a beautiful city, but only owls reside there, what is its beauty? There may be a green tree, but if there are no flowers or fruits on it, then of what use can it be? A gold watch which does not tell time, or a beautiful lamp which does not give light, is of no value. There may be a pucca masonry well, but if there is no water in it, then of what use can it be? Similarly, a man may be very beautiful, and may wear costly clothes, but if he is not social, is not good-mannered, courteous and polite, then he is without human virtues. What makes a man really a man are his sociability and cheerfulness.

The bounties of the Lord are reserved for the person

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who greets others with a cheerful heart and an open mind. Hazrat Ali says,

To greet others cheerfully is the first virtue.

If a man is handsome or rich, this concerns himself. If he is social and cheerful, he influences others. If he is always cross and has wrinkles on his brows, nobody wants to see him, to say nothing of meeting him. Sweet speech full of humility goes to the bottom of another man's heart, and this is the real glory and embellishment of man.

Shah Farindu was asked as to how he supervised his servants. He replied,

By politeness and forbearance. He was then asked as to how he solved his difficulties. He replied, By leniency and kindness.

However serious the difficulty, use politeness, sweetness and melody. It can succeed better than use of the sword or violence. The wound inflicted by a sword heals in course of time, but that caused by a sharp word becomes fresh every time you remember the words. It is, therefore, necessary to watch the speech so that no harsh words are used. Think before you speak. Even if there is no occasion, ask to be excused, as a matter of courtesy. It tastes sweet to take bitter pills from a cheerful person. It, however, becomes difficult to take even a sweet thing from the hands of a rude man.

Sheikh Sa'adi says:

To eat bitter things from the hands of a cheerful man, is better than to have sweets from the hands of a rude man.

One should not visit a mercurial or rude person. His

bad manners would affect you. How badly is a rude man affected by his being grieved? It is better to meet a man cheerfully than to give him treasures. As far as possible, meet persons cheerfully just as lightning appears to be laughing in the clouds.

To be cheerful is better than to be given diamonds in charity. As far as possible, be like lightning and not like dark clouds.

We have to spend nothing when speaking sweet words. Their good effect is felt by us first and then by others.

Kind words do not cost anything.

When you meet another person cheerfully, you shower flowers, and the other man becomes full of their scent. Be cheerful like a flower. Whoever would meet you would share your happiness. If you speak to anyone rudely, he would be ready to fight with you. This would lead to no good, but a lot of worry.

We should not be quick-tempered. We should be courteous in our daily behavior — even to the servants. Whoever comes in contact with you would be pleased with you. To be courteous on a particular occasion is called politeness, but when one is always courteous and mild he is called civil. This virtue is very helpful in spiritual matters.

Only a courteous and cultured man can be called a man; to be otherwise is to be inhuman. The Lord is everywhere but a man can be seldom seen anywhere. He is seen rarely. Kabir says that outwardly, all human beings seem alike but become different when we know them - just as a swan and a stork seem alike, but their actions are different. A swan feeds on pearls but a stork lives on fish.

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The peacock and the eagle are very beautiful as far as form is concerned, but the real beauty is inner which is much superior to that of the body.

Science has proved that coal and diamonds are both carbon, but there is a great difference in their price. Similarly, innumerable persons look like human beings, but are not so in reality. The worth of a thing depends on its quality. If a thing ceases to possess its quality, it ceases to have any worth and becomes valueless. When an electric bulb is fused it becomes worthless and is of no use. The plant which ceases to flower is uprooted and thrown out. Similarly a man, who ceases to be social, cheerful and sweet of speech, becomes unfit for spiritual progress. No real benefit can be had from him. A holy man has said:

What wealth can a crow or a cuckoo give! Cuckoo sings sweetly and turns foes into friends.

A man of social habits does not oppose any good work and does not find fault with others. Owing to compassion he sympathizes with others and never injures the feelings of others. Hafiz says that there are two sure means of being happy. One is to be kind to one's friends and the other is to love one's enemies.

There are two means for being happy in the world: kindness to friends and loving treatment of foes.

If you wish to go to paradise, treat the creatures of the Lord with kindness and consideration.

If you wish to enter the paradise of Eden, treat the creatures of God with kindness.

Austerity

Austerity is firm resolve to take a particular course of action or to contemplate on the same or to do the same. It means having a firm determination to do some act. Unless there is firm determination, it is not possible to accomplish an act. The key to accomplishing a task lies in a firm will to do it. This is the main principle. Work done without performing austerity is generally not accomplished. If you wish to do an act, do it with a firm resolve and determination. In order to make spiritual progress, seekers have resorted to various austerities and have undergone physical and mental suffering. The object was to purge the mind of lust, anger, attachment, greed and egoism and to realize the Lord, but they got entangled in external practices.

Charity

The Lord is bountiful. He is the giver of all blessings.
We always pray,

Oh bountiful Lord, give us and He always grants us boons.

We pray for boons and the bountiful Lord grants us boons. (Jap Ji 2-4)

There is one Father and we are His children. You are my Master. (Sorath M5, 611-19)

Whatever He is giving, is for all. Whatever we have, others also have a right to it. We should share and enjoy. We all belong to the Lord. If we really become His, then all become our partners and nobody will seem to us to be outside the sphere of the Lord.

All are your partners. You are outside of none, Oh dear! (Majh M5, 97-8)

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All human beings are different organs of the Lord, as all spring from the same essence.

Human beings are organs of each other, as in the beginning they come from the same stalk.

To share one's hard-earned income with the helpless and the sick and to spend it on the poor, the downtrodden and orphans is called charity. Charity is very necessary for the good of the world. Charity is a meritorious action. By charity fragrance and freshness increase while stinginess leads to stinking. It is like well water which remains cool, fresh and sweet as long as the well is worked. Charity is sharing wealth with the needy and spending it on good works. He who does not spend in charity, wastes his wealth on unfruitful actions. Kabir Sahib has said:

When water increases in the boat or wealth in the house, to take it out with both the hands is what the wise do.

Charity of One-Tenth Income

Charity shows compassionate and kind disposition. Compassion dwells in the mind of a donor and he is always open-minded. The leaders of all religions have accordingly laid emphasis on charity. According to Muslims, everyone should give a fortieth share of his income in charity. The Sikhs are directed to spend one-tenth of their income in charity. This rule relating to the spending of one-tenth income is very ancient in India. The ancient records recovered in the East from Egypt to Afghanistan show that in the days of Prophet Ibrahim, all nations used to spend one-tenth of their income on charities.

Grotus says that to give one-tenth of the income in charities was a very old tradition. History shows that

Arabs and Afghans, Carthaginians, Egyptians, Greeks and Turks were all acquainted with this rule. It appears from the writings of Clement, Avi Canna, Trevelyan, Cyprean, Jerome and other Christian writers that all ancient people were familiar with it. In the beginning the Jews and the Christians also used to pay one-tenth. The saying was 'Pay one-tenth and become rich'. Historical writings show that traders used to offer one-tenth of their income to the priests who used to present the same before the Lord.

Saxons used to offer one-tenth of the booty from the captives to the sea-god Neptune as a religious duty. Similarly, Xenophon, when he returned from his Asian conquest, offered one-tenth of the booty to Apollo. Prophet Ibrahim said that the universe belonged to the Lord and proclaimed,

Glory to God the Lord of the Earth and Heavens.

He offered one-tenth of his income to Him. Prophet Jacob also acknowledged God as Lord of all and said,

Whatever you give me, I would offer one-tenth of the same to you.

Jesus said to one of his disciples,

Sell what you have and distribute it among the poor so that you may get treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven.

He again said,

Give food in the name of the Lord so that your go downs may be full of cereals and you may lack nothing.

Kabir Sahib says that charity does not lead to scarcity.

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Wealth is not decreased by giving charity like the water in the river. See it with your eyes open, Kabir has said so. (Kabir Sahib)

He again said that as long as there is this body go on giving. When this body would not remain, nobody would say 'please give'.

This is the advantage of coming in this body that you should give. Oh Kabir, give as long as you have this body. Go on giving something as long as you have the body. When this body is reduced to dust, no one will ask you to give. Go on giving something as long as you have the body. Do good to others, this is the fruit of this life. (Kabir Sahib)

Guru Nanak says that we can know truth only if we follow the true teachings. We should show compassion to creatures and share the income earned by meritorious deeds with the poor and the needy.

Truth can only be known by following true teachings. Have compassion on beings and do some charity. (Asa War M1, 468-18)

Seekers after spirituality always do charity. First comes charity by distributing food. The sick and the helpless are treated and are looked after. Widows, orphans and sufferers are assisted in all possible manners. They are assisted by charity and assured of help. They are encouraged by sweet words.

To Whom Should Charity be Given?

Guru Nanak says,

Perform charity with due caution. Sow the seed of charity in the field after examining it.

Examine the field and sow the seed of charity. (Salok M1, 1411-18)

Charity should be given only to such of the needy, the helpless and the orphans, who are not engaged in evil deeds. Serve the hungry and the thirsty. What is the use of giving wealth to those who already have it? To perform charity without due consideration, is like sowing seed in barren land.

Sadhus of various denominations, temples and religious institutions have grown rich. The wealth of religious institutions is being wasted. They are forgetting the Lord because of the riches. It is often seen that they are entangled in sensual pleasures. We see such examples every day. We have, owing to our thoughtlessness, made them millionaires. They find it difficult to manage their affairs. These institutions are full of valuables and jewels, and idlers are enjoying the same. The really needy, orphans and holy men find it difficult to make two ends meet. For this reason Guru Nanak says that by sowing seed in the barren land there can be no profit and even the seed is lost.

What can we get by sowing seed in the barren land? (Asa M1, 419-10)

By subscribing to institutions other than the needy, the seeker after spirituality is, in a way, sowing seed in barren land.

The tenth Sikh guru says that if charity is to be given, it should be given to pure men, i.e. society of spiritual seekers. All other charity is false. He says that only service of such persons is acceptable to the Lord. It does not befit us to serve others. Charity given to them is good. No other charity is good. Such charity bears fruit hereafter. It is vainglory to be praised for others charity. My mind, body,

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head and wealth are all for such persons only.

Only service to them is acceptable. To serve others is not proper. Charity to them is good. Charity to others does not lead to good results. Charity to them gives fruit hereafter. Other charity is false. My house, body, head and wealth belong to them. (Guru Gobind Singh)

Bhai Gurdas also says the same thing:

On looking at infinite sweetness of worldly comforts the Gurmukh puts a single grain in his mouth.

To earn by one's own labor and to share it with the needy leads to acceptance at the door of the Lord. An old man went on pilgrimage to Mecca (Haj). In his dream he saw two angels. One asked, "How many persons have come for pilgrimage?" The other replied, "Six lakhs." The first one asked, "How many are accepted?" The other said, "None." He however, said that there was a cobbler in Damascus who did not come, but his Haj was accepted. On inquiry it was found that he collected the money for Haj but as his neighbors were hungry he spent the money on them.

Formal worship is of no use. True spirituality consists in earning not only for our own subsistence, but in spending it on others and for spiritual good.

It is related in the traditions of the Prophet that he with his followers was once journeying in Syria. They reached a village in the evening and all persons who were fasting gathered and the villagers gave them food to break their fast. The Prophet then said that the villagers thus became entitled to the result of their good actions for the day.

Giving of wealth to true holy men is real charity. They do not hoard it or spend it on sensual pleasures. They spend it merely for feeding themselves. The rest they distribute among the needy. The rice used in worship is really sugar-coated poison. Bhai Gurdas says:

That rice from the Dharamshal (temple) is like sugar-coated poison. (War 35, Pauri 12)

As to who is entitled to receive charity can be known from a holy man only. Give in charity after inquiring from him. They do not covet your wealth as they have the wealth of Naam. They are carefree. They will distribute the money given by you to the hungry and the thirsty and thus do good to you. You would thus become the cause of making them happy and earn their grace.

The service of wealth is that it may be spent in service of the Master. The Master does not covet your wealth. He has the wealth of devotion and Naam. He does good to you and has it distributed to the hungry and the thirsty. You get his grace without effort by making Him happy. His being pleased is very good. The Lord Himself showers His grace. (Sar Bachan 13, 30-34)

The world can be helped by several kinds of charities. In the first place, it is of wealth, food, clothes, etc., which has been described above. In the second place, it is mental. It is to wish well of others and to pray for the welfare and happiness of your enemies.

Oh Nanak, glory be to the Lord. May all live well within His Will.

In the third place, it is charity of intellect, such as teaching the illiterate. The highest form of charity is soul charity or giving of Naam. This can be done by Gurmukhs and Mahatmasonly. They do not accept any consideration for

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the same, and are happy in giving it. They confer a great boon on the world but do not even mention it. They give life and persuade persons to engage in devotion. These Gurmukhs help millions by making a gift of the ray of Naam.

They give life, persuade persons to engage in devotion, and unite them with the Lord. (Suhi M5, 749-2)

They redeem millions by giving them a ray of Naam. (Sorath M5, 6-8-17)

They consider that all belongs to the Lord. They devote money and wealth, palaces and houses, sons and daughters, relations and friends, body and mind, intellect and reason, to the service of the Lord. The Lord is bountiful. The holy man gets identified with Him and it becomes his habit to give His boons in charity. He considers it his duty to do so. He does not consider that anything belongs to him. He offers his all to the Lord. His inner condition becomes as is depicted by Kabir Sahib.

Oh Kabir, nothing belongs to me, all is Yours. In giving You what is Yours, I lose nothing. (Kabir, Salok, 1375-9)

Cleanliness (Souch)

Souch means purity or cleanliness. This is also an essential part of religious duty. It is of two kinds, internal and external. The physical body, house, clothes, etc., are of the second category, and purity of mind and the senses is of the first category. External cleanliness is essential for internal purity, and has a very considerable influence over it. Cleanliness is next to Godliness. Both internal and external purity is essential. The cleanliness of body, clothes and house is very necessary for bodily health. It can be

done by a daily bath, by brushing the teeth, cleaning the clothes with soap and water, and by living in an open and sunny place and using phenol and water. The body is full of many pores, through which perspiration comes out and the outer atmosphere affects the body through them. One must keep them clean and healthy. This is achieved by taking laxatives, keeping fasts and regulation of diet. Pure food is very necessary. Inner purification can be had by purity of the mind and senses, i.e., by attaining the truth or practice of Naam and Shabd.

For perfect purity, clean conduct, pure food and good character are very necessary.

Good Conduct of Life

It is absolutely necessary for meditation that one earns one's own living honestly or by one's own labor. Only such persons can worship, whose earnings are honest. Bu' Ali says that for meditation one should eat honestly earned food so that he may not have any grief or trouble.

For meditation, take food which is honestly earned so that your grief and suffering may not increase.

Honestly earned food produces a peculiar light in us, by which knowledge and intellect are sharpened and love as well as humility are awakened. If by eating something one has a feeling of envy or enmity or one does not remember God or his intellect is dulled, then it is a clear sign of the food having been earned by dishonest means. Food is like a seed. As the seeds are impure or pure, their fruits will produce bad or good thoughts in our minds. By intake of food earned both by hard labor and by honest means, we shall be inclined to contemplate and remember the Lord. By eating hard-earned bread we begin to imbibe

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good virtues. God has given us hands and feet. We should earn our food by their proper use. We must not covet or desire the wealth of others.

To beg is to be under obligation and to depend on others. Be content with whatever you get. Do not depend on anyone. Do not be tempted by the luxurious living of others.

Take the dry and unbuttered bread and cold water. Oh Farid, do not be tempted by buttered bread of others. (Farid, 1379-8)

If our food is simple, we shall have fewer wants. When a person looks to others for his living, he does not remain independent but becomes a slave of others and indulges in undue flattery. By not using his hands, feet, brain and ears, he becomes incapacitated. He is also affected by the food earned by others. If it is by means other than fair, his thoughts and his mind will be similarly affected. Maulana Rum says,

Do not take food at the table of others or without payment so that their blood might not affect you. The food of others, if it is obtained by force or injustice, is like blood.

Turn away from living on the public so that you may not be affected by their blood. Consider this food to be their blood, because it is obtained by force.

Guru Nanak says that a piece of cloth besmeared with blood is considered to be impure. There are bloodsuckers who grow fat by unfair means and amass wealth by seizing the rights of others. The earnings of such persons are full of the blood and sighs of others. How can anybody's mind remain pure by eating their food! God's Name should come out of pure minds and good tongues. But

none can be successful on the path of God by eating such foods.

If a cloth is blood-stained, it becomes impure. How can the mind of those who suck blood be pure. Oh Nanak, take the Name of God with a clean tongue. The rest are empty shows and your deeds are false. (Majh War M1, 140-10)

Guru Nanak, it is said, refused to accept an invitation to dinner by a wealthy and influential governor, named Malik Bhago. He, however, accepted and ate the coarse food offered by a poor carpenter named Lalo. Malik was very angry. He called Guru Nanak and asked the reason for such an insult. Guru Nanak told him that his wealth had been accumulated by sucking the blood of the poor, whereas Lalo's earning was based on meritorious deeds. Food prepared out of such wealth, that has been earned by fair means is full of milk even if it is coarse and stale. But food prepared out of unfair means is full of blood. He squeezed the two pieces of bread with his two hands. Blood oozed out of one and milk out of the other.

Money is essential for honest living. Guru Har Gobind with his wife once went to Gujrat. People made fun of him saying that asceticism was not compatible with riches. Guru Sahib said that money is necessary for living whether one is a beggar or a rich man. To conceal one's riches and to show oneself as a detached person is to deceive the world. If one depends upon others through his lazy habits, he too deserves condemnation. Saints have always taught that one should earn one's own livelihood. Such earnings help others. Meditation on God's Name for some time is one's own earning. If a Sadhu lives on others, he should not take more than his wants and meditate for five or six hours as it is necessary to pay back the debt of the sustainer.

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It is necessary to earn money for one's living by fair means. Money earned by foul means is really not wealth but blood of others. Earning by fair means is like milk. A beggar who provides food to his children by begging cannot achieve any success on the spiritual path. This principle applies equally to all, whether one is a householder or a Sadhu. To eat the leavings of another is like poison. This should be avoided. The tenth Guru had received large offerings amounting to Rs. 2 lakhs (two-hundred-thousand), but he did not take a piece out of it for his own use in spite of heavy needs on account of many adverse circumstances, but threw it in the river and raised fresh funds for war needs. On inquiry as to why he had done so, he said that it consisted of offerings and was like poison. No mother gives poison to her children, he said.

All Saints were against begging. Guru Nanak says that one should be ashamed of begging at the door of others. When the Transcendental One pervades everywhere, why should one beg.

Are you not ashamed of begging at the door of others? (Ramkali M1, 903-8)

The Transcendental One pervades everywhere, why should then one beg? (Ramkali War M1, 953-5)

Guru Amar Das says that if a yogi moves from house to house as a beggar, how will he justify in the Court of the Lord the account of his actions?

After becoming a yogi he wandered all over begging from door to door. When account would be demanded, how would he answer? (Maru War M1, 1089-7)

Guru Nanak gives a clear warning to the Gurus and Pirs that if a man calls himself a Guru but goes to his disciples to beg for the maintenance of his children, then we should not bow at his feet. He is far from spirituality. He who earns his own living and gives to others a share of the same is fit to understand spirituality.

If a Guru or Pir goes to beg, do not bow at his feet. Oh Nanak, he who earns and gives part in charity really knows the way. (Sarang War M1, 1245-17)

A Sadhu begging from a householder loses the nobleness of his position as a Sadhu. A householder taking the money of another falls from his principles. If a householder takes money from a Sadhu, he is degraded and it is very difficult to redeem him.

Kabir Sahib was very much against begging. He says that some persons do not meet a Perfect Master and on listening to incomplete teachings, assume the garb of a yogi but beg from door to door. Begging is like dying. One should not beg. This is the teaching of all great Masters. It is better to die than to beg, for when one says, "Please give", the glory of living and respect for life depart. Fellow-feeling and brotherly treatment cease. The glory of this body lies in giving while alive.

Perfect Master is not met, and teachings are imperfectly understood. He puts on the garb of a Yogi and begs from door to door. Begging is like dying and no one should beg. It is better to die than to beg. This is the teaching of the Great Master. Glory is lost, respect is lost and love is lost. These three are lost the moment a request is made.

Sheikh Farid prays,

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O Lord! Do not force me to sit at the door of others. If such be Your will take away my life.

Oh Lord! Force not Farid to sit at the door of others. If You wish to keep him thus, take away his life. (Farid, Salok, 1380-2)

Pure Food

Three kinds of knowledge are very necessary: 1) knowledge of one's physical body; 2) knowledge of religious duty or moral principles; 3) knowledge of one's soul.

Through the upkeep of the body, we know the methods of maintaining good health. Progress of all kinds — intellectual, physical, religious, spiritual and moral — is possible only with good health. A sick man cannot engage himself in any religious activity. He will be unable to do anything for his country, to earn his own livelihood, to work for society, community or religion. He cannot even engage himself in his own spiritual upkeep. How then can he realize himself!

Guru Arjan Says:

Look to the health of your body and mind for imprinting the Lotus Feet of God within you and for recitation of His Name with your tongue.

He contemplates on the feet in his heart and repeats the Lord's Name. Oh Nanak, he remembers the Lord Who looks after his body. (Behagara M5, 554-1)

Guru Nanak says: Why do you forget Him, who is the very Master of your life and breath? Without His remembrance, everything that you eat is impure.

Do not forget Him who is the giver of life. Without Him all drinks

and clothes are impure. (Sri Rag M1, 16-3)

Food is necessary for health and bodily vigor. And only wholesome food is good, the intake of which does not cause sloth or heaviness. Food that is the cause of pain or inconvenience to the body and raises evil thoughts in the mind is not desirable. Without true Naam, this life is worthless and it is an act of folly to eat and fill the stomach.

More food and pleasures lead to disaster. They cause pain to the body and produce evil thoughts in the mind. (Sri Rag M1, 16-14)

Woe to him who eats merely to swell the belly. Oh Nanak, except the Name all are enemies. (Sohi War M1, 790-18)

Guru Ram Das says that such people as have no Guru (Master) eat and lead a life of ignorance. They are not freed from the cycle of birth and death.

By the Grace of Him whom he contemplates in his mind, millions take food. Those who eat and clothe without serving the Master die and are born again and again. (Gauri M4, 306-3)

A spiritually-inclined person eats and sleeps little. His intellect is pure and his body is healthy. His spiritual life and conduct are both benefited.

Eat and sleep little. (Pipa, Ramkali, 10)

He breaks the bondage of the world, who eats and drinks little. (Asa War 4M1, 67-1)

Food is very necessary for preserving the body. Without it, the body cannot be maintained. Complete benefit can only be derived if it has been earned by right means. It

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should be light, easily digestible and taken in such a quantity as does not exceed our needs.

Food can be divided into three kinds: Satvik, Rajsik, and Tamsik. Satvik food produces pure feelings. Butter, milk, rice, pulses and vegetables come under this category. Food that is full of pungent spices, is hot and has a heating effect on the system is Rajsik. Stale, raw, over-ripe food, eggs, meat, fish, wine, etc., are Tamsik foods. But, even Satvik food sometimes turns into Tamsik, if taken in excessive quantity.

One should not eat only for taste. We should see that the food which we take is neither excessive nor insufficient for our body's needs. It should also contain ingredients producing energy essential for the upkeep of the body and brain. A tasty food taken in excess is harmful.

For brain and mental work, one should eat nuts, fruits, apples, grapes, milk and almonds, etc. For persons engaging in physical labor, butter, carbohydrates, rice, sugar, etc., are necessary. Similarly, strength-giving and bone-forming foods like wheat, pulses, lime, milk, butter, etc. should be taken.

We must have plenty of air, water and carbohydrates. Air is foremost, without which one cannot live. Water comes next. Both are free gifts of nature. Carbohydrates found in cereals are third in importance.

We should eat slightly less than the requirements of our appetite; it is not wise to eat more and then take carminative mixtures. Man is not born to eat, but food is produced for man to eat. Soul is given the status of human life in order to know and realize God. Only human beings can know Him and our body cannot subsist without food.

Even animals are better than human beings. They eat only when hungry and not for taste, and their intake is just to satisfy their appetite and no more, in a natural way. If we eat more than is necessary, we not only deprive others of their share, but excessive intake of food is always harmful.

Eating is for living and remembering the Lord. You, however, believe that one lives to eat.

What Should We Eat?

Whatever is necessary for man to eat is found in fruits—citrus fruits, bananas, figs, dates, apples, pineapples, almonds, walnuts, groundnuts, coconuts and certain other dry fruits. Some scientists believe that it is not necessary to cook food. Boiling and cooking of vegetables destroy various energy-giving elements. They believe that a vegetable or a fruit, which cannot be taken without boiling, is actually not our food. Fruits increase mental and physical energy and we do not feel tired of working. After these, come vegetables, pulses and cereals, butter and milk. Wheat is considered to be the best energy producing food among cereals. Wheat flour ground in hand stone mills and from which bran has not been separated is beneficial. Mill ground flour is not good. Porridge of wheat or boiled wheat taken with milk, dried fruits like raisins, etc., and sugar is more strength-giving than other foods. Milk, curd and fresh fruits are good foods. Pulses take long to be digested. They produce a certain acidic poison and should be taken sparingly.

Food for Spiritual Discipline

In the first instance our conduct of life should be good. Wholesome (Sativik) food should be prepared from vegetables and cereals purchased out of the hard-earned

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income acquired by honest means. The person preparing should have wholesome (Satvik) ideas and he should repeat and remember God's Name with a peaceful and tranquil mind while preparing the food. The effect of these measures is reflected in the food and in those who eat it. By taking such food there would be peace in their minds and they would readily engage in remembering the Lord.

How Many Times and When Should the Food Be Taken?

Food prepared on Western lines is easily digested in five or six hours and the Indian food takes a little longer, i.e. seven or eight hours to digest. Doctors consider that children should eat three times — morning, noon and evening, whereas older people should not eat more than twice daily — morning and evening. The evening meal should be taken at least three hours before sleep, in order that a good portion of it is digested by then. One should fill half the stomach with solid food, one-fourth with water, and the remaining portion should be empty. If these simple principles are adhered to, there will be no ailments in the system. Sheikh Sa'adi says that portion of the stomach which remains empty will be filled with the Light of God. The physical body becomes fat with food. The soul on the other hand gets more energy with smaller intake of food.

Just as from taking food the body grows fat. Similarly the soul gains strength from fast.

The Harmful Effects of Excessive or Insufficient Intake of Food

Excessive food, under the temptation of its taste, increases the blood pressure, causes indigestion and many

other ailments, viz. pain in the joints, constipation, headache and bitter taste in the mouth, slothfulness, etc.

Pandering to taste produces ailments. (Mam M1, 1034-16)

More tasteful the food, more the diseases. He is not found without a Master. (Malar M1, 1255-6)

Meagre taking of food leads to loss of weight, blood insufficiency, prostration, faulty working of the lungs, low fever, restlessness, fear, coma and ultimately death.

Secret of Good Health and Long Life

Do not eat in haste, it produces indigestion. If food is chewed slowly, it is acted upon by saliva in the mouth. In haste, the secretion is not mixed and the stomach cannot easily digest it. Therefore, chew it completely and it should go down the throat as liquid. Mr. Gladstone assigned his long life to slow eating and chewing each morsel thirty-two times. If the food is eaten thus, dyspepsia is cured and even a small quantity is very beneficial.

Do not load your stomach too much. This leads to indigestion.

Do not eat either too cold or too hot food. This disturbs the stomach and leads to indigestion.

Fast twice each month. But one who's evening meal is light, simple and small, need not fast.

Always have regular times for food and it should be eaten in a happy and care-freemood.

Necessary Precautions in Taking Food

Late morning meals and excessive dinners are harmful. Avoid them. They produce stomach troubles, disturbed sleep, bad dreams and pains.

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As far as possible, finish your dinner before sunset.

Drink water slowly two or three hours after food. Do not try to swallow food with the aid of water and without proper chewing.

Secret of the Health of Saints and Great Men

We find from the life history of great men that their longevity was primarily due to simple and spare fare.

Kabir Sahib used to eat mainly rice and pulse cooked together.

*Oh Kabir, take rice and pulses with a pinch of salt as nectar. Why should one have his throat cut for bread? (Kabir, Salok, 1374-13)
Hazrat Mohammed's main food was barley.*

General Booth of the Salvation Army lived to the age of 83 years and was always healthy. He writes,

I have not eaten fish, meat or chicken for the past many years. My food mainly consists of butter, cheese, vegetables and cereals. I eat fruit also. I drink warm milk. I abstain from intoxicating and colored drinks. I do not smoke.

The simpler the life and food, the sooner the stomach digests the food and gets rid of it. The heart is fresh and the brain is clear. Body would be alert and would not feel tired from work. Plain living and high thinking pays.

Good Conduct (Sheel)

Sheel means noble ideas and noble character. It includes purity of thought, word and action.

A person who has good character has control over his sense organs. He remains unperturbed even in the midst of sensual surrounding. He is highly steadfast and has a good and noble nature. Mind enjoys the various sense pleasures through the five senses of perception and the five organs of action. To turn the senses away from the worldly pleasures and to look within, helps on the path of spirituality. The Gurus say:

He who controls the ten senses, his soul gets Enlightened. (Gauri M5, 236-14)

All these senses derive pleasure through the physical organs. The temptations or pleasures are all external. They cannot satiate the mind or the senses. One who is entangled in them, takes to the wheel of births and deaths. Good character leads to success in life and it is very necessary for spiritual gains. It is the stepping-stone to spirituality. Therefore, all Saints have laid great emphasis on this. The tenth Sikh Guru has emphatically stressed the need of purity of mind and character in order to cross the three attributes (Gunas).

By observing good character and contentment, one crosses the three attributes. (Ramkali, Patshahi 10)

The main and principal part of pure character consists of a life of continence, which means the purity of mind, word and deed. It does not simply mean control of sex organs. It comprises control over all sense organs. This is essential in all walks of life. For spiritual gains, however, it is especially necessary. It includes good conduct and pure character. All great men became great through their lofty character. Brahmacharya (continence) is a code of conduct by which we can realize God. One should not, therefore,

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go astray from it.

A man of good character becomes a fortunate man. Right conduct is a science dealing with character, good manners and human conduct. Right conduct is a science. It may be called the philosophy of human behavior. By this, one deals with others. Manu Ji says,

Character is the highest of duties which have been mentioned in the Scriptures and commentaries. Therefore, he who knows the soul should ever try to be of good character.

On finding that the path of duty (dharma) arises from character, Manu Ji describes it as the basis of all austerities and recommends its adoption.

The first duty of a brahmachari (continent person) is to be of right conduct. It means self-discipline and to have good character.

Virtue, truth, meritorious deeds, power and success all spring from good moral character. Mahabharat says that the sign of good religion is good moral character; it is also the sign of virtue. Its observance results in Dharma. The life is prolonged and a person is happy. It brings a good name in this life and hereafter. A person who is the friend of all and wishes the good of all living beings by his thoughts, words and actions, truly knows his religious duty.

Religion is a very intricate and difficult subject. Through religion, one achieves wealth, bliss and salvation. By religion, people generally mean good deeds. A deed which leads to emancipation and to salvation, which means the good of another and which does not lead to the harming of any living being, is true Dharma.

Good moral character beautifies virtue. The deeds of virtuous and religious persons are the signposts of goodness.

A seeker inquired from Rishi Ved Vyas,

I am in a great fix. I have not been able to understand the meaning of Dharma. People try to put different meanings. Kindly explain to me its meaning in simple language, so that I may do my duty in accordance with its precepts.

The Rishi replied,

Whenever you have to do some work, you should keep this principle before you. You should behave in your dealings with others as you wish them to behave with you. This is the sign of Dharma. Understand it thoroughly and use it in daily behavior. This is the essence of good conduct.

A man of good character tries to remove his weaknesses and becomes a Satvik person (wholesome). He behaves properly and correctly towards his parents, elders, brothers, sisters, friends and other relations and in fact with everybody. "May all prosper within Your will." "Peace be unto all the world." He loves his equals and does not harm anybody. He tells no lies. He remains continent and holds his mind away from bad thoughts.

God is a vital force. He is a vital power. Man's vital fluid is also the energy of life. A continent person must have a good moral character. He should control his senses and lead a virtuous life. Guru Arjan says that he who has conquered his senses has saved himself from the attack of the five evils - lust, anger, greed, attachment and vanity.

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Control of mind leads to freedom from five maladies. (Gauri M5 Sukhmani 274-6)

A man of good character values his vital fluid more than his life. He always carefully preserves it, because it is the cause of physical, mental and spiritual development. He is always strong and healthy. Laziness does not go near him. His face is never without its natural luster. His mind is steady and his intellect is sharp. All Rishis and Munis have preached its preservation, because it bestows life's energy and its loss leads to death.

Death is the result of loss of fluid. Its preservation leads to life.

Manu Ji says that young men, while receiving their education, should learn to control their sensual desires. They should, therefore, abstain from alcoholic drinks and spices, etc., which would have a heating effect. They should avoid scents and should not wear scented flower garlands, should not gamble, should avoid gossip, should not tell lies, should not look at the other sex with lust, should not sleep together and should carefully preserve their vital fluid.

Semen has a vital energy which supports our life. It is the vital life itself. It produces luster in our eyes and adds color to our cheeks. It is the vital part of our blood. Scientists consider that forty drops of blood form one drop of this vital fluid. It is a sort of white blood. Dr. Louis also says that it is formed out of vital elements of blood. When we lose even a few drops of blood, we are panic stricken, although it is much less valuable than the vital fluid. We, however waste this vital fluid, which is the king of vitality, recklessly for the pleasure of a few seconds. We are ignorant of its benefits and debase ourselves by wasting it. In order to enjoy sexual pleasures, we drink our own

blood and cut the roots of life with our own hands and make others victims of it.

Sensual pleasures are being indulged in on all sides, and the debasement is thought to be a civilized act. Our community and society is unconscious of it. We are in a very wretched state.

Vital fluid is a dynamic force and is the power and energy of soul and God. Lord Krishna says in Gita,

I am the seed of virility in man.

It is the essence of our life, intellect and spiritual consciousness. Once lost, it cannot be recouped by tonics, etc. If you preserve it, it will help you in realizing the Lord and in perceiving your soul and imbibing bliss. Premature old age, loss of memory, impotence, diseases of the eyes, lungs, heart and the delicate organs are the results of its excessive loss. Look at the young men and women of today. Their thin and pale faces, weak eyesight and emaciated bodies are a painful sight. We should, therefore, be very cautious and remain celibate and unmarried until the age of at least 24 years. We shall thus pay uninterrupted attention to our studies. This is the primary stage of celibacy but celibacy up to 36 and 48 years is of the second stage and highest stage respectively. To remain celibate in youth is a saintly quality. "To be good (celibate) in youth is a saintly quality." The more control we have over it, of greater use will it be in later life.

This vital fluid is working in all the energy-giving organs of the body. It is produced from the marrow of the bones. A kind of fluid known as chyle is produced in the intestines after the intake of food. From it blood is formed. Blood produces flesh, which in turn makes fat, and then bones are formed. The marrow of the bones produces

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semen, which is the most valuable essence of life. It is the most important of all the seven body-forming essences. To preserve it in the body is Brahmacharya (celibacy). It is of two kinds, physical and mental, which control respectively the physical and mental activities, Simran and Satsang (repetition of Holy Names and contemplation on the Form of the Master) help in observing it.

Food for a Celibate

A celibate should eat satvik (wholesome) food. Milk, rice, pulses, barley, almonds, cream, cheese, butter, vegetables, sago, black pepper and wheat bread help in preservation of celibacy. Such articles as stimulate passions, viz. onion, garlic, meat, wine, mustard oil, asa foetida, red chilli, spices, pickles, tea and so forth should better be avoided. These lead to thinning of the fluid and its loss.

Abstinence for a Celibate

In order to be a Brahmachari (person who observes continence) one should abstain from the following — talking to and hearing about women, looking at them, lewd talk, indecent jokes and touching women. Do not look at a woman with lust. Do not touch a woman with an idea of sex in mind. Do not freely indulge in play and sports with women. Do not indulge in talking about their beauty or listening to such talk. Do not sit in a solitary place with a woman. Do not think of a woman with a lustful idea. Do not even think of sexual intercourse with a woman not to speak of actually having it.

Married Life and Spiritual Progress

If after marriage a woman gives her entire love to her husband and the husband gives all his love to his wife

then what is left to give others? A faithful wife or husband is ready to do everything possible for the other. How can they then love the Lord or His creation? They cannot consider the entire humanity as their family as they themselves are moving on a narrow sphere. As their progeny increases, their love for the all-pervading Lord decreases. How then can they attain truth?

What then is the remedy for married persons? How can they realize the Lord? There is only one way — it is that their connection with or devotion to each other should not be based on satisfaction of their lust, but they should lead a life of restraint, having sex with the sole object of producing offspring. Their sexual desires should be on the basis of scriptural injunctions. They should have marital relations only once a month until such time as a child is conceived, whom they should be able to bring up and make self-supporting. They should completely avoid meeting each other during pregnancy and up to the end of the lactation period, which is generally two and a half years. Indulgence during this period would have a bad effect on the child. He would be of bad character and of weak mind. Moreover, frequency could be the cause of several female ailments. If there are one or two children by three or four connections in a lifetime they do not retard spiritual progress. By leading a pure life, the health of wife and husband is maintained.

Married couples should lead their lives as if they had never been married. They should have pure feelings for each other. They should bring up the children properly. They should lead their lives doing meritorious deeds. Such a person stands on the same footing as a celibate.

He who has only one wife is a celibate. (Guru Gobind Singh)

Saint Paul said:

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Love your wives as Christ loved the Church. This means that the life of married couples should be on the basis of pure and religious thoughts. People did not fully understand the implication of this precept and followed a life of sex and sense enjoyments. He again wrote and said: Love the Lord as if you have never had any wives.

The aim of human life is not the production of children alone. Our main aim is to unite the soul with God. A person on the spiritual path should always have this goal in view. The relationship of man and wife after a certain age, say 40 or 50 years, should be discontinued. One should then, while earning his living with his own labor, dedicate his time to the service of the Lord and His creatures. All Saints and great souls have followed such a path. They led a married life of restraint up to a certain age and thereafter they gave up this aspect of their activity. Swami Ram Tirath said that as long as men and women do not learn to live as brothers and sisters and lead lives of purity they cannot hope to make any progress. Lives of persons, who have tasted purity of existence, have been happy, healthy and without worries.

To consider our elders as mothers and others as sisters or daughters will raise a man to a high moral ideal and will relieve him of many troubles of the world. It also increases his mental and physical strength. Others remain weak, unhealthy and are victims of many troubles.

This continence cannot be practiced by control of body alone, for control of mind is essential for the control of the body. Continence should, therefore, be observed with mind, speech and action. If one controls the body but thinks of sensual pleasures, it is harmful, for the mind pushes the body in that direction.

Tulsi Das says,

Adhere to truth and humility and treat other person's wife as mother. I guarantee that you will meet God.

Speak the truth, be humble; and regard the wife of another as mother, if you do not even then realize the Lord hold Tulsi Das responsible.

Continence does not mean that one should merely control his lust and sensual passions. It means actually to withdraw oneself from all the sense desires. If we listen to sensual talks with our ears and see things with our eyes that stimulate passions and yet avoid the sexual urge, it would be like putting one's hand in fire and hoping that it will not be burnt. One should therefore withdraw one's attention and thought from all things which stimulate passion in order to achieve success in one's celibacy. The aim of continence is to try to seek God because it is a powerful medium for the goal of His realization.

If we lead a life of sensuality it will have a bad effect upon our children. They will try to copy our actions. The children of today know everything about sense pleasures. This was not so thirty to forty years ago. It is the polluted atmosphere of schools and colleges which affects them. The parents are responsible for leading a sensual life. There is then the education imparted by the teachers and the effect of their degraded lives. Many students lose their continence even before leaving the school and thereby contract many ailments. They lose their attractiveness because of loss of vital fluid. Firmness and sweetness leave them. They cease to be beautiful and comely.

Their memory is impaired. They find it difficult to understand a subject. They are listless. There is pallor on

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their faces and no luster in their eyes. They have defective eyesight. They have green and black rings below the eyes. They become flabby and suffer from pain in the head, back and spinal cord. They suffer from stomach-ache, lack of sleep, palpitation of the heart, slow fever and tuberculosis. They have spermatorrhoea and gonorrhoea, constipation, urinary disorders, piles, diarrhea and dysentery. There are many advertisements about general and sex tonics by doctors and physicians in the newspapers and there is a brisk sale of such medicines running into millions of rupees. All this points to our debased state.

Advantage of Continence

Dr. Nicholson writes,

It is a medical and physiological fact that the best blood in the body goes to form elements of reproduction in both sexes. In a pure and orderly life, this matter is re-absorbed and it goes back into circulation ready to form the finest brain, nerve and muscular tissues. This matter carried back and diffused through his system makes a man manly, brave and heroic.

If one remains celibate, even simple food is sufficient to keep fit and healthy and one will not need medicines and so forth. His life will become pure, his heart and body will be strong and he will attain long life. He will also be able to control his anger and his sense organs. He will have a pure, clean and good heart. He will be virtuous, non-violent and of a good moral character. Thus his children will be a valuable asset to the coming generation.

Chastity is life and sexuality is death.

Chastity

Chastity is the most beautiful flower of all human

virtues. It makes an angel of a man. Its beauty lies in its own purity, it has the quality of keeping the soul and the body free from any blemish and defect. Chastity consists in having no thought of connection with any person other than one's own wife or husband. It needs very great restraint because chastity may be destroyed by even thinking an evil thought. Fruits remain fresh on the trees, but once they are plucked their freshness is destroyed. One may preserve them for some time by placing them in a jar of honey. Similarly, chastity of a man or woman, once broken, can be protected only by devotion of a very high order. Such a devotion has a protecting influence for the soul, just as honey has for plucked fruit. We are otherwise destroyed like a moth in the fire.

In the beginning we transgress the limits of chastity. Then there is no resistance and we do not try to control the passions. Instead of the right use we put it to a wrong use. Everybody needs chastity. Married couples need it to keep to the path of virtue. In case of separation, he or she needs to pass the rest of the life happily in remembrance of the Lord. No man can see the Lord without being chaste. The Lord cannot manifest Himself in an impure heart. Christ says:

Dogs and the unchaste shall be banished thence. (1st Rev. XX, II 15)

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. (St. Matthew 5:8)

It is necessary to give up desire and lust when on the spiritual path. Maulana Rumi says,

If you desire consciousness and awareness of the soul, give up lust and passion, as these shut our Inner Eye, which cannot see

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the Light (Jyoti) of God, nor can our Inner Ear hear the Celestial Music within.

Give up lust if you want awareness, for it closes the eye and the ear.

Human bodies are like mirrors of glass, which cannot be carried together because they are liable to be broken by striking against each other. Even the pure rainwater becomes dirty as soon as it touches the earth. Therefore, do not allow anyone to touch you even in innocent play or love. It may be that your chastity remains intact, yet some damage is done to freshness of purity and the sweet smell of beauty. If you are ashamed by allowing another to touch you, then your chastity is affected. To preserve the chastity, the company of lustful men and women should be avoided as their speech has the effect of injecting poison in you, and this becomes the cause of ruin of your chastity.

Keep the company of pure men. If you cannot meet them, contemplate lovingly on the Master. In this way, your inner dirt would be washed. Do not, therefore, permit anybody to spoil your chastity. In order to be chaste, you should avoid the company of such persons as are given to sensual enjoyments. The poison of their lustful ideas will surely affect those who come across them. You should always keep the company of pure and chaste persons. If you fail to get such a company, meditate on the form of the Master with love and devotion. In this manner, your inner impurities will gradually be washed out.

Tolstoy says,

One should preserve one's vital fluid. He should not only abstain from evil action, but should keep his thoughts pure and clean and

should not besmear the soul with the dirt of sins and evil ideas.

He should, in other words, be a true and perfect celibate. Husband and wife both should lead a life of restraint and should suppress their urge. With the birth of desired children, they should give up their relationship of man and wife and engage themselves in the development and education of their children, who should be given proper guidance on the path of virtue so that they, in due course, may turn out to be true devotees of God.

Buddha says:

One should not cause pain to anybody. He should behave with others as he would himself like to be treated by others. Evil thoughts must be kept under control. It is necessary to control the lustful desires and senses in order to be virtuous. Lust and sensual pleasures lead to trouble. They are the cause of disputes, pains and worries in this world.

Zoroaster says:

You should work together with your companions. It is not necessary to remain separate from each other, but your way of life must be pure.

Lao-tze says:

I have three precious things which I value greatly: Compassion, Economy and Humility. By compassion I try to become brave; by economy I can be the leader of men.

He further says:

For you, it is enough that you should know your own self and be chaste. Do not punish others after quarreling with them. Do not be satisfied only with the purity of your talks and actions. You should

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be pure in mind. Then you may be the leader of others.

Charan Das says:

Good character is a yoga of high order, provided one knows. Without good character, salvation is not possible. All good qualities without good character are like a poison and Jap-Tap (austerities and recitations) will be of no avail. It is a very precious thing. A person without it is ignoble. Men of bad character go to hell and are subjected to punishment by the Angel of Death (Yama). Without it, a person has no stability of mind or body.

Good character is a yoga of high merit if one knows it. O Charan Das, without good character no one obtains emancipation. If you possess all virtues but have no character, your Jap Tap will be in vain. Learn discrimination at His feet. Character occupies a high position among the thirty virtues. The mind that has no character is debased. Without character, one goes to hell and is subject to death. Without character he wanders all over the world.

He further says that with good character, all other virtues remain intact just as an army functions properly while under the control of a commander. Nothing remains after truth departs. With the loss of character, all virtues are lost. When there is no fence, how can the field of devotion be protected? He who is not of good character in youth loses his health. When the face is pale, what is the use of repentance? With the loss of character, man's stature is lowered in the eyes of the world. Man is rebuked like a dog. He is not honored anywhere. It is an invaluable advice that you should be of good character. You would be redeemed and would meet the Lord. Therefore, bathe in the pool of good character and serve the Lord. There is no other place of pilgrimage like it.

With good character all the good virtues remain, just as the army remains with the commander. When truth is

lost, nothing remains; with loss of character, all is lost.

How can the field of devotion be saved when the fence is broken? Good character was not kept in youth and health deteriorated.

What is the use of repentance when one has lost face? With loss of character, the position in the world is lost. He is rebuked like a dog, and is not respected anywhere.

The best advice is to be of a good moral character. The life is redeemed and the Lord is realized. Bathe in the pool of good character and serve the Lord. Sukh Dev says that there is no pilgrimage like it.

In 'Pran Sangli', Guru Nanak has described beautifully the merits of observing continence and demerits of not doing so.

Everybody talks of vital drop, seldom does one know super vital drop. Super vital drop is the jewel. Those who search, find.

Who can know it? One who contemplates finds it. One ties a cloth tightly over the organ. One lives in a forest to be away from women. One does not close his eyes (sleep) for fear of loss of fluid. The mind, however, wanders in all directions. The mind which is running in the ten directions is controlled. Oh Nanak! the most precious jewel is found because of this control.

The jewel is got by controlling the fluid. The mind is controlled by controlling the fluid. Light appears by controlling the fluid. The Lord is realized by controlling the fluid. The body becomes pure by controlling the fluid. Man becomes immortal by controlling the fluid. One

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knows himself by controlling the fluid. He approaches God by controlling the fluid. One realizes the Lord by controlling the fluid. Oh Nanak! One is freed from rebirth by controlling the fluid.

One knows all the secrets by controlling the fluid. One sees Light by controlling the fluid. One conquers difficulties by controlling the fluid. One becomes fearless by controlling the fluid. One sheds pretenses by controlling the fluid. One hears the unknowable Melody by controlling the fluid. One takes to yoga by controlling the fluid. One knows the Lord by controlling the fluid. One becomes compassionate by controlling the fluid. One gets keen intellect by controlling the fluid. One knows the secrets of the body by controlling the fluid. Oh Nanak! There is seldom such a jewel among the millions.

No one knows the quality of a jewel. Only a jeweler knows the luster of a jewel. When a jeweler knows the luster of a jewel, he then gives out the quality of the jewel. Only a connoisseur can find a jewel. No one but a jeweler can recognize a jewel.

The jewel lights the mind of the connoisseur. A jewel is liked by the connoisseur. A connoisseur buys the jewel. Oh Nanak! A jewel dwells in the mind of the connoisseur.

When the jewel is got, its Light spreads. When the jewel is got, attention is fixed in Melody. When the jewel is got, one merges in the spiritual regions. When the jewel is got, the faith in the unknowable is strengthened.

When the jewel is got, the wonderful method is found. When the jewel is got, peace is obtained. When the jewel is got, all the wisdom is acquired. When the jewel is got, one engages in contemplation.

Those who waste the fluid lose the jewel. Those who waste the fluid are reborn. Those who waste the fluid undergo the cycle of eighty-four. Those who waste the fluid are over-powered by death. Those who waste the fluid have ailing bodies. Those who waste the fluid are tyrannized by Kal. Those who waste the fluid lose all. Those who waste the fluid suffer greatly. Those who waste the fluid get into difficulties. Those who waste the fluid are ill-treated by Yama (death). Those who waste the fluid suffer in the end. Oh Nanak! He who wastes the fluid shall have to weep.

He who wastes the fluid has to be reborn. He who wastes the fluid always suffers. He who wastes the fluid gets into extreme troubles. He who wastes the fluid again enters the womb. He who wastes the fluid burns like fire. These are the consequences of waste of fluid. Oh Nanak! He who wastes the fluid is born again and again.

He who does not control the fluid visits the wives of others. He who does not control the fluid weeps to the end. He who does not control the fluid is not able to carry out the Dharma (duties). He who does not control the fluid repents in the end. He who does not control the fluid is false like a dog. He who does not control the fluid is burnt by fire. He who does not control the fluid is degraded. He who does not control the fluid is sent to hell. He who does not control the fluid is unwise. Oh Nanak! He who wastes the fluid repents.

What is the benefit of self-control? By self-control depression disappears. Who can describe the benefits of self-control? By self-control one gets knowledge of all things. What is the use of self-control? By self-control one crosses the ocean of the world. By self-control one gets

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everything. By self-control one gets emancipation.

Imbibing Virtues

Lord is the storehouse of all virtues. The soul which imbibes virtues realizes the Lord and is dear to Him. Such a soul is blessed. Those virtues, by imbibing which the soul is honored at the door of the Lord, are classed under fourteen heads in the hymns. Those should be carefully considered and imbibed.

There are many virtues in the Lord. The soul that imbibes them finds the Lord and is dear to Him. She is the happy bride who is dear to the Lord.

Oh Love, I am bewitched by Your many virtues. Such virtues I find not in another. (Asa M1, 359-9)

The virtuous one found the truth by giving up desire for evil. She dyed her mind in the Shabd of the Guru and uttered the words of love and endearment with her tongue. (Sri Rag M3, 36-19)

Praise the truth, practice the truth and only true name can satisfy. Meditate on virtues, imbibe virtues and give up evil. (Sri Rag M3, 37-16)

Oh my mind! be pure and true, and love the Lord the evil will disappear and virtues will appear and you will unite with the Lord. (Asa M1, 437-14)

He who realizes the Name and imbibes the virtues of the Lord is dear to Him. Oh Nanak!, it is not she who is dear. It is so because of the necklace of Name. (Gauri M3, 243-19)

If I have treasure of fragrant virtues. I will enjoy the fragrance. If my friends are also blessed, let us share with them. (Suhi M1, 765-19)

What Are Those Virtues?

Repeat the Name and feel the presence of Par Brahm (Transcendental Lord).

I am a sacrifice to them who know the Name. I will give up egoism and walk in their company. (Sri Rag M3, 30-19)

Make the Shabd of the Guru your light and the truth the cot. And stand before Him with folded hands all the time. Then only will the Lord meet you. (Asa M5, 400-12)

He who realizes the Name and imbibes the virtues of the Lord is dear to Him. Oh Nanak, it is not she who is dear. It is so because of the necklace of Name. (Gauri M3, 243-19)

The virtuous one found the truth by giving up desire for evil. She dyed her mind in the Shabd of the Guru and uttered the words of love and endearment with her tongue. (Sri Rag M3, 36-19)

He who desires bliss should practice truth. He sees the Transcendental One near him and contemplates on the Name. (Gauri M5, 322-8)

One should give up egoism and sing the praises of the Lord, and love Him.

Oh hear me, my friend of unclean heart, merge in the Shabd of the Guru. (Gauri M3, 243-19)

I am under the protection of the Lord. I sing His praises in utter equipoise with restful body and heart. (Sorath M5, 620-3)

They sing the praise of the Lord and merge in His virtues. (Salok M4, 1423-11)

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Oh Nanak! I met the Perfect Master and realized the Lord spontaneously. There are others who trade in virtues and sell their demerits owing to the good nature of the Master. (Asa M3, 427-7)

He gets the Name by service of the Master and it is enshrined inside him. Mind and body become peaceful and the fire of desires is extinguished. He who gives up egoism attains utter peace. (Varhans M3, 588-7)

Do not injure the feelings of others.

Do not speak harshly to anyone, as the Lord is in all. Do not break anyone's heart as all are pure pearls. (Farid, Salok, 1384-17)

All hearts are like pearls, do not hurt them if you want to be beloved of the Lord. Do not break any heart. (Farid, Salok, 1384-19)

Do not be rude but use sweet words.

That speech is blessed which brings honor. Oh ignorant foolish mind, if you speak harsh words you would hear abuses. (Sri Rag M1, 15-13)

Ask the blessed bride what has made her dear to her Lord. It was contentment, simple dressing and sweet speech. (Sri Rag M1, 17-19)

Live in awe of the Lord.

Oh Sheikh, give up self-consciousness and abide in the fear of the Lord. Shed thy craziness. You will get release by living in awe of the Master, and through it realize the Fearless. (Vihagari M3, 551-17)

She dwells and works in awe of the Lord. She gets great bliss here and in His Court hereafter by entering the gate of salvation. (Gujri M3, 516-11)

Live within His Will and give up otherness.

Do as willed by the Lord and this is your embellishment. Give up otherness and this is chewing of betel leaves by you. (Asa M5, 400-11)

The ever blessed bride who loves the Master is always full of compassion. The words of the Master are jewels and he who accepts them enjoys the nectar of the Lord's love. (Sri Rag M4, 41-12)

Give up desires and evil.

The virtuous one found the truth by giving up desires for evil. She dyed her mind in the Shabd of the Guru and uttered the words of love and endearment with her tongue. (Sri Rag M3, 36-19)

Mind and body become peaceful and the fire of desires is extinguished. He who gives up egoism attains to utter peace. (Vadhans M3, 588-7)

Give up egoism and do not talk ill of others.

The pain of egoism is expelled. Bliss is had and body is without any disease. Oh Nanak, by the Grace of the Master, The Lord of the unfathomable virtue has been revealed. (Suhi M4, 773-6)

When you are not to remain here, why are you proud? Not to call anyone bad and not to argue with a fool, is the essence of the studies of the scriptures. (Asa War M1, 473-12)

You covet the wife or wealth of another and are afflicted with the evil of egoism. Give up evil thoughts, talking ill of others, lust and wrath. (Malar M1, 1255-19)

Do good even to the evil-minded. Do not indulge in wrath. Live in humility and think of the self.

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Oh Farid, do good for evil, and do not give shelter to the fire of wrath in the mind. Your body would be without disease and you would have everything you desire. (Farid, Salok, 1381-19)

Oh Farid, if one gives you a slap, do not give him a fist blow. Kiss his feet and go to your house. (Farid, Salok, 1378-5)

Do not be cross with anyone but search your own heart. Live humbly in this world, oh Nanak and thus obtain His Grace. (Gauri M5, 259-9)

The poor live in peace after giving up egoism, oh Nanak. The high and mighty have fallen prey to their own pride. (Gauri M5, 278-5)

He who bows to all and none bows to him, if he is weighed in a scale, his pan would be heavier. (Asa M1, 470-14)

Sinner bows twice as much as a hunter of deer. But all bowing is useless if there is evil in the heart. (Asa M1, 470-16)

Give up lust, wrath, greed, attachment and evil thinking and serve in humility. Abstain from coveting the wife, wealth and possessions of others. Do not indulge in evil thoughts or back-biting and live in peace.

You covet the wife or wealth of another and are afflicted with the evil of egoism. Give up evil thoughts, talking ill of others, lust and wrath. (Malar M1, 1255-19)

If one removes lust, wrath, greed and attachment, gives up evil and self-seeking, becomes humble and serves the Lord, then he is dear to Him. (Asa M5, 377-15)

He who lives in peace finds a place with the Lord. Oh Nanak, a lustful and wrathful person can never approach, so say the learned. (Bihagara War M3, 551-18)

Adopt truth, contentment, compassion and forgiveness.

To engage in truth, contentment and compassion is the secret of doing meritorious deeds. One can give up egoism and become the dust of the feet of others only through the Grace of the Transcendental Lord. (Sri Rag M5,51-9)

Without forgiveness, millions have perished. Who can count the numberless? (Ramkali M1, 937-5)

Ask the blessed bride what has made her dear to her Lord. It was contentment, simple dressing and sweet speech. (Sri Rag M1, 17-19)

Give up doubts, seek the Lord, know yourself, consider the Lord as omnipresent and all-pervading and serve the Saints.

Give up your doubts, turn Godward and know yourself. The Lord is always present in you. How can you then do evil? (Ramkali M5, 883-7)

Know the Lord to be ever present with you and become the dust of the feet of all. Keep company of the Saints and make the Lord your own. (Todi M5, 713-3)

He who desires bliss should practice truth; he sees the Transcendental One near him and contemplates on the Name. (Gauri War M5, 322-8)

Be you the slave of the Saints, their contact leads to Peace. The best of all virtues, however, is that the Lord is near you. (Asa M5, 400-8)

Become the slave of the slave of Him who is dear to the Lord. Surrender your mind and intellect to the Master and by the Master's Grace utter the Unutterable. (Bilawal M4, 834-16)

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Wash the feet of the Guru and serve Him and give up desires for evil. Become the slave of His slave and you will be honored at His door. (Asa M5, 377-17)

Become the dust of all, consider all as friends, see the Lord in all and do not injure any being.

Know the Lord to be ever present with you and become the dust of the feet of all. Keep the company of the Saints and make the Lord your own. (Todi M5, 713-2)

Oh mind, become the dust of all and all should appear as friends. The Lord pervades all and sustains them with His Mercy. (Asa M5, 379-5)

Become the dust of all and identify yourself with the Lord. Do not injure anyone and go to your Lord's house. (Gauri War M5, 322-9)

To engage in truth, contentment and compassion is the secret of doing meritorious deeds. One can give up egoism and become dust of the feet of others. Only through the Grace of the Transcendental Lord. (Sri Rag M5, 51-9)

There is one Light. That One dwells in all hearts. See the same Brahm (Lord) in all. The soul and the Lord are one and pervade all. Bow to all. (Kalyan M4, 1325-13)

Oh Farid, the Lord pervades the creation and the creation is in the Lord. How can anyone be called bad when there is none other than Him? (Farid, Salok, 1381-17)

Give up your doubts, turn Godward and know yourself. The Lord is always present in you. How can you then do evil? (Ramkali M5, 883-7)

Admit death as a fact and give up longings for the fu-

ture.

Accept death as the first basic fact and give up longing for the future. Become the dust of all men and then come to Me. (Maru War M5, 1102-11)

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CHAPTER 6. THE NAME OF GOD (NAAM)

What is the Name or Naam? It is easy to talk of Naam, but its real significance can only be learned from those who have realized it. There is no difference between the Name and the Named. He who obtains the Name realizes the Named One also. Those who have not been initiated into it are millions of miles away from it. Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti says:

There is no difference between the Name and the Named. See the reflection of God in His Name.

The Name is all in all. Everything emanates from the Name. Those who do not know the Name or have not realized it know nothing. They come empty-handed into the world and like gamblers go away empty-handed wasting their wealth in this world. Kabir Sahib says:

Blessed is the leper who bleeds from every pore but repeats the Name of the Lord, what is the use of a healthy body if one does not repeat the Name?

The Need for and Greatness of the Name

For rising to the spiritual regions the wings of the Name are required. Those who wish to see the Lord in His Glory can have the wings of the Name and fly to those regions.

You should fly in the sky of the pure spiritual region. For this it is necessary to fly with the feathers and the wings of the Name of the Lord.

If you really desire to meet Him, you should repeat His Name. He is not separate from His Name.

If you wish to meet the Reality, repeat His Name. You will unite with God if you unite with His Name. You will certainly remain with God day and night; provided the Name of God is with you always.

The Name destroys all sins. One becomes one-pointed and worldly desires do not trouble him. Unite with the Name and without any trouble you will become pure and His Light will shine in you.

Your heart will shine with the Light of the beloved, if it is cleaned with His Name.

Kabir Sahib has sung the praise of Name in a charming manner. He says:

If there is a gram of Name and a thousand grams of sins, half a gram of the Name in the heart burns all sins to ashes. By repeating the Name the dark spots of desires are washed away just as a spark burns up a hay stack. By repeating the Name, the snares of the mind and Maya are burned; in a moment all the dualities of this world vanish.

He who possesses the wealth of the Name has all the occult powers.

All occult powers are slaves of the Name; He who possesses the wealth of the Name has all powers. The eight spiritual powers and the nine occult powers, all stand with folded hands before him.

Whoever unites with the Name, whether he be good or bad, wise or unwise, is taken across this world by it. By sitting near water or fire we feel cold or hot. Similarly, the touch of the Name affects our inner self. Whether we repeat the Name with love or without love, lazily or enthusiastically, it cannot but affect us. Saint Tulsi Das says

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in the Ramayana:

The repetition of the Name produces happiness all over; whether done with love, or without love, or with laziness. (Ramayana, Balkand 27)

The Name is engrossing and intoxicating. Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti says:

That the Glory of the Name of the Lord has taken hold of my heart and life and has quenched my thirst with the sweet drink of union with Him.

The Glory of the Name of God took hold of my life and heart; my thirst was quenched with the Nectar of the Name of the Lord.

There are Myriads of Names of God, Which One Leads to Salvation?

The Lord has numerous names which have been given to Him by wise men and seers in order to praise Him.

Innumerable are His names. (Jap Ji, 4-7)

The Lord pervades all. He is independent, and has no equal. He is the Supreme Lord and cause of all. He is nameless and has no name. He has been described variously by the Saints as Unfathomable, Invisible, True Being, Sat Purush, True Name, Sat Naam, the One, Eka-mkar, the Perfect Conscious Being, Puran Chetan Purush, the Great Lord, Ram Rai, Timeless, and so forth. He is Invisible, because He cannot be seen, and Unfathomable, because he cannot be known. Similarly, holy men have named the Lord of the three worlds 'Without Word', Transcendental One, Word, and Ultimate Being, as well as Lord of Justice, and Destroyer (Kal). Many other names have been given to Him, keeping in view some of His vir-

tues, such as Ram, Rahim, Girdhari, Murari, Allah, Khuda and Wahguru. The Jews and Christians call Him Jehova. We are a sacrifice to all these names.

I am a sacrifice to all the Names You have. (Basant M1, 1168-14)

Reality of the Name

We hear a good deal about the praise and contemplation of the Name, but we have not thought very much about its reality. What is the Name, and which is the Name that leads to salvation?

Which is the Name by repeating which one can gain release? (Ramkali M9, 902-5)

Which is the Name by repeating which one crosses the ocean of the world? Which is the Name of the Lord by repeating which one crosses the ocean? (Sorath M9, 632-12)

The Lord has no name; He is without a name; let us salute the Nameless One. (Jap Sahib)

Innumerable are His names, but He is beyond all. He has no limit, no end. How can He be described in words? Knowing this, the wise men and seers, in order to praise Him, have given Him many names which indicate His infinite nature. But even then they could not describe the Reality.

You have many names and innumerable forms; no one can describe Your virtues. (Asa M1, 358-15)

Oh Lord and life of the world; all fortunes and treasures and powers are in the palm of Your hand; You have infinite names. (Dev Gandhari M5, 536-6)

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The Lord is unfathomable, and infinite are His names. The wise tried hard to describe His virtues, but could not properly evaluate Him. (Kalyan M4, 1319-5)

Oh Lord, Your names are innumerable. The tongue cannot count them. (Bhairon M4, 1135-17)

The tenth Guru in the line of Guru Nanak says:

How can all Your names be spoken or described? (Jap Sahib, Patshahi 10)

There is a difference in the names. Some are descriptive and some are personal.

The tongue utters Your descriptive names. Sat Naam is Your old original name. (Maru M5, 1083-12)

Which of these names should be accepted, or which is the highest one? Hindus lay emphasis on Om and sing the praises of Ram. Allah is used by Muslims, and Waheguru by Sikhs. Every religion has its own names. Which is the name that leads to salvation? What is the purpose of contemplating on a name or praising it? Is it merely to understand its meanings by repetition, or is it something else in addition? The repetition of words and meditating on their meanings can only lead to mental goals. The Gurus have at various places, in their writings, emphasized the repetition of Names, the hearing of the Name, contemplation on the Name, dwelling on the Name in the heart, and seeing the Light of the Name.

Repeat the Name, my dear friends. Repeat the Name and be happy. Hear the Master's words and keep the Name ever in mind. (Asa M4, 367-15)

On hearing the Name my mind felt bliss. By following the direc-

tions of the Master, I enjoyed the benefits of the Name. (M 4 Asa 367-16.)

Meditate on the Name as long as you have life and breath. The Lord will then accompany you at the time of death and save you. (M 4 Sri Rag 82-4.)

Oh Lord! Barren should be the mothers of those in whose heart You do not dwell. Their empty bodies wander without the Name and they die in woe. (Jetsari M4, 697-15)

The devotees of the Lord and Master pray again and again to the Master. We worms and insects seek Your shelter. Oh Master, have mercy and enlighten us with the Name. (Gauri M4, 492-9)

The Gurus, in addition to mentioning repetition and meditation on the Name, have also spoken about hearing the Melody of the inner Sound and seeing the Light of the Name or Word of God.

By hearing the Name one knows himself, and gets the benefit of the Name. By hearing the Name sins are expiated, and the mind becomes pure. Oh Nanak, blessed are those who hear the Name. A devotee always meditates on it. (Sarang Var M4, 1240-16)

By repeating the Name one gets the Light of millions of suns. (Jetsari M5, 700-18)

Have mercy and give us the Light of the Name. (Gujri M4, 492-10)

The Name has in it the means of both complete hearing and seeing. In the Gurbani, mention is made of the Name abiding in the heart. It has been clearly stated that the Name is beyond the mind and the senses.

Naam is infinite, invisible and imperceptible. (Maru M1, 1041-19)

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From this it is clear that the Lord's true Name is not mere words, but is something else which dwells in the inner recesses of our being. There are sweet and enrapturing melodies in it which can be heard. There is Light in it which can be seen. That Name is, in reality, invisible, imperceptible and infinite. It is all-pervading. Kabir Sahib has clearly stated:

The millions of names current in the world do not lead to release; the primal Name, which is the secret formula, is rarely known.

The Gurus have mentioned that repetition of Names has its own place and is necessary, but we cannot, in this way, merge with the Lord. Unless we get connected with God-in-action who has been described as Shabd or Naam, we cannot get release. But this can only happen through a Perfect Master.

Everyone utters the Name of the Lord but through utterance alone one mounts not to God. When by Guru's Grace the Lord is enshrined in the heart then alone does one gather the Fruit. (Gujri M3, 491-1)

Merely crying water, water, is of no avail. It is only when we get water that we feel its coolness and our thirst is quenched. Yari Sahib says:

The tongue is tired of repeating Ram (Lord). By merely saying water, thirst is not quenched, this is done only when one drinks it.

It is said in the hymns of Kabir Sahib:

Without seeing and feeling, it is no use repeating the Name. If one were to become wealthy by talking of wealth no one would remain a pauper.

All names are for the Named. If one unites with the one whom the name represents, one may remember Him by any name. If we get water, it is immaterial if it is called pani, as in Punjabi; Eau, as in French; Hydor, as in Greek; Aqua, as in Latin; or water, as in English. When we meet the One whom these names represent we get Him and His virtues. Hunger is not removed by crying 'bread, bread', or thirst by saying 'water, water'. The words 'water' and 'bread' are quite distinct from the actual water and bread. It is only by using these things that thirst and hunger are satisfied. We do not get the real benefit unless we unite with that which the Name represents.

Maulana Rum says:

Repeat the Name and search for the Named; without this the Name is useless.

Saint Tulsi Das states that the real Name is superior both to Brahm and Ram (God), because Brahm, Par Brahm, Sat Naam, Alakh and Agam were all created by the Name.

The Name is higher and more bountiful than Brahm and Ram (God). (Ramayana, Bal Kand 25)

Brahm is both 'formless' and 'with form.' Indescribable, unfathomable, beginningless and wonderful. According to me, the Name is greater than both of them. He has had them in His power through all the ages. (Ramayana, Bal Kand 22-1)

The unfathomable has been realized through the Name. The Name is, therefore, greater than Brahm and Ram (God). (Ramayana, Bal Kand 22-3)

Tulsidas goes to the extent of saying that praise of the

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Name is infinite, since even Rama cannot adequately sing its praises.

How far can I sing the praise of Nam (Name)? Even Rama Himself cannot do so. (Ramayana, Bal Kand 25-4)

The reason for this is that Rama is an incarnation of Brahm and Brahm and Par Brahm were all created by the Name.

Those who have forgotten the real Name and are repeating other names, cannot derive full benefit. They are entangled in this world like a worm that wastes its time running hither and thither in a dunghill.

Those who give up the real Name and repeat other names, are like worms that waste their time in a dirt heap. (Sarang Var M3, 1247-5)

Apart from the repetition of the real Name, all reading and recitals are within the sphere of Maya. Except the Name nothing is permanent and except for its repetition, all reading and recitals lead to nothing.

False is all other reading, false is all other speech, false is the love of Maya. Oh Nanak! Without the Name nothing is eternal, they who read undergo woe and misery. (Sri Rag Var M3, 84-15)

In the Gurbani only study and contemplation of the Name are regarded as true worship; but only a rare few understand this.

Oh Nanak, study and meditation on the Name is the only true worship; but very few realize this. (Sarang Var M3, 1246-16)

The Gurus have said that reading and writing are

worldly occupations.

To gather knowledge is no more than to follow the way of the world. (Sorath Var M3, 650-11)

The Reality in all religions is the Name of God which is Supreme in all of them.

The essence of all faiths is contained in the Name of the Lord. (Gauri M5, 296-4)

No spiritual or other deed can equal repetition of the real Name. The Name is superior to all charities and alms-giving, recitals and austerities, study of the Vedas, and all other religious and meritorious deeds.

Everyone asks for happiness, but the Lord does as He Wills. No deed, charity or devotion equals the practice of the Name. (Vadhans M1, 566-9)

Above all acts of piety and charity, austerity and concentration, is contemplation on the Name. He who utters the Lord's Name, fulfills the object of his life. (Asa M5, 401-3)

People study the Vedas and the Shastras in order to cross the world; they do many meritorious deeds, but above them all is the Name. (Asa M5, 405 9)

Millions of meritorious deeds cannot equal contemplation on the Name. All outer deeds such as pilgrimages, alms-giving and charities, fasts, acts of piety, and so forth, fall short of it. It is only the practice of the Name which can take one to the highest spiritual regions. There is no other way.

You may offer your body in tiny bits in sacrifice, you may offer body and mind as sticks to the fire day and night; you may do myr-

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iads of deeds, but none equals the worship of the Name. You may have yourself cut in two by placing your head under the sacred saw. You may freeze your body in the snows of the Himalayas, still the disease of the mind will not be cured. You may be absolutely certain that this will not equal the worship of the Name. You may give heaps of gold, fine horses and good elephants in charity; you may give away land and cows, and feel proud of doing so, but you get the true gift only from the Master if the Name of the Lord has pierced your mind. You may through arduous intellectual work study the Vedas, but you will still be in bondage. Only the Master opens the gates of release. All your efforts will fall short of the Name. This is indeed the only true kind of conduct. (Sri Rag M1, 62-6)

The praise of the Name is beautifully sung in the Adi Granth:

Repetition, austerities, knowledge, meditation, commentaries on the six Shastras and the Smritis, the practice of yoga, the performance of rituals, renunciation and wandering about in the forests, making all other kinds of efforts, deeds of charity and piety, and oblations to the sacred fire, cutting up of the body and offering each bit as sacrifice, keeping fasts and doing other deeds of merit; these equal not meditation on the Lord's Name; oh Nanak! after hearing the Name only once from a Perfect Master (at the time of initiation). If one scans the nine regions of the world and live long; becomes a great and detached ascetic; offers his life to the fire; gives away gold, horses, elephants and land in charity, practices inner washings and yogic postures, disciplines himself with hard practices like a Jain, and has himself cut in pieces bit by bit, but does not get rid of the dirt of his ego, none of these things equals the Name of the Lord; oh Nanak, a devotee gains salvation by repeating the Name. If one dies at a sacred spot with desires in his mind, he is not rid of ego and pride of self. If one washes his body day and night, one's mind is not cleansed of dirt, one may discipline one's body in many ways, but one does not succeed in ridding the mind of the poison of ego. One may constantly wash the body, but how can a wall of mud be washed clean? Oh mind, sing the praises of

the Name of the Lord; oh Nanak, the Name has saved many a sinner. (Gauri M5, 265-10)

Commentaries on the Vedas, Puranas and other Scriptures all say that all practices except that of the Name are of no avail.

Commentaries, Vedas, Puranas and other Scriptures all proclaim that all practices save that of the Name are false and vain, the prattle of children. (Suhi M5, 761-16)

The traditions of the house of Nanak emphasize the practice of the Name.

The house of Nanak relies on the Name alone. (Bhairon M5, 1136-18)

All true Saints, holy men and devotees have engaged in the practice of the Name and all religions preach it.

The Name is the path of Nanak and Kabir; know it in your heart. Dhru and prahlad were intoxicated with it. (Dulan Das)

The primal poet knew the greatness of the Name, he became a Saint by repeating It in the reverse order. (Ramayana, Bal Kand 18)

The devotees of the Lord praise the Name at all times.

Standing, sitting and in sleep they repeat the Lord's Name, for this, oh Nanak, is the eternal task of the devotee. (Gauri M5, 286-5)

All the religions sing its praise.

The essence of all religions is the Name of the Lord. (Gauri M5, 296-4)

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The best of all duties is this duty; perform the purest act, the repetition of the Name of the Lord. (Gauri M5, 266-13)

Real Worship That Leads to Salvation is That of the Name Real worship of the Lord is rare.

It cannot be adequately described.

Oh Saints, rare is the worship of the Lord; one cannot adequately praise it. (M3 Ram Kali 910-5)

Everything other than the Lord is unclean. What can we offer Him? All the world worships Him, but, as it is worldly, the worship is not fruitful. Those who are absorbed in the Shabd are pure and blessed. There is no true worship save that of the Name. This is the real worship. The entire world is lost in delusion. So far as worship is concerned, many persons do it, but as they do not know the true method of worship, they are entangled in duality and doubt.

Everyone worships God, but the egotistical man knows not the Reality. If one is absorbed in the Word and his mind becomes pure, he truly worships. People are deluded. A true devotee realizes himself by meditating on the Name. They who are attuned to the Lord through the Word are pure beings and they sparkle with Truth. Without the Name, none can worship God. Without it the world wanders in doubt. The God-Conscious Being realizes himself. Attuned to the Lord's Name. He, the Immaculate God Himself, makes us worship Him through Guru's Word and makes it fruitful. If one worships, but knows not the way, His mind is stained with the love of the other. Only a true devotee knows what worship is, within his mind is enshrined the Lord's Name. (M3 Ram Kali 910-7)

The Name is the Supreme Lord The Name or Word or Holy Spirit is the Supreme Lord. It sustains both this world and the next.

The true Name created my body; it sustains me both here and hereafter. (Asa M1, 358-9)

The Name is beginning less and endless. It is imperishable.

Give up all cunning and contemplate the Absolute, Transcendent Lord. All else except the True Name is false. (Asa M5, 405-2)

Only the Lord remains, and His Name and the Saints. (Salok M9, 1429-4)

All is Within the Power of the Name

Whom the Lord Wills gets the directions of the Master and knows the Name. Oh Nanak, all is in the power of the Name. One gets it only with great good fortune. (Asa M3, 426-8)

He manifested Himself and assumed the form of the Name. (Asa Var M1, 463-4)

The Name is the essence of all. Without the Name one is subject to the pain of death. When one's self merges with the essence, the mind is stilled. Duality goes and unity takes its place. (Ramkali M1, 943-13)

The Name is the Creator of All

The Name is the Divine Sound or Shabd. When the Sound was unmanifested it was nameless. There was no creation previous to its manifestation. It had no form. From it arose a wave that created all. All the creation is sustained by the Name. It is the beginning and the end of all.

The Gurbani says that in the beginning the unmanifested assumed the form of the Name.

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He manifested Himself and assumed the form of the Name. (Asa Var M1, 463-4)

All this creation is a manifestation of the Name. There is nothing else except it. Since the entire creation emanated from it, then what else is there that can sustain the creation?

All the creation is within the Name, there is no place that is outside of the Name. (Jap Ji, 4-9)

The sentient and the insentient, the manifest and the unmanifest, all are from Him.

All was created by the Name; one cannot know it except through a Perfect Master. (Suhi M3, 753-5)

The Name is the creator of the entire universe, and it sustains all.

God is the great Name, which created all creatures. He pervades all and sustains them. (Sri Rag M4, 81-15)

All emanate from the Name and by giving it up die. (Sorath M3, 603-7)

All the regions, all the universes, the sky, the nether-worlds and all habitations, palaces, as well as their inhabitants, were created by the Name. Guru Arjan, in the Sukhmani, sings beautifully the praises of the Name, the Creator:

The Name sustains all creatures. The Name sustains all regions. The Name sustains the sky and the nether-world. The Name sustains all forms. The Name sustains all habitations and palaces. By hearing the Name all are saved. (Gauri M5, 284-11)

All the worlds, regions and ages exist by means of the Power of the Name.

The universe, all divisions of the world rest only on the One Lord. This the Guru has revealed, tearing off the veil of Maya. When the nine treasures of the Name are enshrined in the heart, why and where is one to run? (Gauri M5, 205-11)

What is the Name?

What is the Name whose praise is sung in every hymn written by the Gurus? It is necessary to ponder over this question. It is impossible to describe the Name in human language. It is a current of consciousness or Divine Sound, Shabd. When there is motion in the consciousness, the Sound appears. We call this the Name or Word of God. This Name or Sound is the sustainer of the entire universe. Whenever there is creation, there is Divine Sound or Shabd. Creation cannot be carried out without the Divine Sound. This Sound is all-pervading. No place is without it. It is, however, manifest at some places, and unmanifest at others. It is resounding from head to foot. It is the essence and real substance of the universe.

Oh Pipa, the Sound is the real essence; but only a Perfect Master can reveal it. (Pipa, Dhanasri 695-15)

All religions describe the Lord as being a Divine Sound. The Name is a current of consciousness which has the power to create. By its aid the soul reaches its Original Home after passing through the physical, astral and causal spheres.

Holy men have mentioned two kinds of names. One is the external name, which can be spoken or written.

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This is called *apra vidya* or external knowledge. It is also called the *Varan-atmak Name*. The *Varan-atmak* or *utterable Name* is used in worldly matters. It is used in all the Scriptures. By utterances of the tongue men and other living beings convey their thoughts to others. A monkey screeches and gathers all the other monkeys. The *Varnatmik Name* is the first step in spiritual progress. In order to still the mind we have to repeat the Name with the tongue or mentally. This *Varan-atmak* repetition is done in four ways.

Bekhari: By the tongue.

Madhyama: Through the mind at the throat center.

Pashyanti: Through the mind at the heart center.

Para: Through the subtle current of mind at the naval center.

By the repetition of this name some happiness or peace is obtained, but it is not perfect, since all of the centers at which it is repeated are below the eye center or the Third Eye, the seat of the soul.

The second Name is the unfathomable, imperceptible and secret Name, which emanates from the Lord Himself and is His Form. It is called *Para Vidya*, *Divine Science*, or *Dhun-atmak Naam*, *unutterable Name* or *Naam* heard by the Soul. In it the Melody of the personal Divine Name can be heard. It cannot be spoken. He who repeats it in his heart without the use of his tongue can know God, the Creator of all regions.

He who repeats it without the tongue, he only knows the nature of the Name. (Malar M1, 1256-10)

The Melody of the Name is inside man

But unless one meets someone who knows the secret, one cannot hear it. We waste our lives without it. The Name is the Word and the Named is Dhun-atmak. The Lord can be known only by rising above words. The repetition of the Varan- atmak utterable Name is done with the tongue. This is the first step on the ladder of spirituality and is therefore, necessary. Saint Ravi Das says:

Without seeing Him, desire does not well up; but how to see Him when all that seems will pass away? He who dwells upon the Lord's Name through His praise, that Yogi alone becomes detached. (Ravi Das, Bhairon 1167-9)

The utterable Name is like a puppet which appears to be independent; but in reality there is a hidden wire attached to it which is in the hand of the manipulator. The relation between the Name and the Named is similar. We have to realize the real God through the spoken word 'God'. Utterable words are necessary to still the mind. But the soul cannot ascend to higher regions, after leaving the body without the melody of Naam, the unutterable Name which is within the body. The Varan-atmak Name of God is a spoken word uttered in languages that differ from country to country. The Dhun-atmak Name, however, resounds in a language that cannot be spoken and which is the same for the entire world. The advice of the Saints is the same for all, whatever their nationality, caste or creed. The message of the Naam which is resounding within us is the same for all classes and races.

The teachings imparted to the four castes are alike; the devotee repeats the Name and is redeemed. Oh Nanak, the Naam resounds in every heart in the Iron Age. (Suhi M5, 747-19)

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The story about Mian Mitha, in the book called Janam Sakhi, throws light on this subject. There lived in Mithankot a holy man by the name of Mian Mitha who met Guru Nanak and discussed various subjects with Him. Guru Nanak said,

Oh Mitha, without the True Name one remains in bondage and cannot obtain salvation.

When Mian Mitha asked what the Name was, Guru Nanak said,

Mian Mitha, no one has been able to describe the Name. It is not a matter of mental knowledge; it can only be experienced.

Mian Mitha then said,

Oh Lord, tell me this secret by one means or another.

The Guru said, "Listen with attention. Do you hear anything?" Mian Mitha replied, "I hear nothing". Guru Nanak then took Mian Mitha aside, looked at him intently and then asked, "Mian Mitha, do you hear anything now?" Then Mian Mitha replied,

Oh Merciful and Redeeming One, I feel as if the eternal waves of the Name of God are flowing in every pore of my body.

From this it is clear that the Name is indescribable in words. It manifests as a melody and it can only be experienced.

A true devotee praises the Lord with every pore of his body. (Ramkali M1, 941-5)

The Saints, therefore, say that the Lord is one, and that

there is only one method of meeting Him. This is a method that does not interfere with any caste or religion. One may belong to any caste or religion, yet he can follow the method without any hindrance.

The Path of the Name is inside all. One can unite with the Lord by following it. He can only be realized when one unites with this Name. Everyone is tied down by the fetters of birth and rebirth because of his attitudes and convictions and is not ready to adopt new ideas. But by staying in the company with a holy man one begins to understand something about the Name.

The Melody of the Name

The Name has pure Melody. It is resounding in every heart. After receiving instructions from a Master one can hear it. All religious Scriptures speak of it.

The virtues of the Lord; the Melody of the Name and Word; the Vedas and Shastras praise them; the Scriptures are full of them. (Gauri M5, 296-4)

In the heart rings the Melody of the Name, which is neither subdued nor can it be evaluated. Without the Name everyone is a pauper, this I have learnt from my Master. (Sarang M1, 1232-10)

By hearing the Inner Sound one knows himself, and gets the benefit of the Name. By hearing the Name sins are expiated, and the mind becomes pure. Oh Nanak, blessed are those who hear the Name. A devotee always meditates on it. (Sarang Var M4, 1240-16)

The story about Mian Mitha, in the Sakhi, given earlier, shows that there is Melody in the Name.

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The Center Where the Name is Heard

When the soul withdraws its attention from the body, it ascends and reaches the eight-petalled lotus behind the eyes, it hears the Name.

Oh Yogi, ask for the alms in the township of the body, then you will be blessed with the Name. (Ramkali M3, 908-15)

There is a very sweet and captivating melody in the Name, on hearing which the soul is attracted to the spiritual regions, just as a needle is drawn towards a magnet, since our souls, the Name and the Lord have the same common substance. By the attraction of the Name the soul leaves the tomb of the body and rises out of it. Maulana Rumisays:

If I were to tell even a little about the Divine Melodies, the dead would rise from their graves.

This Name is self-manifesting. In the first stage some Name of God is repeated and the attention is withdrawn from the external senses and gathered inside. Then its Melody becomes audible and one becomes intoxicated with its sweetness and purity.

One becomes absorbed in the Name day and night; he is intoxicated and happy. (Ramkali M1, 946-12)

Worldly intoxication is short-lived, but on becoming absorbed in the Name, the soul remains in ecstasy day and night without a break.

The ecstasy of the Name remains constant day and night. (Janam M1, Sakhi)

Man lives by means of the Name, and without it he dies. By re-

membering it I live, by forgetting it I die. (Asa M1, 9-15)

Oh my Lord, I live by praising your Name; without the Name there is no life. Oh Master, strengthen my faith in the Name. (Sri Rag M4, 40-5)

Unless the soul unites with this Unutterable Name, one does not get complete salvation.

Time for the Practice of the Name

The Name can be repeated at any time, but the Amrit Vela, nectar hour in the early morning is the best time.

At the nectar hour meditate on the Glory of the Name. (Jap Ji 2-5)

Rise early and meditate on the Name, praise it day and night. No sufferings will visit you, and woes will depart. (Gauri M5, 255-6)

Why Do We Not Hear the Melody of the Name?

The mind is forever floating on the crest of its waves. It is full of the filth of sense pleasures with the result that our attention has scattered into the world. It cannot, therefore, capture the Melody of the Sound.

The impure minds do not devote themselves to the Word, and receive not the Name. Impure they live, impure they die and lose honor as they depart. (Sri Rag M3, 39-9)

So long as the mind is trapped in the whirlpool of desires one is puffed up by ego. Such a one is neither attuned to the Word, nor does he love the Name. (Sarang Var M3, 1247-14)

The Name is Not the Subject of the Senses

The True Name is invisible, imperceptible and infinite. It is being uttered day and night without a tongue. By the

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practice of listening to the Name, the waves of the mind are stilled and the mind is controlled. Guru Nanak exhorts us to attain realization of this Name.

The Name is invisible, imperceptible and infinite; its essence is very sweet and dear. Oh Lord, bless Nanak with Your praise in all ages. There can be no end to Your remembrance. (Maru M1, 1042-1)

The True Name is Secret and Rare

The True Name is secret even though it is present in everyone. But in order that it may manifest itself it is necessary to get initiation from a Saint who is adept in its practice.

In the Kali Yuga the Name lies hidden though the Lord fills every heart. The Jewel of the Lord's Name becomes manifest to those hearts that retire to the Guru's refuge. (Parbhati M3, 1334-14)

One can get everything else in this world, but this secret Name is unobtainable save to a rare devotee of the Master.

The Name in this world is hard to attain, through the Master is the Name enshrined in the heart. (Sorath Var M3, 644-16)

In the Kali Yuga precious is God's Name, through the Master's Word it is realized. (Gujri M3, 490-15)

The Name is the Link Connecting Us With the Lord

The current of the Name pervades the entire universe and sustains all. This body is a small representation of the universe and the Name pervades and sustains it also. We are connected with the Lord through this current and the

connection is unbreakable. This current is flowing from the head downwards. Just as a fish swims up a stream against its flow, similarly the soul with the help of the current of the Name rises up and reaches the source of the Name. This Path is sometimes described as the Reverse Path. All other paths are worldly ones.

He whose mind is attuned to the Name, alone knows the immaculate One, oh Nanak. (Gauri M5, 281-11)

The Name is an Easy Path

As has already been said, the soul reaches its original home in the spiritual regions with the aid of the Shabd. Without the Shabd it is blind. Similarly the Name also serves as a guide and support for the soul. By its aid the soul can attain the tranquil state. There is a prayer for its attainment in the Adi Granth.

Oh Lord, have Mercy on Nanak; Your Name is dear to him. It is like a stick to the blind. (Belawal M5, 847-7)

I am blind and need a support; Your Name is my guide. I am poor and helpless; Your Name sustains me. (Namdev, Tilang 727-12)

In the Iron Age Only the Practice of the Name is Fruitful

When virtues decline and evil increases, the mere doing of duties and meritorious deeds bear no fruit. In such a period the Perfect Masters preach the doctrine of the Name. When tyranny and persecution take hold of the land, when everyone is filled with gloom, when people become devoid of true strength and clear thinking, there is no easy and quick acting path save that of the Name. Good deeds bear no fruit in this age. They were a law in

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the past ages.

In the Iron Age, only the Lord's Name is sublime. (Maru M5, 1075-19)

Saint Ravi Das tells us that in the Golden Age, Truth was the dominant note; in the Silver Age, sacrifices; and in the Copper Age, idol worship; but in the Iron Age, it is only the Name.

In the Golden Age, Truth reigned supreme, in the Silver Age charity, in the Copper Age, worship and piety. In the three Ages men held fast to these acts, but in the Iron Age, our mainstay is the Name. (Ravi Das, Gauri 346-10)

Saint Tulsi Das holds the same view as that of Ravi Das. He writes:

Contemplation was the practice in the first Age, and sacrifice in the second Age. People worshipped idols of God in the Copper Age. In the Iron Age everyone is covered with dirt and impurity, and people live contented, like fish in an ocean of sins. The Name is like the wish-fulfilling tree, and Kal, the Negative Power, is frightful. But remembrance of the Name with the mind cuts all the worldly ties. (Ramayana, Bal Kand 26, 2-3)

In the Iron Age the Lord's Naam is the most efficacious method, and it emancipates all devotees. (Maru M4, 995-5)

In the Iron Age no good act or duty is of value; no one is saved without the Name. (Sar Bachan 681)

Guru Arjan also says:

It is only the Name that saves the devotee in the Iron Age. (Bhairon M5, 1138-7)

No other means is fruitful in the Iron Age. Only the practice of listening to the Name can bear fruit. Great emphasis is accordingly laid by the Gurus in the line of Guru Nanak on sowing the seed of the Name.

The Iron Age has now dawned, sow the seed of the Lord's Name. This season is not propitious for any other crop; do not be deluded by doubt. Basant M5, 1185-7

Blessed are those who are initiated into the Name in the Iron Age.

Oh Nanak, I am a sacrifice to them who are blessed with the Lord's Name in the Iron Age. Kama M5, 1298-14

Salvation is Attained in All the Four Ages Through the Name

The Name has been known and taught since very ancient times. It is God's own law. Since the beginning of the world the Lord's Name has been known to Saints and has been responsible for the salvation of mankind. Kabir Sahib, Guru Nanak and the other nine Gurus, Dadu Sahib, Paltu Sahib, Tulsi Sahib and many other Saints preached this Path to their disciples during the last centuries. The Muslim holy men have taught the same Name during the last 1300-1400 years.

Prophet Mohammed and other Muslim Saints like Shamas-i-Tabriz, Maulana Rumi, Hafiz and others also taught the Lord's Name. St. John and Jesus Christ referred to the Lord's Name some 1900 years ago. Similarly Zoroaster also taught it. Some two thousand five hundred years ago Mahatma Buddha practiced the same Name. Gorakh Nath also taught the same Name.

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Archaeological excavations in Egypt show that King Ikhnaton, who ruled about 4000 years ago, encouraged its practice. The Name was then called 'Aton'. It was secretly practiced in the time of the Upanishads, and there are many references to the Name in them. In the Copper Age, Lord Krishna was familiar with the practice of the Name. There are references relating to the practice of the Name in the Rig Veda, the oldest recognized religious book in the world. In its Vak Devi Sukt, the Name is highly praised.

Kabir Sahib said in his teachings that he came into the world in all the four ages, and that he preached the practice of the Name. He was known in the different Ages as Sat Sukrit, Maninder, Karunamai and Kabir respectively.

The Gurbani clearly mentions that people have been redeemed in all the four Ages by the Lord's Name, but that this Name was only realized by rare devotees only.

In all the four Ages, the highest thing is the Lord's Name. (Gauri M3, 229-17)

All creatures find release only through the Name, they attain to it by the Guru's Grace. (Bhairon M3, 1129-9)

The Lord's Name emancipates in all the four Ages. It is through the Word that one deals in the Name. (Sohle M3, 1055-1)

The Wealth of the Name is Permanent and Imperishable

The only wealth that is permanent, is the wealth of the Name. All else is perishable. This wealth cannot be burnt by fire or washed away by water. It cannot be stolen by a thief.

The Name is permanent, all else is fleeting. This wealth no thief can steal or take away. (Gujri Var M3, 511-3)

The wealth of the Name dwells in the heart, and he who gets it gains release. This wealth fire cannot burn, thieves cannot steal, water cannot drown, nor can it be confiscated. (Maru M1, 991-11)

The Name is an Infinite and Eternal Treasure

The Name is eternal. It is an infinite treasure which cannot be exhausted. It can be given to a devotee only by a perfect Master. The one who receives it is blessed.

In my home is the treasure of the Name. It contains a great store of devotion. The true Master has blessed me with a true life, and lives He eternally the great Giver. (Vadhans M4 593-9)

The Name is an inexhaustible treasure which dwells in the heart of a true devotee. (Suhi M5 787-13)

Inexhaustible is the treasure of the Name, and no one can evaluate its worth. Blessed are they who have the wealth of the Name; they have realized the true Lord. (Sorath M3 600-5)

The Name is the True Merchandise

The wealth of the Name is the only True Merchandise worthwhile to buy. It deeply fills all hearts.

The Name is the True Merchandise, deeply filling all hearts. (Sri Rag M1 22-8)

The Name is the Law or Shabd

Blessed is the man who obeys the Law. The Shabd of the Master is the insignia of His Name. (Basant M3, 1175-6)

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The Name is the Capital of Devotees

The Master is the Merchant and the Disciple is the Client.

The devotees have the treasure of the Name to spend. (Gauri M5, 253-17)

Blessed is the Merchant who deals only in the Lord's Name. The devotees gather round Him like peddlers and He supplies them with the emancipating Word of the Lord. Gauri M4, 313-5

The True Merchant of the Name is the Lord Himself

Your Name is the Precious Jewel, oh Lord; You are the True Merchant; the devotees are Your peddlers. (Gauri M5, 217-15)

The Name is the Devotee's Mainstay

The Name sustains all creatures. It is their support. It is the helper and friend of all devotees. It is their caste and honor. They become calm and are at peace by practicing it.

Nanak's only refuge is the Lord's Name, naught else is his support. The world is born to die and is ever destroyed; but one becomes eternal by clinging to the Master's presence. (Asa M4, 447-19)

The Name of the Lord sustains the mind. It gives life and happiness to the mind. The Name is my caste, my honor, my family. It is my constant friend and gives me release. (Todi M5, 713-9)

The True Name is my only sustenance, the True Name has removed all my worldly desires. (Ramkali M3, 917-9)

Oh Saints, listen to Nanak's call to love the Lord's Name. The Lord's Name is my only support. (Ramkali M3, 917-11)

Your Name alone helps the world to swim across. This alone is my

hope; this alone is my mainstay. (Sri Rag M1, 24-14)

The Practice of the Name

At the time of initiation the Master explains fully to the disciple the way to practice the Name. Some details have been given under the heading 'What is the Name'. This wisdom is ancient. It is revealed by a Master to a disciple. It is not designed by any man. It is designed by God. This is the real spiritual practice and it can be had by initiation through a Perfect Master alone.

The Practice of the Name is Easy

The Name can be repeated without any formalities and without the use of the tongue. Children, the aged, and young men and women of all religions can practice it in all circumstances, for this Name is eternal.

Truth never grows old and the Name is never soiled. (Sarang Var M3, 1248-9)

No one becomes ill by practicing it, nor is there any fear of experiencing any other difficulty. The practice of listening to the Divine Melody is indeed a joyful one. It involves a little effort but the reward is manifold. Without spending a farthing you are dyed deeply in the color of the Lord. What was obtained by the ancient Rishis and Munis only after severe penances extending over hundreds of years is attained through the practice of the Shabd in a short period of time and without undergoing any physical discomfort.

In the beginning, however, one has to retire to a secluded place within one's residence to carry out the practice daily and keep the company of Saints. But when one ob-

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tains access to the inner regions, the Melody of the Name resounds all the time and under all conditions.

While sleeping, sitting, standing or lying, I remain in the same condition, says Kabir.

By the practice of listening to the Name, the soul never forgets the Lord. One obtains the benefit of equipoise. He sees the Lord present everywhere. All his acts are part of the Lord's worship.

Kabir Sahib says in this connection:

Oh Saints, the equipoise is blissful. Since the time the Master showered mercy upon me, my soul has not wandered. Wherever I go, it is going with Him. Whatever I do, it is His worship. Both home and outside are alike, and the feeling of otherness is gone. The Shabd is heard in the heart at all times, and my mind has given up its cravings. Walking, sleeping, sitting and standing, I am deep in spiritual trance. I close not my eyes nor my ears, nor do I give pain to my body. Yet I see my Lord with open eyes, and look at His beauteous form. Oh Kabir, this is the summum bonum of life; beyond pain and pleasure is this state of bliss.

Beyond the ken of the Vedas and the scriptural texts; yea, the Master of Nanak is manifest everywhere. (Asa M5, 397-7)

How is the Name Obtained?

The gift of the invaluable Name can only be had by those for whom God wills it.

Oh Nanak, it is only through the Grace of the Lord, that we get the true Name. (Sri Rag M3, 26-13)

The Name dwells in the heart of him to whom it is given by the Lord. (Kanra M5, 1298-12)

There is no wealth equal to that of the Name; he alone is true to whom the Lord gives it.

(Asa M3, 364-13)

He alone gets the treasure of the Name with whom the Lord is pleased. (M 5 Asa M5, 405-5)

It can be had as a gift from the Ultimate One, through His Grace and through good fortune.

Oh Nanak, those who received the Name, received it through His Grace. (Vadhans M4, 566-10) Those who were so ordained practiced the Name. (Asa M4,369-7)

It is through His Grace alone that one is attuned to the Name. Oh Nanak, happy are they in whose home there resounds the unending Music. (Ramkali M3, 917-13)

Chastity, truth, continence are all contained in the Name. One does not become pure without the Name. But it is only by great good fortune that the Name dwells in the heart, and one attains to the Lord through Shabd. (Sri Rag M3, 33-5)

The Name can be received from a Perfect Master and from Saints well versed in the practice of the Name.

Those who bow to the Name and remain in it absorbed, oh Nanak, they receive the gift from the door of the Lord. (Tilang M1, 721-14)

He who is blessed becomes true, the Perfect Master gives him the Nectar of the Name. (Asa M1, 352-18)

All was created by the Name; but one cannot know it except through a Perfect Master. (Suhi M3, 753-5)

There is no one except the Perfect Master, who can give the Name of the Lord for our support. (Salok M3, 1417-3)

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Dye your mind in the color of the Name by its repetition. Oh Nanak, this can only be done in the company of the Saints. (Gauri M5, 264-11)

I, who am without merit, the Lord has blessed with His Mercy, and joining the society of the Holy, I was given the Lord's Name. (Gauri M5, 183-8)

The Name can only be obtained from the Master, the giver of the Name, and from nowhere else. Guru Nanak accordingly advises that one should get the gift of the Name whenever there is an opportunity to do so, and should practice it through the Grace of the Master, thus fulfilling the real purpose of one's life. Caste or creed do not stand in the way.

Go where you can get the Lord's Name; and by the Guru's Grace, practice devotion to it. (Asa M1, 415-1)

To obtain this Name, initiation from a Perfect Adept is necessary. One should also keep the company of the Saints so that, influenced by their magnetic spiritual personality, one may make rapid progress inwardly. If one carries out this practice by merely reading some books he can get no benefit, since even a small mistake may mislead him. Where there are currents of the Name within, there are also currents of both Kal and Maya, and these can cause one's downfall through lust and anger. Those who do not enjoy the protection of the Master may fall a prey to the deceptions of Kal and Maya. Those who practice the Dhun-atmak Name without a Master hear the inner sounds of Maya and Kal. A disciple should therefore, contact a Perfect Master who has access to the highest spiritual region. After receiving initiation from Him, his progress within will be fruitful.

Only a Gurmukh (True Devotee) Gets the Name and Not a Manmukh (Devotee of the Mind)

Unless one meets a Master one does not understand the true significance and importance of the Name.

Everyone utters the Lord's Name with the tongue, but he alone receives it who serves the True Master. (Malar M3, 1262-8)

The Name is a conscious touch which is imparted by the Masters and the Saints to their disciples. This is a gift of Divine Life. Through the Master's Grace it manifests within us. The Name is within everybody, but until one becomes a true devotee one cannot obtain this wealth. The Manmukhs remain without it.

The Name is an inexhaustible treasure which dwells in the heart of a true devotee. (Suhi M5, 787-13)

In your home is the merchandise, in yourself is the capital. Take the Name every moment; only a true devotee obtains it. The treasure of the Name is inexhaustible; but only a fortunate one receives it. (Sri Rag M3, 29-18)

Nothing equals the Name. Oh Nanak, only a true devotee obtains it. (Gauri M5, 265-8)

By hearing the Name one knows himself and gets the benefit of the Name. By hearing the Name sins are expiated and the mind becomes pure. Oh Nanak, blessed are those who hear the Name. A devotee always meditates on it. (Sarang Var M4, 1240-16)

All bonds are snapped, release is obtained. One merges in the Truth. It is difficult to obtain the Name. It dwells in the heart of a true devotee. Oh Nanak, blessed are those who serve the Master. (Sorath M3, 644-17)

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The self-willed know not the Name, without the Name they lose honor. They are torn by duality and love not the taste of the Word. (Sri Rag M3, 28-9)

This secret of the Name is inside all, but it does not become manifest without a Master and without practice. The self-willed remain without it. This is not a subject for speech, nor can it be had merely for the asking or at the request of someone. If we were to offer money to a professor and request him to give us an M.A. Degree, he would simply say, study and put in a sincere effort. It is necessary to study for it. The power is inside everyone but it can only be obtained through the Grace of a Master by engaging in the practice of the Name. Without the Name all the four categories of living beings and all the four kinds of repetitions are in delusion.

Yours are the four sources of creation. Your words they speak. But without the Name all are deluded by doubt. (Majh M3, 116-4)

This Name can be obtained by serving a Perfect Master only. It cannot be had without Him.

By the service of the Master; the Name of the Lord is obtained. Nobody can have it except through a Perfect Master. (Majh M3, 116-5)

Benefits of the Name

The Gurbani has enumerated numerous benefits of the Name. The Name is the bread of life which strengthens the soul. It is the water of life which refreshes the soul. The body derives strength from the soul. The Name is the root of all. It gives motion and speed to the spiritual life, and therefore spiritually, man evolves more rapidly.

The Name is the sovereign remedy for all diseases and leads to lasting happiness.

The Name is the panacea for all ills; it leads to happiness and salvation. (Gauri M5, 274-18)

The Name helps us in both the worlds and accompanies us here and hereafter. Nothing else accompanies us.

The sacred thread is of avail only if there is Divine Light. A loin cloth and forehead mark are of value only if we cherish the Name. The Name alone remains with us both here and hereafter; we should seek nothing other than the Name. (Asa M1, 355-4)

Utter the Name of the One alone with your tongue, and you will be blessed with immense bliss. Hereafter also it keeps company with your soul. (Gauri M5, 211-16)

On the way that you tread alone there the company of the Lord's Name is your peace. (Gauri M5, 264-7)

I seek the Name which goes with me forever; for, without the Name all are in the bondage of Kal. (Gauri M1, 152-10)

Benefits of hearing and believing in the Name

Guru Nanak has given the benefits of listening to and believing in the Name in the 8th to 11th Stanzas of the Jap Ji Sahib. He says:

The Adepts, Masters, gods and yogis hear it, the bull supporting the earth and sky hears it. It is heard in the earth, the spheres and the underworlds, on hearing it one becomes immune from death. Oh Nanak, devotees are ever in bloom; on hearing it their sins are destroyed.

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Ishwar, Brahm and Indra hear it, by hearing it the lowly become pure. By hearing it, one knows the means of divine union and the secrets of the body. By hearing it one understands the Shastras and the Smritis and the Vedas. Oh Nanak, the devotees are ever in bloom; by hearing it their sins are destroyed.

By hearing it you obtain righteousness, contentment and knowledge. By hearing it you bathe at all the sixty-eight sacred spots. By hearing and studying it you get the Name; on hearing it you contemplate with ease. Oh Nanak, the devotees are ever in bloom; by hearing it their sins are destroyed.

By hearing it one becomes the admirer and recipient of divine virtues, on hearing it one becomes a Sheikh (great man), a Master and a king. On hearing it the blind see the way. On hearing it the unattainable is attained. Oh Nanak, the devotees are ever in bloom; by hearing it their sins are destroyed.

The benefits of the ever-resounding Melody of the Name becoming manifest are many. On hearing it, one can attain the status of Adepts, Masters and demigods. One comes to know the power supporting the entire creation, the earth, the skies, the islands and the underworlds and learns how to go beyond the reach of death.

The powers of Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu are acquired by him. Even the lowliest person becomes virtuous. One achieves proficiency in yoga and understands the secrets of the body. He understands the real meaning of the religious books, the Shastras, the Smritis and Vedas.

By hearing the Melody one gets truth, contentment, true knowledge and the purity of sixty-eight sacred pilgrim-stations. By singing the praises of the Name he is honored in all lands and can concentrate easily. By hearing it he receives all the divine virtues. He becomes a leader, a Master and a true king. His soul finds its way to

spiritual regions. The Name serves as a support for the soul. With its aid the soul transcends the realms of mind and Maya, is freed from their influence and reaches its Original Home. By hearing it one is ever in bliss. All sins and sufferings vanish.

What is meant by hearing? Guru Sahib clearly states that by this is meant the hearing of the Melody of the Name and nothing else.

Hearing the Lord's Name, one becomes an Adept endowed with occult powers. Hearing the Name, one is blessed with the nine treasures, and all one's wishes are fulfilled. Hearing the Name one gets contentment and Maya worships at one's feet. Hearing the Name one gains tranquility and is ever in bliss. (Sarang Var, 1240-8)

Hearing the Name one is sanctified. One achieves self-control and goes beyond the reach of death. Hearing the Name one is illumined and one's inner darkness is dispelled. Hearing the Name one knows oneself, and gets the treasure of the Name. Hearing the Name sins are washed away and one attains God's Immaculate Truth. Nanak; pure is one's countenance if one hears the Name. It is through Guru's Grace that one contemplates the Name. (Sarang Var, 1240-15)

Hearing the Name, one is in bloom; through the Name one is comforted. The mind is satisfied with the Name, and one is delivered from all sorrows. Hearing the Name one earns a good name, and is blessed with Glory. (Sarang Var M4, 1239-19)

On hearing the Name man becomes super-conscious. On knowing God's law, he shapes his life accordingly and merges his will in His Will. The state of such men is described in the Jap Ji Sahib from Stanzas 12 to 15:

Those who believe are in a state sublime, their virtues one cannot describe. No paper, no pen, no scribe, can tell of their high condi-

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tion. Such is the Name of the Immaculate One, were one to believe with all one's heart. (Jap Ji, 12)

Those who believe, their minds awaken to higher consciousness, to inner knowledge of all spheres; for them there is no sorrow, no fear of death. Such is the Name of the Immaculate One, were one to believe with all one's heart. (Jap Ji, 13)

How clear the path of one who believes, he lives with honor, with honor leaves. Walks he straight to the Lord's abode, and is to Dharma, he duty bound. Such is the Name of the Immaculate One, were one to believe with all one's heart. (Jap Ji, 14)

To the believer opens the gate of deliverance, and he becomes a source of benediction to his kin. He himself swims across and those that seek His door, wanders in search of alms no more. Such is the Word of the Immaculate One, were one to believe with all one's heart. (Jap Ji, 15)

The state of such persons is beyond description. Paper, pen and intellect have no power to describe them. By meditating on the Name the latent faculties of a man get awakened. He comes to know the secrets of all regions. He does not suffer from worldly attachments and Maya. He does not have to accompany Yama (the angel of death) in the end.

In the spiritual regions, no impediments are placed in the way of one who accepts the Name. He goes there without let or hindrance and he is respected there. Since he is connected with the Name he does not have to visit the narrow lanes of Yama. He who accepts the Name reaches the gates of salvation and becomes a benefactor of his family also. He himself swims across the ocean of the world and in the position of a Master he becomes the means of saving his disciples. He is never ensnared by Maya.

The Name is free from Maya. Wonderful benefits are obtained by believing in it. It is only when one is destined that one can get these benefits and it is indeed a rare one who does so.

The Gurbani further makes it explicit that acceptance means believing in the Name.

Believing in the Name one redeems one's whole generation, and all those who keep one company and cherish the Lord in heart. Emancipated are they who hear and also those who utter the Name. Believing in the Name one is rid of sorrows and hungers by being attuned to the Name. Nanak, they alone praise the Name, who are united with it by the Master. Believing in the Name one is rid of false intellect and takes to the path of wisdom. Believing in the Name one is rid of ego and one's maladies. Believing in the Name peace comes and the Lord dwells in the mind. Oh Nanak, the Name is a jewel, the devotee of the Lord contemplate on it. (Sarang Var M4, 1242-2)

Believing in the Name, one's consciousness expands; through the Name does one become wise. Believing in the Name one utters the Lord's virtues; through the Name does one sleep in peace. Believing in the Name one is rid of doubts, and thereafter one comes not to sorrow. Believing in the Name one praises God, and the sinful mind is cleansed. (Sarang Var M4, 1242-9)

Through the practice of the Name one who has been asleep for generations awakens and realizes himself.

By the Master's Grace one is attuned to the Name, and one is awakened from the slumber of ages. (Gauri M5, 184-16)

Hearing the Name, one realizes one's self and earns the benefits of the Name. (Sarang Var M4, 1240-16)

By merging with the Name one unites with the Lord

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and the light merges in the Flame. One lives in the living presence of the Lord. He is blessed and generations of his relations are redeemed.

The nine treasures of the Name and occult and spiritual powers are his slaves. He attains the sea of equipoise, and meets the eternal God. (Swayye M4, 1397-12)

He is absorbed in the Name day and night, and light merges with the Flame. Through this inner Light, the Lord is known. No one can know this except through a Master. (Sri Rag M3, 35-16)

Those who treasure the Lord's Name, their tasks are fulfilled by the Lord. They are dependent upon no one else, for the Lord is ever by their side. (Gauri M5, 305-4)

Through the Name one is honored in His Court. Through the Name are whole generations of his redeemed. (Gauri M5, 863-7)

Through the practice of the Name one is illumined. One comes to know of the three worlds and attains the fourth stage.

Through the Name is the heart illumined, through the Name is all glory. Through the Name is all bliss, accordingly I seek refuge in the Name. (Asa M3, 426-5)

Imbued with the Name, one knows the mystery of the three worlds. Imbued with the Name, one is ever in bliss. (Ramkali M1, 941-16)

Whom He in His Grace attunes to His Name; oh Nanak, attains the fourth stage. (Gauri M5, 284-14)

Through the Name one is freed from the snares of Yama and is rid of birth and death. One does not go to hell. One breaks off all worldly fetters and attains salvation, and generations of his relations are redeemed.

Oh Nanak, blessed are those who dwell upon the Name; the messengers of death do not go near them. (Bihagara M4,540-17)

Hearing the Name one is sanctified, one gains self-control and is not touched by Yama. (Sarang Var M4, 1240-15)

He who contemplates on the Name and the Lord redeems himself and generations of his relations. (Asa M3, 362-10)

We have become fearless because of the Name; because of it we are free from coming and going. (Gond M5, 863-18)

Hell is not for him in whose mind the Name dwells. (Gauri M5, 257-18)

One breaks one's bonds and is emancipated and is merged in the True One. The Name in this world is hard to attain. Through the Guru is the Name enshrined in the heart. (Sorath Var M3, 644-16)

Numerous other benefits of the Name are mentioned in the Gurbani. By its practice the method of union with the Lord is obtained and one's life becomes fruitful. The mind is contented. Lust, anger, cravings, attachment and so forth leave. Sins, perversions and egotism are destroyed. One is saved from the poison of Maya and one gets happiness, bliss and peace. Being absorbed in the Name is constant austerity, and one becomes free from the effects of karma. He meets no impediments. He becomes pure and merges in Truth. One who practices the Name is loved by the Master. He in whose heart the Name dwells is master of millions and the king of all.

The Gurbani also mentions the sufferings of those who remain devoid of the Name. Keeping all these things in view, the Gurbani greatly emphasizes the need for the practice of the Name.

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Repeat the Name, oh my seeker friends, and so attain peace, by enshrining the Name in the heart with Guru's Grace. Without the Name one is cursed, and blinded by attachment, and all his actions prove fruitless, and lead to involvement and pain. (Asa M4, 367-15)

Meditate on the Name as long as you have life and strength; this alone will go along with you in the end, and save you when the life is no more. (Sri Rag M4, 82-4)

Repeated prayers are made for the gift of the Name.

I beseech You, oh True Guru, the True Being, my Lord. We the humble and the lowly have sought Your refuge, take pity and awaken the Name in us. (Gauri M4, 492-9)

Your seeker seeks Your Name, oh Lord, You who are in every heart. (Gauri M5, 209-18)

It is necessary to get initiation from a Master who is an Adept in the Practice of the Name so that this life may become fruitful and one may be blessed in the Lord's Court.

They who dwell on the Name, their toil is over. Glorious are their beings, Nanak, they save many more. (Jap Ji, 8-11)

The Lord's Names (Hari Naam and Ram Naam)

The Name is the Supreme Lord. It is the Creator of all. It is all in all. Everything comes from it. In the Gurbani the Supreme Lord has been called Hari. The Name is indistinguishable from God. It is His Name and emanates from Him. It is, therefore, called Hari Naam, the Lord's Name. In order to make this clear, the Name has, in different places, been called Hari Naam by Guru Nanak and his successors.

The Name pervades everywhere. There is no place without it. In order to make this fact clear this all-pervading Name has been called Ram Naam, (the all-pervading Name) in the Gurbani. By Ram is meant that which pervades everywhere or is omnipresent.

Hari Naam has many benefits, as the Gurbani explains. Perversion and sin are destroyed. Egotism is obliterated. Occult and spiritual powers are obtained. All wishes are fulfilled. Happiness and peace are attained. One obtains salvation. By its practice not only does one cross the ocean of existence himself but he also helps his generations to do so. He is emancipated while still living.

CHAPTER 7. DEVOTIONAL MUSIC (KIRTAN)

As commonly understood, Kirtan simply means singing the hymns of the Saints. There is a power of attraction even in the outer melody, and concentration and refinement of one's feelings may be secured by listening to it. There are two powerful forces which attract living beings - beauty and melody. Of the two, melody has the greater power of attraction and influences the mind to a greater extent.

The deer, for instance, which can outrun a horse and is hard to catch, is attracted by melody and is then easily caught. When the hunter plays music in the forest, the deer is attracted by its notes and comes to rest its head on the musical instrument and is thus caught. The influence of music on serpents and birds is a matter of common experience. The snake-charmer, for example, plays on his flute and the serpent, forgetting for a moment its venomous nature, submits tamely to the piper. The influence of melody on man is far greater. Music certainly has a powerful effect on the mind but it cannot take us into the higher spiritual worlds.

Saints and Gurus say that the Shabd, (the Divine Sound) is resounding constantly inside every one of us and that contact with it brings deliverance to the soul. This melody has been described as Akhand Kirtan, (ceaseless

music) in the Adi Granth, the holy Sikh Scripture.

The way to the Light in the Iron Age and to full freedom from the prison of egotism lies in the Shabd, oh Sage!

In the Iron Age regard the Name as supreme worship, and the essence of all devotion for the soul's inward progress. To gain the glory of the Name, seek the Master's counsel, and remain firm in your faith in Him. (Kanar Var M4, Shalok 1314)

The Gurus regard Naam (the Name of God, the Word or the Shabd) as the only way to the Lord. Naam or true Kirtan (devotional music) is within us; the Name is omnipresent. The Divine Melody of Naam can be heard in the region of the forehead.

The Melody plays at your door, in the region of the forehead, beyond the bounds of the three gunas (attributes). (Kabir, Ramkali 970-1)

No spiritual practice other than that of Naam or the Shabd (Divine Sound) is advised in this Iron Age. Of all the practices, rites and observances, Naam is the most fruitful and the most suitable in this Age; no other practice is so effective or worthwhile.

This is the essence of the wisdom of the Four Ages; celibacy, self-control and pilgrimages were good for Three Ages; Naam is the only proper means for the Iron Age. (Bilawal M3, 797-18)

Now is the time of the Iron Age, the time in which it is right and proper to sow the seed of the Name; to sow any other seed in this Age, is labor lost and utter waste. (Asa M4, 446-3)

The practice of Naam and the ability to listen to its music may be learned only from perfect Saints and holy men by their Grace.

The Lord's Kirtan is a secret of the Saints. Believe in the word of

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the Master and He will reveal it to you. (Kalyan M4, 1326-14)

The Gurus say that only those who find a Perfect Master can practice Naam and can gain contact with it by implicit faith. It is only a true devotee who can do this.

Fortunate is he who finds a Satguru, for he will always hear the Music within. (Vadhans Var M4, 592-8)

Unless one meets a Perfect Master and dies while living by rising above the nine doors of the body, he does not obtain release, and he does not really hear the true Kirtan. Gurus say that only the Naam or Kirtan within is true Kirtan, and not choral singing in places of worship.

Dancing and singing to instruments is a vain attempt to tame the mind; the mind is blind and deaf to this mimicry. The fire of worldly attachment burns within, and the wind of doubt blows constantly; 'tis hard to light the lamp of right understanding. (Rag Asa M3, 364-14)

We have sung His praises for many ages in songs that please the ear and move the heart, but uninspired by Naam, it is all delusion. (Rag Asa M1, 414-15)

Just as a magnet attracts iron, similarly the melody of Naam, which emanates from the Lord, attracts the soul to His feet. The mind is fond of pleasures and nothing in this world can make it remain still. It leads everybody in the world to dance to its tune. There is only one way to still the mind, and that is by listening to the inner music of Naam, or the Shabd. Whoever has stilled the mind has done so by this method, the various benefits of which are described in the writings of the Gurus.

All the defects of the senses are removed by this prac-

tice - enmities end, lust, anger, attachment, greed and pride are banished. The soul, which for ages has been sleeping the slumber of worldly attachment and Maya (illusion) awakens; the devotee is saved from death and the Lord of Death. He is released from birth and death. He becomes detached while living in the world, and the mind, which is otherwise uncontrollable, becomes enchanted as a result of hearing the Inner Melody, that is, Naam, and becomes still. These benefits cannot be gained by listening to external music.

This precious treasure, Naam, is inside everyone, and one should search for it in the company of Saints and holy men. This is the only way to make one's life worthwhile.

The Word or Speech of God (Bani)

The subject of the Word or Bani is a very deep and subtle one. The word Bani (meaning word or speech) is generally understood to mean a set of words which can be read, written or spoken; but the term Word is used in a much more abstruse sense in the Guru Granth Sahib.

In general, there is not much difference between Bani (speech), Shabd (Sound), or Naam (Name). They are generally used as interchangeable terms and denote the same thing. Although it is impossible to have the inner experience of hearing the Music of the Word without the aid and guidance of a Master, and without labor, one can nevertheless understand it to some extent by study. In all languages and all countries, Bani or speech is of two kinds: Varanatmak (spoken or written) and Dhunatmak (inexpressible, unutterable or unstruck).

Varanatmak speech, that is, sounds that can be spoken or written, are of four kinds, namely: Bekhari, Madhyma,

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Pashyanti and Para. The first is uttered by the tongue, the second by the throat, the third by the heart and the fourth is the one by which yogis create waves or currents in the region of the navel. Since these are within the six chakras or centers in the body and are devoid of Naam, they do not lead to release. The third Sikh Guru said:

The whole creation and its methods and forms of speech are in dark confusion without the Light of Naam. (Majh M3, 116-4)

Through spoken words, which can be heard by the outer ears and which are described as 'airy speech' by the Gurus, one tends to become more and more engrossed in the activities of the mind and the matter. The spoken words are described by the Gurus in this way because they are heard through the agency of the air.

Speaking and hearing we do by the air (sound waves); it is all deceptive and confounds the mind. (Sri Rag M1, 24-4)

The Dhunatmak Word (melody-based Sound) cannot be written or spoken. It is beyond the range of the air and the elements and transcends the six chakras or body centers. It has been called the Name of God (Naam) in the Granth Sahib.

Truly speaking, even after traversing the six centers up to the bounds of the universe that is still under the control of the three gunas or modes of thought and action, that is, up to and including Trikuti (apex of the regions of the three gunas), and even up to the tenth door, the sound that animates these regions is described by the Gurus as "three-modal sound", the snare of Brahm. Kabir Sahib says:

This sound is not beyond the limits of Kal. It is therefore perish-

able. (Gauri M3, 230-19)

Only the real and true Divine Word or Sound is beyond the reach of the Negative Power. It is called Sach Bani (True Word), Sach (Truth) and Sar Shabd (Real Sound). This Sound, Word, or Bani leads to the really spiritual life and to union with the Lord.

Oh devotee, listen to Nanak, the Divine Sound is Nectar. This Sound is the essence of all; it takes you across the ocean of this world. (Ramkali M1, 932-15)

Transcend the three attributes or qualities, and enjoy the Essence, oh Nanak; for that Essence redeems. (Ramkali M1, 940-4)

The True Word is blessed, for it unites one with the Truth; Nanak was blessed by it, and realized the Lord through His Grace. (Gujri Var M3, 514-5)

Those meet Him whom He wishes. True is the Word, it is sweet Divine Sound. Nanak sings the virtues of the True One, and because of this singing he merges with the Lord. (Maru M3, 1057-9)

He Himself unites; know Him and become pure. True is the Lord and His Word; the Shabd unites one with Him. (Sri Rag M3, 32-5)

True is the Shabd; true is the Word. The devotee sings its praises; men of God, throughout the ages have sung it. (Asa M3, 424-5)

This does not mean that the external counsel of the Gurus or Saints is of no use. On the contrary, their words are very beneficial, since they are the Lord's own utterances given to us through highly developed and gracious Saints and incarnations. They speak to us about their own experiences and their words are more valuable than jewels and precious stones. Saints do not speak from the regions of the mind and intellect; they speak under inspiration from

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the higher levels of inmost experience.

Oh Lalu, know you this; whatever He says, I say to you. (Tilang M1, 722-15)

The inspired speech of the Saints is like the flow of nectar from a divine spring.

Words flow from the mouths of Saints as from a spring of nectar. (Gauri M5, 320-7)

The writings of Saints are faithful records of their experiences in the higher spiritual regions. They are like signposts and mile-stones to seekers on the path of spirituality. They are given out by Saints for the benefit of spiritual seekers.

Except for the words of the Master, all other words are unreal. Those who utter them and those who listen to them are all imperfect.

The words of all but the Master are false. Indeed, all other words are unreal except those of the Master. Imperfect are they who say or hear them; imperfect is all that they say. (Ramkali M3, 920-6)

The words of the Saints tell us of another Word, which is the Master of the entire world and which leads to release. That Word is true, formless, unspoken, and God's own Word, Naam or Shabd, the immortal source of life. This is the Dhunatmak Bani (melody based Sound) mentioned by the earlier sages. It is called the Word in the Christian Bible, and the Muslims call it Kalma-i-Ilahi (the voice of God). It is said in the Gospel of St. John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

The Muslims say that Kalma, the Word, created the fourteen regions.

The Word created the three worlds, say the Vedas and the Shastras, and they call it the Supreme Power. Nanak dwells at His feet. He utters only the nectar of the Word. (Asa M3,422-18)

The power of the Word has been beautifully described in the Bankbarni Sukt of the RigVeda:

All the gods dwell in Me; I bring up and nourish all. I keep the world in motion; all is being sustained by Me. All knowledge and action prove fruitful because of Me.

In another place, it is said:

I create all the regions and the creatures. I dwell everywhere, like the soul in the body or air in the universe. Beyond the regions of the sun, beyond this earth and before the world existed, I, by my own greatness and force, manifested myself as this great universe. (Rig Veda, Mandal 10, Sukt 125, Atharva Veda, Kand 5, Sukt 30)

The Word contains the principle of the Divine Sound, which is ever resounding at the door of the Lord.

How wonderful is this Region, which is filled with the unstruck music. Even the Lord seems enraptured by it. (Gauri M5, 186-17)

The Lord's distinctive attribute is the Melody of Naam. The Vedas and Shastras all sing its praises. (Gauri M5, 96-4)

Oh where is the temple of God? It is where the unending music plays. (Beni Ji, Ramkali 974-7)

The Word was in the beginning of time, it is, and it will be forever.

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Even while they (Saints) do, see or speak; they are absorbed in the Shabd. The Word existed during all the Four Ages; it is the Truth and the Reality. (Sri Rag M3, 35-9)

The Word emanates from the Lord. It is the Truth. It is the Eternal Reality, and it leads to immortality.

His acts are true; true is His Word. He is the True One, and He pervades all. (Gauri M5, 284-15)

True is the Shabd, true is the Word. The men of God have sung its praises throughout the ages. (Asa M3, 424-5)

The deep dye of the Word never wears away. If you are dyed fast with the Word, its color will not fade or wear away. (Asa M3, 427-1)

This Word is one that rings throughout the Four Ages. But where? Guru Nanak, the first of the ten Sikh Gurus and the torchbearer of the Sikh religion, says that it is within us and is manifested in the hearts of devotees of the Lord.

The True Word is in the heart, the True One reveals it. (Suhi M3, 769-15)

Thy Word is Nectar, it dwells in the devotee's heart. (Sri Rag M1, 72-10)

Thy Word is inside, Thy Word is outside. Tis Thy own utterance, Thy own revelation. (Majh M5, 99-13)

The Master speaks the Word of the Lord. He hears it and He reveals it.

The Word of the Lord pervades everything; the Master hears it and reveals it. Those who hear it are released; they reach the Imperish-

able Home. (Maru Solhe M5, 1075-8)

This Word emanates from the Inner Light. To listen to it is true devotion, and it leads to the beloved feet of the Lord.

It is not robes as symbols of detachment, nor ears with slits as a religious convention; but to have a mind that is truly detached, and to have Inner Ears pierced by the Shabd. That is true detachment, and there alone one sees the Inner Light, and hears the Inner Sound, enrapt in the love of the Lord. (Sorath M1, 634-11)

The great fifteenth century Indian Saint, Paltu Sahib, points out the same fact. He says:

In the sky is an inverted well, and in the well there is a burning candle. The candle is without wick or oil, but nevertheless the candle burns. It burns all the six seasons of the year, and during both the day and night. Meet a Perfect Master, and see the Inner Light. Except the Master, no one else can show it to you. A Sound comes from the flame, which none can hear except in Divine Ecstasy. Oh Paltu, blessed is he who hears it. An inverted well is in the sky, and a burning candle is in the well.

This is the Word spoken of by the Masters, and it is found in the region known as Sukhman (the Royal Vein). It comes from the higher spiritual regions.

True is the Word of the Perfect Master, it comes from Sukhman, the land of Sehj (Oneness with the Supreme Lord). (Dhanasri M3, 663-17)

This Word can be obtained from a Perfect Master only.

Blessed is the Word of the Master; for the Word of the Master rests in Truth. (Suhi M3, 754-6)

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One who hears the True Word, is rid of pain and sorrow; it is obtained through the kindness of Saints, as has been revealed to me by the Master. (Ramkali M3, 922-17)

This Word can be known only by means of the method imparted by the Master or through the Grace shown by Him.

Act according to the directions of the Master; let the Naam dwell in your heart; sing of the True Word, sing the praise of the Lord. (Gauri M1, 222-15)

The Word of the Master, life-giving as Nectar, dwells in the heart by His Grace; the devotee's coming and going ceases, and he is ever blessed. (Ramkali Var M5, 960-19)

It is a boon given by the Master, and one knows it when it reveals itself; without knowledge there is nothing but groping in the dark; true knowledge comes from the Shabd, and it can be heard only by the Grace of the Master. (Maru M3, 1044-14)

In reality, the Master is the Word-in-the-flesh, or the Word made flesh.

The Word is the Guru, and the Guru is the Word. The Nectar is in the Word. (Nat M4, 982-11)

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, wrote to his Master:

Blessed is your mouth! The melody of the Word issues forth from it.

This Word has been called the Anhad Bani (Unending Music), Aghar Bani (Unstruck Music) and Gupti Bani (Hidden Music) in the Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs.

The Unending Music is the hidden treasure; the Saints have kept the key with them. (Rag M5, 893-19)

The devotee lives in awe of the Lord, as he hears the Unstruck Music. (Ramkali M1, 941-4)

The hidden Word becomes manifest; Nanak knows it to be the Truth. (Ramkali M1, 944-1)

The Gurus mention a great many benefits of the Word:

It leads one to the highest spiritual stage and takes one across the ocean of the world. Pride is destroyed. It shows one how to know one's real self, and it shows one how to rise above the world of the three attributes. It washes away the dirt of all sins. It helps in overcoming the five enemies (lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride). It sets all things right. It removes all difficulties and enables one to meet the Lord.

These benefits cannot be had from any extent of study of writings only. But the rare and elevated souls can gain these benefits from the Word within.

Sweet as nectar are the sayings of the Master; but only a true devotee can taste of them. (Majh M3, 113-13)

The true devotee alone doth know the Word; the Word comes from the Lord and leads to His abode. (Ramkali M1, 935-13)

As happiness and bliss arise from the Word, ignorance of the Word obviously spells pain.

He who does not know the Shabd, he who does not enjoy the Word, the devotee of the mind, he is blind, and he comes to grief. (Dhanasri M3, 665-6)

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There is, therefore, great emphasis on the Word in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Oh thou, beloved of the Master, sing the True Word. Sing the Word revealed by the Master, sing the Word, the blessed Word. (Ramkali M3, 920-3)

The Word of the Master (Guru Bani)

The Word or Bani has been already discussed in sufficient details. Guru Bani or Gurbani means the same thing as Bani.

The Word of the Master is the true Light for the world. It dwells in the mind, by the Grace of the Lord.

Gurbani is the Light of the world; it dwells in the mind, by His Grace. (Sri Rag M3, 67-10)

Its great blessing for the devotee is that all his defects and evils are removed, and his Light merges in the Light of the Lord.

In the treasure-house of devotion, the Word of the Master is a precious stone. Those who realize this Word gain release from birth and death.

In the treasury of devotion, the Word of the Master is a precious stone; realize it and you will be blessed. (Asa M5, 376-15)

The Initiatory Teachings of the Master (Guru Mantra)

In the Guru Granth Sahib, the words Gurbani, Bani, Shabd and Naam (Name) are all used in more or less the same sense. There is not much difference between them.

The Guru Mantra is the initiatory teaching imparted by the Master to enable a disciple to reach his original Home in the highest spiritual region. This is the Shabd or Naam in the case of Saints who are Adepts in the practice of the Shabd. The Gurus, accordingly, also use the words 'Guru Mantra' in place of the words Shabd or Naam.

Listen to me, my good friend, the Master has given me the mantra of the True Shabd. (Vadhans M5, 576-18)

There is Light in such a Guru Mantra.

The Guru Mantra is Light in darkness; the company of the Master redeems us. (Gond M5, 864-19)

It dwells in the heart.

The Master whispered the Lord's Name in my ear; it dwells inside my heart. (Prabhati M4, 1335-8)

As mentioned in the Section on the Bani, this Guru Mantra can be obtained only from the Master.

I sing the praise of the Lord all day, for the Master gave me the perfect mantra. (Bhairon M5, 1150-2)

The benefits of the Guru Mantra cannot be fully detailed. One is freed from all worldly bondages. Love and faith in remembrance of the Lord are strengthened. One becomes free from the influence of Maya (illusion) and Kal (death). All things are set right. One knows oneself at last and gains release from birth and death. Such a person does not again suffer from pain and worry.

This Guru Mantra is gained only as a result of great good fortune.

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*Blessed are those in whose minds dwell the teaching of the Guru.
(Gauri M5, 260-6)*

It is not difficult to imagine the plight of a person without the Guru Mantra. Guru Arjan Dev says:

*Cursed is he and ill-spent is his life, who has not obtained the
Guru Mantra. He is like a dog, crow or swine; like an ass or snake
is he. (Sahaskriti M5, 1356-19)*

Initiation

Initiation is mentioned at several places in the hymns of the Gurus. To obtain initiation or to be an initiate is the same thing. Muslim holy men use the words 'Beyet Hona' (getting initiated). The Master gives to the disciple His spiritual Light. He makes him fit to lead a spiritual life. The Gurus describe it as the 'Gift of Life'.

*He gives the Gift of Life; He teaches devotion to the Lord. He
unites His disciple with the Lord. (Suhi M5, 749-2)*

Initiation can be had from a living Master only, and not from the so-called preceptors who merely whisper a mantra in the ears of the disciples. This gift of Life or Ray of Life can be obtained from a living Guru. The life-giving impulse can be obtained only from a living being; it is impossible to get it from books or Scriptures.

*One meets a Master, and gets initiation. He surrenders all, and
enjoys the inner life. (Gauri M1, 227-16)*

At the time of initiation, the Master imparts the secret knowledge of the heart. It then becomes possible to make spiritual progress by following the Master's directions.

After explaining everything, directions are given which help in repetition, contemplation and manifestation of the Inner Shabd or Divine Sound. They help the disciple in his inner ascent. At the time of initiation the Master gives the Ray of Life and connects him with the Melody of the Shabd. He then establishes a subtle link with the disciple, guides him and takes him to the Original Home.

However learned, religious-minded, self-disciplined or respected a man may be, he remains deluded by the mind and Maya. In these circumstances only a Master can connect him with the inner Shabd. However virtuous a man may be, he cannot, by his own efforts alone, contact the Sound. Unless the Master gives him the gift of the Ray of Life and initiates him, he cannot contact the Divine Sound.

At the time of initiation by the Master the soul becomes fit for being connected with the Shabd. This moment is considered as the moment of birth in the Master's family. After a disciple is connected with the Name by the Master, he begins to progress on the spiritual path and to get control over his weaknesses. When the seeker progresses on the spiritual path by following the directions of the Master, he does not remain subservient to the body. On the other hand, his soul tends to soar to the spiritual regions, to break off all the ties with the earth and to dwell more and more in the higher regions within.

This gift of the Name is given to a conscious being, and is meant to awaken him to a new life by its animating impulse. How soon one obtains the benefits of initiation depends on the person initiated. It depends on his inner spiritual condition. The inner condition is different in different persons. Certain persons are fully ready, while others are less so. The Master 'injects', as it were, his consciousness and Light into the soul of the disciple at the time of initi-

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ation. This injection of His own Consciousness and Light permeates the disciple like leaven, and produces a new spiritual consciousness and Light as the practice of Naam is continued. The spiritual Light of the Master gives a new life to the soul of the disciple and begins to free it. Consequently, the disciple begins to have a feeling of fulfillment. This gift of the Master cannot be taken away. Time and Maya (illusion) cannot destroy this seed, this Ray of Life. The disciple, once initiated, will certainly progress, sooner or later. He will one day certainly reach his True Home.

Unless one gets initiation, one does not get knowledge and therefore cannot discern the truth. The Guru says:

There is no knowledge without initiation by a Master. (Bhairon M5, 1140-15)

What is this initiation? It is a Ray of the Name or power of God which can be obtained only from a Perfect Master.

Those only meet a Master who are so destined. The Name of the Lord is the Nectar; it is given at initiation. (Suhi M1, 726-15)

This initiation is obtained only by great good fortune. When one gets it, the mind becomes happy and still. We know ourselves and are released from birth and death. Initiation from those who have never gone inward serves no purpose whatever.

This is the Age when men pretend to be pure but are engaged in sins; spiritual pretenders go about offering initiation; the woman loves her husband only for what he earns and cares not where he goes or when he returns; no one accepts the authority of Scriptures or Vedas; everyone worships his own self; the judge who occupies the seat of justice, counts the beads and utters the name of God, accepts bribes and deals injustice, and is ready to quote chapter and verse when his conduct is questioned. (Ramkali Var M1, 51-14)

This world of attachment and Maya is like a dangerous ocean in which everyone is floundering. Only a true devotee can cross it. A disciple who gets initiation but practices other rites and austerities and does not give up attachment to the world, is not released from birth and death, and he takes a long time to reach his Original Home.

Everyone is floundering in attachment; only a true devotee gets free; while others take birth again because of attachment, and visit the abode of death because of attachment. One may get initiation, but if one recites Scriptures and practices austerities, and cannot give up attachment he is not accepted. Attachment is removed through Grace alone; oh Nanak! then alone one merges with the Lord. (Asa M1, 356-8)

Riches (Vakhar)

The Gurus say that the sole purpose of man's birth in this world is to enable him to gather the merit (riches or merchandise) through which he may be accepted at the door of the Lord. What is this merit, this wealth or Vakhar? The Gurus say that it is the practice of the Naam or Shabd.

Gather the riches of Naam; oh Nanak, this is true wealth to acquire. (Jaitsri M5, 710-10)

Acquire the true riches of Naam; follow the Master. He who has true riches merges in the Shabd which is Truth. (Maru M1, 1032-18)

These riches are the Name or the Word of God. The Saints are its keepers and it can be obtained only through them.

The wealth you were born for, the Lord's Naam, is with the Saints.

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(*Sukhmani Gauri M5, 283-4*)

Just as material goods and merchandise are available in the market, the wealth of Naam is available in our body. The body may be likened to a shop with the merchandise of Naam in it. It may be searched for and found in the body with the aid of a Master.

This body is a jeweler's shop; the riches of the infinite Naam are sold in it. That tradesman gets these riches who contemplates on the Master's Shabd. (Sorath M1, 636-2)

Knowledge (Gyan)

The word 'Gyan' is from the root 'Gya' to know. The word 'know' in English is another form of it. Ordinarily, knowledge of writing or reading is considered sufficient and great emphasis is laid upon acquiring it. But such knowledge is merely a development of the intellect.

True knowledge or apprehension is, however, an altogether different function and is of the human spirit. There is a mention of both knowledge and science in the Bhagavad Gita. The one imperishable creative Power pervades the perishable things of the world and realization of this basic fact is described as knowledge; while knowledge of the perishable things created by the eternal Lord is called science. It is said in the Gita VI-8, that a man with knowledge and science and practicing yoga sees the Lord in all living creatures and sees all living beings in the Lord.

While knowledge and contemplation of material things, both of which are the functions of the mind, may be necessary for a discriminating understanding of the ideal objective, one has still to make an effort to gain that spiritual insight which comes only when the mind and intellect are

stilled.

The Gurus do not consider reading or writing or thinking as real knowledge. They regard Shabd, Sound, and Naam, Name, Sach, Truth, and Kirtan, Internal Music, as knowledge. The inner Melody or Music, which is always resounding in every heart and is present everywhere, is also called knowledge by them.

The Master's Word is knowledge and apprehension; It is very sweet; one gets it only by the Grace of the Master; only the rare and fortunate ones taste of it. (Gauri M3, 162-3)

In the Naam is contained the Master's wisdom; it is through the Naam one attains it. Yea, he alone attains it who is blest by the Lord, and who repairs to the Master's feet. (Suhi M4, 759-4)

Deep and serene is the ocean of Truth; knowledge and meditation do not find it. No one can fathom its depths. (Basant M1, 1188-14)

Knowledge and vision are the Melody, and it is indescribable. It is like a fruitful green tree, which gives immense shade. (Sri Rag M1, 59-8)

The Gurus say that there is light in this knowledge. Guru Amar Das, the third of the ten Sikh Gurus, describes the 'knowledge' of the Master as the 'Eternal Light of the Heart'. It is conducive to constant devotion, which is the real benefit of Naam.

Knowledge is imparted by the Master; it eternally enlightens the heart. His writ runs far and wide, even the kings submit to it. The disciple practices devotion day and night, and obtains the True Naam of the Lord. (Sorath M3, 600-11)

Guru Arjan Sahib, the fifth Sikh Guru, says in this connection that when the knowledge of the Master reveals

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itself, it illumines the heart. The mind becomes satisfied and calm when it drinks the Nectar of Naam, and it also becomes fearless.

The knowledge of the Master revealed itself; the heart was enlightened and all was Light. The mind drank the Nectar and was satisfied; it became fearless and was stilled. (Gauri M5, 09-7)

In making spiritual progress, the Master's knowledge enables one to see the Light of the inner suns and moons.

Fire, meadows, forests and oceans, suns and moons, all are found in the body; they know not this secret. (Basant M1, 1171-14)

This knowledge is helpful everywhere, both inside and outside. It is behind the veil of the mind, and it is found in the Sukhman (Royal Vein) inside every human being.

Knowledge imparted by the Master helps both inside and outside; adherence to it eradicates all ills. (Asa M5, 398-19)

The Master gives the light of understanding, and reveals within the Lord's infinite treasures; understanding brings release from the world. Oh Nanak! he alone to whom He is kind obtains it; he is truly honored. (Vadhans M3, 593-12)

When the mind is illumined by the light of knowledge, it gains immense wealth by possessing the priceless Name. (Maru M4, 1069-14)

Come, let us go to Sukhman, that land of calm, unruffled by passions; let us sit there and enjoy a drink of great rarity, with sweets of knowledge and mahua flowers of meditation, brewed in faith with the water of the mind. (Kabir, Ramkali 969-6)

This knowledge leads to release from birth and death, and no one but the Master possesses it. No one has ever

obtained or will ever obtain it without a Master. Its development is a matter of practice, and its secrets can only be had from one who has himself practiced it.

Oh brother, no one but a Master can give you this knowledge; even so will Brahma tell you, or the sages Narad and Vedvyas. (Sri Rag M1, 59-7)

The pitcher holds the water; without the pitcher it will not stay in one place; thus knowledge holds the mind still, and knowledge comes from the Master. (Dev Gandhari M5, 532-11)

Oh friendly souls! There can be no knowledge without a Master; a thousand efforts of frantic zeal will not be helpful to meet the Lord. (Asa War M1, 469-16)

No one ever found the Name of the Lord, no one ever met the Lord without a Master. This is the quintessence of knowledge; he who meditates on the Lord acquires the qualities of the Lord. (Maru Var M3, 1093-7)

This is the greatest boon conferred by the Master. When the mind is stilled by means of Simran (repetition of holy names) and meditation, the true knowledge reveals itself. There are very few persons in the world, however, who do this practice. Persons full of lust, anger and pride remain without it. All the desires subside on getting it. One comes to know everything, whether manifest or hidden. He comes to know the three worlds. All his sins and sufferings are done away with.

He gains release from this world and conquers death. He transcends all defects. It is easy to see that this cannot be done by means of external knowledge.

Knowledge is to the soul, what ornaments are to the bride. Adorned with it the soul feels worthy enough to

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approach the Lord. The mind is like an elephant, and the Master is like its driver. When the mind is goaded by knowledge, the elephant of the mind does not get out of control. This knowledge, which is Shabd or Naam or Bani, the Word, connects the soul with the Ultimate. When one gets this knowledge, one is freed from birth and death.

When this knowledge is revealed in the heart, the benefits of all other kinds of knowledge, contemplation, meditation and austerities are obtained.

He cherishes the unknowable, he cherishes the incomprehensible, the Lord dwells in his heart, he gets both knowledge and apprehension. Oh Nanak, the mind is imbued with the Lord's Naam. It has found an easy way of serving the Lord. (Asa M1, 356-4)

He who realizes the Lord unknowable, has achieved the perfection of all knowledge, contemplation, meditation and austerity. Oh Nanak, when the mind is imbued with Naam, it attains to the state of Sehj (Oneness with the Supreme Lord), thus serving best the Master's behest.

The Esoteric Letter (Akshar)

The Gurus speak highly of the akshar (letter) in their writings, and there is a frequent mention of One letter and Two letters. This 'letter' is described as the creator of the entire world. Mahatma Madan speaks of two letters:

He is the Perfect Master, who tells the secret of the two letters. One must be given up and the other grasped; that is the way to God, or our Original Home.

The Vedas, Puranas and other books are merely disseminators of the fifty-two letters of the Sanskrit language. One does not gain release by reading them. Without knowing the one letter, or the true letter, or the pure letter,

one remains involved in this world. He who knows this true letter becomes fit to reach the feet of the Lord. The Akshar Purush (One-Letter Being) creates the universe by means of the unending Music; and the universe is destroyed at the time of dissolution. The Vedas and other Scriptures do not go beyond this Akshar Purush.

The Gita also says:

In the world there are two Beings: Kshar Purush (the Perishable Being) and Akshar Purush, (the Imperishable Being). Kshara embraces all creatures and their permanent basis is Akshara. (XV-16). Kshar Purush is perishable, while Akshar Purush is the unmanifested basic substance, the unmanifested essence of Prakriti. But the Supreme Being – called Paramatma, who as the Imperishable Ishvara pervades and supports the three worlds is different from them. (XV-16, 17).

But those who worship the Imperishable, the Indefinable, the Unmanifest, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Rock-Seated, the Immoveable, the Unchanging; keeping the whole host of senses in complete control, looking on all with an impartial eye, engrossed in the welfare of all beings – these come indeed to Me. (Bhagavad Gita, XII-3, 4)

The Sar Shabd (True Sound) creates the regions between the highest region (Satlok) and the three worlds. These are destroyed in each dissolution. The real Home is beyond them. It is the original Home of the Saints. Akshar Purush (One-Letter Power) is the means to take us to the Lord.

Some Saints have described this Power as follows:

Kshar – The gross material world.

Akshar – Creator of Triloki or the three worlds.

Nihakshar – The higher spiritual regions which are

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destroyed in each grand dissolution, and the true Region or Sat Lok, which is beyond them.

In the Sar Bachan (Essence of the Teachings) by Swami Ji Maharaj, it is written:

Beyond Kshar, Akshar and Nihakshar, doth Your servant offer prayers.

These abstruse matters are mentioned frequently in the hymns of the Saints, but they can be understood only in the company of Saints who have realized them.

The Lotus Feet (Charan Kamal)

There are a number of references to the Lotus Feet of the Master in the hymns of the Sikh Gurus.

Wash His feet and serve the Master. (Todi M5, 713-14)

Listen, oh my ignorant mind! Bow at the feet of the Master. (Sri Rag M1, 57-18)

Drink the water with which the feet of the Master have been washed. (Gauri M5, 239-17)

Let the feet of the Master dwell in the heart, then you will get everything you desire. (Asa M5, 95-17)

What is the meaning of the Lotus Feet? What should we understand by them? To which feet are we to bow? Which feet are we to wash and then drink the water with which they have been washed? What is meant by the feet which are to dwell in our hearts and fulfill our desires? Some would say that in this context the second Guru meant the first Guru, Guru Nanak; the third Guru meant the second Guru; the fourth Guru meant the third Guru, and the fifth

Guru meant the fourth Guru. But Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, also used these words in His hymns. Whom did He mean? Adi Granth, the holy book of the Sikhs, has been studied from this point of view and various verses from it are given below for the consideration of the readers.

The Gurus have referred to the Lotus Feet as follows:

They advise us to bow to the feet of the living Master. For spiritual progress a living Guru is very necessary. No one can find the Lord without a Master, even though he may go on making millions of efforts. (Maru M3,1057-8)

Guru Arjan Sahib says that one should give up cleverness and prostrate oneself at the feet of the Master.

Give up all pretentions and prostrate yourself at the feet of the Guru. (Sri Rag M5, 44-11)

Guru Arjan Sahib clearly says that prostrating oneself at the feet of the Master and standing in His presence means prostrating oneself at the feet of the living Master.

Become the dust of the Holy Men's feet, and give up egotism; give up all cleverness and prostrate yourself at the feet of the Master. (Sri Rag M5, 45-3)

Give up all cleverness; and prostrate yourself at the feet of the Saints. (Gauri M5, 177-1)

Prostrating oneself at the feet of the Master simply means meeting Him and taking shelter with Him. Similarly, one is often advised to bow at the feet of a servant of the Lord or a holy man or Master, and to think of His feet or to be a sacrifice unto them.

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I bow to the feet of the devotee of the Lord. (Gauri M5, 191-7)

Stay in the company of holy men and contemplate on the feet of the Master. (Sri Rag M5, 47-16)

Blessed is the time when one sees the Master; let yourself be a sacrifice at the feet of the Master. (Vadhans M5, 562-15)

I live by looking at Your face; may I be a sacrifice unto Your Lotus Feet. (Suhi M5, 743-9)

The feet of the living Master have been described as the true place of pilgrimage. By serving a living Master one is accepted in the Court of the Lord. The unprotected get protection.

Oh brother, release is gained by listening to the Name; the service of the feet of the Master is like going on a pilgrimage; you are accepted in His court and find an honored place there. (Sri Rag M5, 52-19)

It is said that the nectar flowing from the holy feet of a Master is very sweet and it is only by great good fortune that one gets it. By seeing a Master one gains millions of benefits.

Oh mother, the feet of the Guru are sweet; one can approach them only by great good fortune. Millions of benefits are gained by seeing the Master. (Todi M5, 717-9)

The Gurus also mention drinking the water with which the feet of the living Master have been washed.

Drink the water with which the feet of the Master have been washed. (Gauri M5, 239-17)

Remember the Name and your body and mind will be blessed; drink the water with which the feet of the Master have been washed. Blessed is the time when you go to the door of the Master; oh Nanak, the Lord is kind. You have met a Perfect Master. (Suhi M5, 749-8)

It is only by great good fortune that one can attain the feet of the Master.

Oh Nanak, he is the most fortunate whose mind is attached to the holy feet of the Master. (Sorath M5, 614-18)

Oh Nanak, fortunate is he who gives up pride and bows at the feet of the Master. (Asa M5, 372-18)

Oh Nanak, blessed am I! For I have had access to the feet of holy men. (Gauri M5, 191-19)

Access to the feet of the Master and full opportunity to serve Him are obtained by the Grace of the Lord. It is only through His Mercy that love for the Master dwells in the heart.

The Lord came to my help, and wisdom dawned upon me; my mind turned to the feet of the Master. (Asa M4, 447-1)

He to whom the Lord is kind washes the feet of the Master. (Gauri M4, 309-14)

The Lord had Mercy on me; the Holy Feet of the Master dwell in my heart. (Majh M5, 107-1)

That day is blessed when a man bows at the feet of the Master. That forehead and beard are blessed which touch the feet of the Master.

The eyes that see them are blessed; blessed is the forehead that touches His Lotus Feet. (Gauri M5, 201-19)

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Blessed is the day when the mind rests on the Lotus Feet; blessed is that meeting.(Gauri M5, 254-15)

Blessed are the beards that touch the feet of the Master. (Shalok M3, 1419-10)

Bhai Gurdas Ji describes the taking of shelter at the feet of the Master as follows:

After many ages I obtained human birth, and made it fruitful by taking shelter at the Guru's feet. My worthless eyes saw the Master; my worthless ears heard the words of the Master; my worthless nose inhaled the deep fragrance of the Master's holy feet; my worthless tongue repeated the word of the Master; my worthless hands served the Master; my worthless feet went round Him. (Kabit 17)

Taking shelter at the Master's feet is true worship; occult powers lead to birth and death. Taking shelter with the Master's Name leads to the abode of peace. Devotion and austerities do not bring release; taking shelter at the Master's feet is of incalculable value. It leads to release and salvation. (Kabit 72)

Since I have taken shelter with the Master, I have found that the whole world lies at His feet. The Master's Lotus Feet are the source of nectar, all the world longs to have the dust of His feet; the Lotus Feet are the natural home of peace and wealth. They lead to the stilling of the mind and to spiritual meditation. The praise of the Lotus Feet is unfathomable, I bow to them again and again every moment. (Kabit 17)

The Gurus have mentioned various benefits that flow from taking shelter at the feet of the Master. Pains, worries and calamities are removed. Lust, anger, greed and other defects disappear. Both the body and the mind become pure, and one gains peace. All troubles are forgotten and the fear of death is banished. The devotee crosses the

ocean of worldly existence. He has constant devotion for the Name. The lotus of the heart flowers into full bloom. The disciple awakens. The Lord dwells in his mind and is seen everywhere. The devotee gets peace and bliss and reaches the Supreme Abode. There are many hymns containing prayers that one may reach the feet of the Master in order to obtain these benefits.

The Guru instruct the disciple how to make the holy feet of the inner Master dwell in the mind.

The living Master is not confined to His body. He also has access to the higher regions of the universe. Contemplation on His inner form is the second step in spiritual progress. When the soul by means of repetition (Simran) rises to higher regions, it can stay there only with the help of contemplation on the Master's inner form. The Gurus, therefore, say with great emphasis that the feet of the Master should dwell within our 'hearts'.

Let the feet of the Master dwell in the heart; then the deepest aspirations of the mind shall be fulfilled. (Asa M5, 395-17)

Let the feet of the Master dwell in the heart; all your sufferings will then be ended. (Gauri M5, 190-13)

Let the feet of the Master dwell in the heart; meditating on Him, cross the sea of fire. (Gauri M5, 192-2)

Are the holy feet distinct from the form of the Master? No, never. Contemplation on the form of the Master includes contemplation on the feet also. When one sees the feet inside, the entire form is present before one's vision. Disciples have always contemplated on the feet of the Master within. Tradition says that Bhai Gonda Ji, while sitting in meditation at Kabul, contemplated on the feet of

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Guru Har Rai, the seventh Sikh Guru, from dawn to dusk, and did not allow him to move. The Guru Hargobind sat immovable at Kiratpur all the time. We need the dust of the feet of such disciples, in whose minds the feet of the Master have become manifest, and who (consequently) enjoy the bliss while beholding them. We should be like bees at the Lotus Feet of the Master. May we be a sacrifice unto those in whose minds these feet are manifest!

In the inner regions the form of the Master and His feet are very radiant. Tulsi Das Ji has described the radiance of the nails of the Master's feet as follows:

The nails of the feet of the Master shine like diamonds; when their vision appears in the inner mind, one gets divine sight.

Maulana Rumi also says:

When the Guru is enthroned in your heart, you know everything from beginning to end.

When the Master manifests himself in the heart, you come to know all — from the beginning to the end of things. Disciples with such knowledge merge themselves in the inner form of the Master. Bhai Gurdas Ji says:

While I was meditating, a divine sight came into view, and a merciful Divine Form appeared; the soul merged in the Shabd and the Tenth Door opened. The Nectar of Love was found there as a treasure; I bowed with folded hands to Him and it was accepted; he pervaded every part of the body; the desires of the mind were stilled, and I meditated on the Lord. (Kabit 18)

From the time when the Lotus Feet begin to dwell in the heart, the wandering mind does not go out anymore. The Lotus Feet produce freedom-giving nectar, and one gains the immortal region and merges in it. Since I began contemplating on the feet of the Mas-

ter, all other knowledge and meditation have been given up. The feet of the Master are like the honey-producing lotus, the desires of the mind have been stilled, and I have reached the Original Home. (Kabit 218)

The astral form of the Master appears in the forehead when the soul withdraws itself and gathers at the point behind the eyes called 'the heart' by the Saints. Unless this happens it is impossible to meet the Lord. The form of the Master appears first, and then the Lord. The form always remains with the disciple and takes him to higher regions. It takes him beyond the realm of the three attributes (gunas) to the fourth region, and seats him in the lap of the Lord.

I see the feet of the Master within my forehead, and all my troubles are therefore ended. (Gauri M5, 187-9)

The form of the Master is in my forehead; wherever I look, I see it with me. (Dev Gandhari M5, 535-15)

The body (person), in which the feet of the beloved of the Lord dwell, is sacred.

The feet of holy men dwell in my heart, and my body is purified. (Dhanasri M5, 680-3)

Only those to whom the Lord is kind are able to see the astral form of the Master.

Oh Master, I saw the brilliant radiance of your holy feet; to whom the Lord is kind, he alone sees this. (Bilawal M5, 814-13)

Saints love the Lord and worship the Lotus Feet of the Master.

They love the Lotus Feet of the Master, they love the Lord and

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worship His holy feet. (Asa M5, 394-5)

It is very beneficial to meet those who are the Lord personified. Their feet are wonderful. We praise them again and again and pay them constant homage.

Beauteous are their feet; it is very helpful spiritually to see their god-like form. (Gauri M5, 293-11)

Fruitful is your vision, oh Lord, dear to me are your beauteous feet. I praise them again and again, and offer incense to them in my mind. (Jaitsri M5, 701-14)

Let thy Lotus Feet dwell in my heart; may I sacrifice myself before thy inner vision. (M 5 Vadhas 563-9)

The Gurus always advise spiritual seekers to obtain the boon of the Lotus Feet of the Master and of the Name of the Lord. In various hymns, the Gurus speak of bowing at the feet of the Lord and contemplating on them.

Bow before the feet of the Lord, the Word of the Master will lead you to them. (Gauri M3, 492-2)

Think of the Lotus Feet of the Lord, and take shelter with them. Repeat the Name of the Lord, and in this way gain true wealth. (Ramkali M5, 899-9)

Remember the lotus feet of the Lord, and contemplate on them in the mind. (Todi M5, 714-11)

The Gurus use the words 'Lotus Feet of the Lord' and 'Lotus Feet' almost in the same sense. What are the Lotus Feet? Gurus clearly state that they are the 'Melodies of the Lord', by hearing which man becomes holy. He thus crosses the region of the three attributes (gunas).

Blessed is the Melody of the Lord, beautiful are the feet of the Lord. Remember this and become a Saint. (Sarang M5, 1228-7)

The 'Lotus Feet' is another name for the Melody which one obtains from the company of Saints.

Peace, happiness and the Celestial Melody, you get from the company of Saints. (Majh M5, 105-13)

The manifestation of the Lotus Feet means the manifestation of the Melody of the Naam or Shabd.

Those who drink the Elixir of the Lord, are devoted to love of His Lotus Feet. (Gauri M5, 198-14)

He breaks our worldly bonds, and binds us to the Lotus Feet; He attunes us to the Shabd. (Ramkali M5, 915-14)

The Shabd Sat Guru appears in the mind. Oh Nanak, take shelter at His feet. (Dhanasri M5,680-14)

According to the Gurus, to meditate on the Name is to meditate on the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Those who become intoxicated with the Name are also drunk with the Nectar of the Lotus Feet.

Nanak is filled with love for the Lotus Feet; oh Lord, save the honor of Thy servant. (Gujri M5, 500-12)

Contemplate in the mind on the Lotus Feet of the Lord. (Todi M5, 714-11)

When Light appears in the heart as the result of spiritual practice, it is also taken to be the manifestation of the Lord's Lotus Feet.

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The Lotus Feet dwell in the heart; the Light has appeared, and I see the Lord. (Asa M5, 375-10)

The Gurus clearly say that repetition of the Name is remembrance of the Lord's Lotus Feet.

Walking, sitting, sleeping or waking, remember the Word of the Master. When in the company of a Saint, ask for shelter at His feet, you will then cross the ocean of this world. (Maru M5, 1006-19)

To remain at the Lotus Feet of the Lord is the beginning and end of all.

The mind in ecstasy at the Lotus Feet, doth see the beginning and end of all. (Kabir, Salok 1370-24)

How can one describe the Lotus Feet? They are blissful beyond description, to be known only by experience.

Oh Kabir, how can I describe the Grace of the Lotus Feet? There are no adequate words for it; it has to be experienced. (Kabir, Salok 1370-27)

The Lotus Feet dwelling in the 'heart' become our constant protection and support.

Those who rely on the Lotus Feet, are always in touch with the Name of the Lord. (Majh M5, 107-4)

Those who rely on the Lotus Feet, who have them for their capital, are honored in the True Court. Oh Nanak, the Lord is the only true support. (Dhanasri M5, 675-19)

He is our friend, supporter and companion, He is the great, unfathomable and infinite One. Let His Lotus Feet dwell in the heart, for He is the sustainer of all. (Asa M5, 405-15)

Oh Lord, You are the treasure of virtues, I rely for support on Your Lotus Feet. Remember to sing His Name, as long as you have breath. (Bilawal M5, 818-10)

The Lotus Feet serve as a ship that takes us across the ocean of the universe.

Oh cross the ocean; the Lotus Feet are the ship. His laws are His own; He knows them all. (Gauri M5, 209-3)

Fearful is the ocean of the world, but the Lotus Feet of the Lord serve as the ship. They will take you across. (Vadhans M5, 577-10)

The Lotus Feet of the Lord are the ship, oh mind, use this ship and sail across. (Asa M5, 398-8)

These Lotus Feet are in the 'heart' and sustain the body and the mind.

He who hears the inner music remembers the Lord. Thus he becomes a holy man, and the Lotus Feet dwell in his heart; he worships them internally, and they sustain his life. (Sarang M5, 1222-9)

The Lotus Feet dwell in the heart, remember them to your last breath. (Dev Gandhari M5, 534-8)

Only he, for whom it is so ordained by the Lord, loves His Lotus Feet.

All are strung on the same thread. He alone, whom the Lord loves, loves the Lotus Feet. (Majh M5, 108-16)

The Lord in His Grace makes one love His beautiful and wonderful Lotus Feet. (Asa M5, 384-5)

The Perfect Master himself gives the boon of the treasure of the Lotus Feet and reveals them.

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Love the Lotus Feet; The Master gives this boon. (Asa M5, 376-15)

Praised be the Lotus Feet. Praised be the Master, who showed them to us. (Sarang M5, 1212-14)

I was poor and the Master gave me the wealth of His Lotus Feet. I was homeless and He gave me shelter in them. (Sri Rag M5, 48-16)

By remaining in the company of the Saints, the Lotus Feet dwell in the mind.

I became enlightened in the company of Saints; the Lotus Feet now dwell in my mind. (Prabhati M5, 1340-12)

How do these Lotus Feet dwell in the mind? They do so by remembrance of the Lord.

The remembrance of the Lord removes all suffering, and the Lotus Feet appear in the mind. Repeat the Lord's Name, and do it millions of times; oh dear ones of the Lord, drink the Nectar. (Gauri M5, 194-16)

Remain in the company of the Saints, sing the virtues of the Lord; do not waste the jewel of human birth. Sing the glories of the Lord, and He will ferry you across; He will remove your sufferings, and the Lotus Feet will dwell in the heart. Remember them to your last breath. Nanak is most blessed, the Lord has given him shelter. (Dev Gandhari M5, 534-7)

When, by repetition of the Name, the mind and senses are stilled, the soul leaves the body and rises higher. The Lotus Feet then appear in the heart. The soul merges in the inner Melody of the Naam and the Lord is not forgotten even for a moment. The soul is linked to the inner Melody, and the devotee's attention is so much absorbed

in it and thereby made calm and peaceful that he forgets all other enjoyments.

The great Sound has entranced the deer; it has pierced it with a sharp arrow. Nanak has reached the Lotus Feet of the Lord, and is now tied fast to them. (Kedara M5, 1121-4)

These Lotus Feet are wonderfully beautiful. It is only with great good fortune that a holy man is able to become fastened to them. They appear in the minds of devotees.

The beautiful Lotus Feet of the Lord, appear in the minds of Saints. Only a holy man worships them. (Asa M5, 380-8)

The Lotus Feet appear in the minds of devotees. (Majh M5, 109-4)

Simran and austerities, pilgrimages and meritorious deeds are all included in the attainment of the Lotus Feet.

He who praises the Lotus Feet of the Transcendental One has achieved all the merit of prayers and austerities. (Sri Rag M5, 48-14)

Meditate on the Feet of the Lord in the mind; all pilgrimages, prayers and austerities are included in this meditation (or are accomplished thereby). (Gauri M5, 195-5)

Repeat the Name of the Lord, drink the nectar, praise Him day and night. You shall thus have performed yoga and charities; bow before His feet and realize them. (Ramkali M5, 925-14)

Bhai Gurdas Ji also praises the Lotus Feet and beautifully describes the fruits of obtaining them:

The praise of the Lord's Feet is beyond description. It is wonderful. Bow to them again and again. Tenderest of the tender, coolest of the cool, fragrant and without equal are they. They lead to the nat-

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ural and easy uplift of the soul. Of superb taste and unfathomable essence are they; they are of beautiful form; they still the mind and desires. They give indescribable happiness and infinite pleasure. (Kabit 80)

Praise the Lotus Feet, and the lotus of the heart will be filled with Light. Keep them before your eyes in constant love, and you will gain insight into the heart of things. All sounds and the soul are absorbed in the Eternal Melody. The mind in sweet oblivion climbs the inward heights. One loses the feeling of the body, overcome by love. The fruit of being a devotee is happiness ineffable; no words are good enough to sing its praise. (Kabit 33)

The Nectar of release is obtained from the Lotus Feet, the soul is uplifted and one gets the wealth of true happiness; it becomes possible to cross the sea of fearful waves of the world; the Nectar washes away all worries and stills the mind; when the Sound is contacted the soul loses itself in joy; constancy of love and firmness of faith find roots in the heart; life, life-in-release, and the basis of life – all becomes clear, one loses one's self and merges in the infinite. (Kabit 92)

The Dust of the Lotus Feet

The Gurus, in addition to mentioning the Lotus Feet of the Lord, also mention the dust of the Lord's feet in their hymns. A study of the hymns shows that like 'Lotus Feet' the term 'dust of the feet' has also been used in different contexts.

The dust is obtained from holy men and Saints. In the hymns of the Gurus, the praises of holy men and Saints have been sung in many different ways. We need them for spiritual progress. The Gurus say that the whole universe longs to have the dust of holy men's feet. The Lord has ordained it as the means by which one is to cross the ocean of the world.

All your universe, my Lord, longs for the dust of the feet of the Saints. (Malar M4, 1263-10)

Both men and gods are anxious to get this dust.

The service of the Lord's feet leads to salvation. Both seers and sages, men and gods, are eager to get the dust of His feet. (Bhairon M5, 1138-10)

Rishis and Munis (seers and wise men) such as Shankar, Narad and others, were all anxious to get this dust, and the very earth on which such Saints walk is made holy.

Shankar, Narad, Sesh-nag and Munis - all wish to have the dust of the feet of the Saints; the earth they walk upon becomes holy. (Kalyan M4, 1326-10)

This dust doth cleanse as no ritual ablutions can, in this dust lies the merit of countless pilgrimages; this dust is holy and wipes off all sins. Even gods and goddesses worship at His feet as humble servants; the dust of the Lotus Feet is most beneficial, it conquers all circumstances and gives mastery over actions; the dust of the Lotus Feet is most purifying; through it sinners become pure and are redeemed. (Bhai Gurdas Ji, Kabit, Sawayye 339)

Shamas-i-Tabriz, the great Persian Saint, says:

You should brighten your eyes with the dust of the Saints, so that you may understand everything from the beginning to the end. You should use the dust of the feet of the Lord's chosen beings as collyrium in order to see the Lord.

Illumine your eyes with the dust of the Saints' feet, that you may see the beginning and the end of things. Use the dust of their feet as collyrium, through pain that is very sweet, it makes for clearer

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vision.

Many places, where Saints lived or where they spent time in devotion and enlightened people, have become centers of pilgrimage. Thus many sacred places have come into being owing to the greatness of holy men, Saints and devotees. For the Sikhs, Nankana Sahib, Panja Sahib and Kartarpur are considered sacred in memory of Guru Nanak. Khandur Sahib was founded in memory of Guru Angad. Because of Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev, Amritsar and Taran Taran respectively are considered holy places.

Similarly, the following are considered as sacred: — Mecca and Medina by the Muslims; the rivers Ganges, Yamuna, Saraswati and Godawari and the city of Kashi, Banaras, by the Hindus; and Jerusalem by the Christians.

The Gurus say in this respect:

All the gods to whom the places of pilgrimage are dedicated, crave for the dust of the feet of the Saints. (Malar M4, 1263-9)

The Ganges, Yamuna, Godawari and Saraswati, all crave for the dust of the feet of the Saints. (Malar M4, 1263-5)

Places of pilgrimage are revered because of their association with holy men, Saints and sages. Saints and other holy men, however, are not attached to any one single place. The place where they sit becomes sacred. They are mobile points of pilgrimage.

Bhai Gurdas Ji says:

The Ganges, Saraswati, Yamuna and Godawari, Gaya, Prayag, Set, Kurukshetra and Mansarovar, Kashi, Kanchi, Dwarka, Mathura

and Ayodhya, Gomti, Avantka and snow-bound Kidar Nath, Narbada, various forests, sacred spots and Kailash, the blue Mandrachal, and Mount Sumer, sacred spots, wealth, truth, righteousness, compassion and contentment, all of them together are not equal to the dust of the feet of the Master. (Kabit, Sawayye 416)

Sacred is the dust of the Master's feet, blessed is the dust rubbed on the forehead; blessed are those that see it, they get all that is desired. Nothing is as great as the glory of the forehead, neither the brilliance of a million jewels, nor the effulgence of millions of suns and moons, nor the splendor of great palaces, won by great good fortune, can equal the glory of this dust. (Kabit, Sawayye 421)

Repetitions of mantras, austerities and visiting the sixty-eight holy places of pilgrimage are nothing as compared to the dust of the Saints' feet.

Attachment and doubt are removed by the Grace of the Saints. The dust of the feet of Saints is praised by all religions. (Gauri M4, 183-6)

The true Name satisfies the mind; the dust of the feet of the Saints gives the merit of baths at all the sixty-eight holy places. (Asa M5, 377-3)

My desire was fulfilled on seeing the Master. By rubbing the dust of His feet on my forehead the benefit of bathing at the sixty-eight sacred places was obtained.

It is only after obtaining the dust of the feet of the Saints that a man is really alive.

The Lord is merciful and omnipresent; Nanak has found life, for he has obtained the dust of the Saints' feet. (Dhanasri M5, 676-19)

It is only when the Lord wishes it that a person gets the dust of the feet of the Saints. It can be had only through

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His Grace.

Oh Lord, give Nanak the dust of the Saints' feet; oh bountiful Lord, I do not know anyone else who can give it. (Bihagara M4, 556-18)

It is not everyone who gets the dust of the feet of the Lord's loved ones.

Oh Nanak, the dust of the feet of those who are dear to the Lord is a rare boon. (Bhairon M5, 1143-8)

Only a fortunate man gets the dust of Saints' feet; oh Nanak, it is only by meeting the Guru that one is attuned to the Lord. (Gauri M5, 193-19)

One may inwardly obtain the dust or ray of the astral form of the Saints. The bright rays which emanate from the feet of the astral form of the Saints are described as the dust of their feet.

I partook of the Nectar of the Name; I rubbed the dust of the Saints' feet on my forehead. (Sorath M4, 652-19)

Tulsi Das Ji also says that the nails of the feet of the Master are brighter than diamonds.

The nails of the feet of the Master shine like diamonds; by remembering them one gets divine sight. (Ramacharitmanas)

Tulsi Sahib Ji says that if you wish to see the dust of Saints' feet you should clean the mirror of the mind and body and keep the soul constantly at the center behind the eyes. By contemplating in this way you will know the inner secret and see the Light of the dust of the feet of the Saints.

Keep your soul behind the eyes every moment; clean the mirror of

the mind and the body and beautify the soul; when you are fully concentrated you will realize the secret. Oh Tulsi, you will then see the Light of the dust of the feet of the Saints.

What is this dust? The Gurus describe it as Nectar or the precious Naam of the Lord.

Nanak says that the dust of the feet of the Saints is the precious Naam. (Dhanasri M5, 691-14)

The dust of the Saints' feet is in every heart and sustains all. This is the Nectar or Word of the Lord.

It is in all hearts and sustains them, this dust of the Saints' feet, oh Nanak. (Dhanasri M5, 677-6)

One should sing of the nectar of the Naam, and bathe in the dust of the Saints' feet. (Sorath M5, 623-13)

The dust of the feet of the Lord is applied to the forehead. This precious dust is beyond the reach of gods, goddesses and men.

My forehead is covered with the dust of the feet of the Lord; it is beyond the reach of gods and men. (Namdev, Dhanasri 694-2)

If one can get the dust of a holy man's feet he will obtain the merit of visiting millions of sacred places and of countless fasts and disciplines.

By obtaining the dust of Saints' feet, one obtains all the benefits of pilgrimages, fasts and disciplines. (Sri Rag M5, 48-7)

By obtaining the dust of the Saints' feet, all calamities, troubles, grieves and pains of separation are removed. Egotism, lust and other sins are destroyed. All the dirt is removed from the mind and it becomes pure. Other de-

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sires and aspirations are fulfilled. One becomes free from the wheel of birth and death and becomes happy. The fear of death vanishes and illusion disappears. Millions of living beings are redeemed and gain release. The Lord is seen everywhere. The devotee is honored both here and hereafter, and in the Court of the Lord. He enjoys natural and true happiness and real wealth.

Bhai Gurdas Ji has beautifully described the benefits of the dust of the feet of the Saints. He says:

One gets the sweet Nectar from the Lotus Feet, and the mind is filled with sweet happiness. The Lotus Feet are sweet-scented and very delicate. They are the abode of everlasting peace. From them one gets the unfathomable spiritual delight. The Unending Music proceeds from them. They are the givers of supreme Light and wealth. All other knowledge, meditation and remembrance are forgotten. (Kabit, Sawayye 271)

By applying the dust of the Master's feet to the unclean mind, it becomes clean, like a mirror, and is firmly attached to the Master's words. The Master gives the collyrium of knowledge; He demolishes the fort of deception. The Immaculate One pervades all lands and seas. The dust removes all fear and doubt, and takes one beyond action and time. It breaks the power of the five senses, its service is the service of the highest Immaculate One. It makes one free from illusion and free from sufferings. (Kabit, Sawayye 295)

By applying the dust of the Lotus Feet to the forehead, all doubts, illusions and dread of destiny are removed. The Nectar of the Lotus Feet cleans the unclean mind and removes doubts. The Lotus Feet are the natural home of happiness; the mind is stilled and is given a firm support; the praise of the Lotus Feet of the Master is unfathomable and incomprehensible. It leads to the attainment of all treasures and all virtues. (Kabit, Sawayye 337)

By applying the dust of the Lotus Feet to the body, the body is cleansed of foul matter and becomes the abode of God. By drinking

the Nectar of the Lotus Feet, one is freed from the three modes (gunas) and knows oneself. By the Light of the Lotus Feet enthroned in the heart, one knows all the three worlds and ages. The Nectar of the Lotus Feet is sweet-scented and soothing. There is nothing equal to it. It is the only true support. (Kabit, Sawayye 338)

Besides the dust of the Lotus Feet of Saints, a mention of the dust of the feet of devotees is also made in the Scriptures.

Oh Nanak, ask for the dust of the feet of the devotee who himself repeats the Naam and makes others do so. (Gauri Var M4, 306-2)

Bhai Gurdas Ji says:

I put the dust of the devotee on my forehead; all else is but the dust of the road. This dust is the wish-giving tree amongst millions of trees. It is like the Divine Nectar, the lode-star, or the wish-fulfilling cow. Gods, men, yogis and wise men in all the three worlds and three ages have studied the Vedas and reasoned about their meaning; millions of gatherings of millions of disciples bow to the devotees of the Master and gain happiness. (Kabit, Sawayye 193)

The Gurus pray again and again that they may obtain the dust of the Lotus Feet, and every sincere seeker searches for it.

Surat Shabd Yoga or the Yoga of the Sound Current

The word 'Surat' means attention, consciousness, meditation, or the soul. The word 'Shabd' means the Dhunatmak or Melody-based Name or Power of the Lord. 'Yoga' means the uniting of the Surat with the Shabd and becoming one with it. Hearing the Melody, the soul is irresistibly drawn to it. This Melody is resounding everywhere, but unless we are attentive we cannot hear it. This Melody

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is the Shruti (that which is heard) of the sages. It is also called Udgit, or the music from above. It is not an external or worldly music. It is the music of the soul. Sufis call it Sama. It can be heard by the soul. Muslim holy men call it Sultan-ul-Azkar or King of Melodies, Sot-e- Sarmadi or Divine Voice and Sot-e-Nasiri or the Voice of Victory.

In Punjabi, the word 'Surat' means consciousness. It refers to the conscious being of man, namely, the soul. It is for this reason that it came to mean the soul. The Shabd or Celestial Music has already been discussed in several sections. Yoga means union or connection. The method by which the soul may become absorbed in the Shabd and become united with it so that it will never separate from it again is called Surat-Shabd-Yoga, or the union of the soul with the Divine Music of the Lord.

Surat Shabd Yoga is very ancient and has existed from the very beginning. It is natural. One cannot add to or subtract anything from it. The Shabd was in the beginning. It created this universe. The soul has a natural affinity for the Heavenly Music of Naam.

Yogas are of different kinds. The object of the lower yogas is to awaken the Serpent Power (Kundalini). These yogas are concerned with the chakras (centers) of the body. The Saints have not accepted them. Good health can be obtained by means of Hatha Yoga. Through Pran Yoga, the yoga of breathing in certain ways, control of the breath can be achieved, and health and long life can be attained. Through the yoga of the mind, one can control the mind. The yoga of knowledge sharpens the intellect and enables one to understand the oneness of the soul and God.

The six chakras or centers of Brahmanda (the second spiritual region) are reflected in the regions below it. The

reflection of the six centers of Anda (the astral region) is seen in Pinda, the physical universe. The Saints disregard the six lower centers of the body and enjoin the practice of listening to the Celestial Music at the eye-center, which is above the six lower centers. They consider Surat Shabd Yoga, the Yoga of uniting the soul with the Divine Sound, to be the highest of all the yogas. Its object is to connect the soul with the Shabd and by this means to merge the soul in the Supreme Silence (Ashabd), the Akeh (Unutterable) and the Nirala (Wonderful), from which it originally emanated. Without the soul there can be no yoga or worldly activity. Guru Nanak Sahib says:

As is the soul, so is the way. (Sri Rag M1, 24-19)

When one heeds with reverence the Guru's Word, his soul is awakened and he is honored in the Court of the Lord. (Sri Rag M1, 18-3)

Kabir Sahib and all the Saints and the ten Gurus of the line of Guru Nanak have taught the practice of Surat Shabd Yoga. What is Surat Shabd Yoga? It is another name for the practice of the Name of the Lord.

Nanak knew the immaculate Name, and gave it devotion with love. Guru Angad had it as part of him, he showered the Heavenly Music continuously. (Sawayye M4, 1406-3)

This is the means of meeting the Lord.

Beyond is the Friend, the unique Beloved. The Word of the Master takes the soul across. (Tukhari M1, 1113-11)

Surat Shabd Yoga is easy to practice. One does not have to undergo suffering while practicing it, as in other yogas. It is accordingly called Sehaj Yoga, or the Easy Path. One

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does not have to make any effort except that of listening to the Melody of the Shabd with close attention. A child, youth, or an old person belonging to any sex, caste, creed and country can practice this yoga.

One does not have to undergo hardships as in Hatha Yoga. One can practice it while living at home and carrying on one's worldly duties. It is not necessary to change one's religion in order to practice it. Anyone belonging to any race, community, religion or faith can practice it.

Practice of Surat Shabd Yoga

There are three phases of Surat Shabd Yoga, namely Simran (repetition or remembrance), Dhyan (contemplation), and dhun (Melody). Simran consists in repeatedly remembering a certain specified thing. The full details of this practice can be obtained from a Perfect Master. In the beginning Simran is Varanatmak, i.e. practiced by means of spoken words. Later on, however, it is performed by means of the 'tongue' of thought. When it becomes firmly established and the power of remaining in concentration is developed, inner Light appears and also the beautiful astral form of the Master. This form pulls the soul towards it and in this way, contemplation is completed. The object contemplated upon, the contemplation and the contemplator become one. The ideal, the contemplation and the doer become one.

When a disciple remembers an ideal again and again and fixes the eyes of contemplation on it again and again, the Nirat, or soul's power of sight, will visualize its shape and absorb its effect. In this way, the soul and the soul's power of seeing rest in 'calm fixity' and the Divine Melody is heard during contemplation. The seeker should fix the attention of the soul on the Melody described by the

Master. The power of speech should merge in Simran or repetition, the power of sight in contemplation, and the power of hearing in the Dhunatmak or Unutterable Naam. The disciple should seal his tongue, eyes and ears with Simran, contemplation and the Divine Melody.

Close the three apertures (ears, eyes and mouth); make no loud recitations. Close the outer apertures and open the inner ones. Close the three apertures and repeat the Name of the Immaculate One; the inner apertures will open only when the outer ones are closed. (Kabir)

These three practices are done at the eye center, also called the Third Eye and the eight-petalled lotus center. The eye-center is between the two eye-brows. For the practice of Surat ShabdYoga, it is necessary to obtain initiation from a Perfect Master or Saint. Progress in this Yoga is made in the company of Saints. When the Lord sends His Grace from His Original Home, then only one gets the blessing of meeting a true Master and of being in His company. After meeting a Master, the disciple need not observe any formal religious rites or ceremonies. The Master, by His Grace, makes the disciple practice Surat ShabdYoga.

By His Grace one meets a Master; and the Master initiates one into the practice of Surat Shabd Yoga. (Majh M3, 110-1)

For the practice of this Yoga it is necessary to have a secluded spot away from noise. To achieve inner seclusion, the Masters teach a perfect method by which the disciple closes the outer doors and sits in one-pointed concentration. He is asked to practice at a fixed time, morning and evening. At that time, one has to gather one's attention at the seat of the soul, which is behind the eyes, mid-way between the two eye-brows. The Hindus call it the Third Eye

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or Tisra Til, and the Muslims call it Nukta-e-Sweda or the eye-center. It is not necessary to put pressure on any vein or other part of the body. It is sufficient if you fix your attention at that point in the body.

This is the point which is referred to by Lord Krishna as being in the middle of the root of the nose. During this exercise one performs the Simran, or repetition, as directed by the Master, and also contemplates on Him. He should not let any other thought enter his mind. In this way, he should gather together at the eye-center the consciousness, which normally pervades every pore of the body, and fix his attention at the eye-center. The full details of this practice and also of the difficulties and obstructions that may be experienced are described by the Master at the time of initiation, so that the disciple may avoid them. The Master also helps the disciple internally and protects him.

The Master helps in overcoming difficulties; the devotee reaches his home safely and is happy. (Basant M5, 1185-15)

It is dangerous to practice this Yoga without initiation, after merely reading books or after hearing about it from others. Maulvi Rum gives the same advice. He says that one should seek a Master because, without a Master, this path is full of risks and dangers. He says:

Seek a Master for this journey; without a Master it is full of risks and dangers.

What is the sign of success in the practice of this Yoga? It is that one loses all consciousness of the body. In the beginning the hands and feet become numb, and then other parts gradually become numb. The currents of consciousness which flow downwards and give life to the body gather together at the center of the soul – the eye-center –

and the rest of the entire body loses consciousness. Unless one rises completely above the nine doors (the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth and two lower apertures), one remains ignorant of the divine vision.

Unless a man rises above consciousness, he remains without the divine vision.

Kabir Sahib also says that the soul, which is wandering around in the nine doors, cannot find the invaluable treasure. He says:

Oh fair damsel, you have searched in all the nine doors, but have not found the precious treasure. Oh Kabir, the nine doors hold it not; it is inside the Tenth Door. (Kabir, Gauri 339-13)

When the powers that normally operate at or through the nine doors gather together, the Divine Melody is heard and the inner Light is seen. The connection with the gross senses ceases, and the subtler regions come into view. The soul, mind and intellect all become finer and purer.

There the soul, mind and intellect find their real and proper form. (Jap Ji)

All the faculties of the devotee improve. The faculties of his soul and mind become finer. The intellect is sharpened. On listening to the Melodies of the Divine Sound, the mysteries of all the higher and finer spiritual regions are revealed.

When the soul by means of Simran or repetition is gathered at the eye-center and crosses the starry regions, the sun and the moon, it beholds the astral form of the Master within. This form accompanies the disciple to the ultimate Home. The attention of the disciple then becomes strongly

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concentrated. He reaches this stage by means of Simran or repetition. Simran is not much needed thereafter. The disciple worships and meditates on the Guru, and by degrees the two become one. He becomes "Fana-fil-Sheikh" (one with the Master). He merges in the Master. The hint given by the Gurus when they say: "Leave yourself and merge in the Guru" refers to this state. In this way, the disciple automatically finds his way to the higher regions.

When one gets the company of the outer Guru, he looks one-pointedly at His form and into His eyes, and as a result of the wonderful light and magnetic attraction of the Master he reaches a high degree of concentration. His soul leaves the body easily and rises to inner regions and sees various scenes there. Besides this there is no other method for easily concentrating and seeing the beautiful sights of the inner regions. Simran and contemplation are now complete and the Music of the Shabd, which was dimly heard at first, is now clearly heard. It intoxicates the mind and gladdens the soul.

The purpose of Simran is to collect the soul behind the eyes so that this earthly vessel, the body, may be vacated at will. The purpose of contemplation is to hold the soul still in the upper regions. This results from fixing the attention on the Radiant Form of the Master. The function of the Divine Melody is to take the soul up to the higher-regions.

When a disciple has access to the Radiant Form of the Master, he may consider half the battle as won. After this, the act of rising to higher regions is both easy and joyous. The Master takes the disciple along with Him by the radiance of His Light and the wonderfully sweet Melodies of the Divine Sound. They enter the region of the thousand-petalled lotus, which is in the center of the

astral region and is very brilliant. Here they meet innumerable Rishis (wise men), Munis (seers) and Mahatmas (holy men), who are enjoying the Light of the region. This region has been called by them Sahasrar, or the Region of the Thousand Lights. In this region the Negative Power places certain obstacles in the disciple's way. But the Master removes them and takes the soul across. Guru Nanak has described them in the section of the Adi Granth called "Characteristics of the Faithful", and Tulsi Das Ji has described them in the Ramayana.

After passing through many other spiritual regions, the Master takes the disciple to Sach Khand, the True Region, which is beyond the reach of both the dissolution and the grand dissolution.

This is a very brief account of Surat Shabd Yoga. Only a devoted disciple gets this yoga from a Perfect Master. Through it he reaches his Original Home in Sach Khand, the True Region.

The devoted disciple realizes the Lord in the body; to him the Divine Melody is the distinguishing mark of the Lord. (Asa M1, 414-6)

The benefits of practicing Surat Shabd Yoga are very great. The inner Melody and Light appear and one comes to know the True Reality.

Surat Shabd Yoga bears its own witness. The conch-shell horn is blowing and the devotee hears it. (Ramkali M1, 877-9)

The way of yoga, of knowledge, of devotion, of Surat Shabd, of repetition and austerities – all point to Him. As warp and woof, they lead to Light. Oh Nanak, the devotees are not subject to pain and sorrow. (Kalyan M5, 1322-10)

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All defects, doubts and egotism are destroyed.

You commit many misdeeds and sins, and remain in doubt without Surat Shabd Yoga. Egotism is a deadly disease; only by obeying the Master is it cured. (Ramkali M1, 906-16)

One gains great happiness through the practice of this Yoga.

The Lord's Name pierced my mind; and now I do not need to dwell on anything else. One is happy when the mind is concentrated on the Divine Melody; attuned with the Lord, I am happy. (Sri Rag M1, 62-3)

Those who practice Surat Shabd Yoga, by virtue of the spiritual power of the Divine Melody or Shabd, get disentangled from the world, and thus they cross the ocean of the phenomenal universe.

Just as the lotus remains detached from water, just as a duck floats on the water's surface, cross the ocean of existence by means of the Divine Sound oh Nanak, praise the Name. (Ramkali M1, 938-15)

Where there is no Surat Shabd Yoga, the position is just the reverse. One burns in the fire of sorrows, and one's birth in the human form is wasted.

You have lost the human birth in a gamble, because you have not practiced Surat Shabd Yoga. (Bhairon M1, 1155-10)

The gallows of the Angel of Death and the fearful chaurasi (cycle of eighty-four) is for everyone. One should, therefore, through the practice of Surat Shabd Yoga, make one's life fruitful, for one has obtained birth in the human form only through a great good fortune.

CHAPTER 8. HISTORICAL REFERENCES

No one can have access to the spiritual regions without a Master. According to the Hindu Scriptures, when Narad Rishi went to Vishnupuri (abode of Lord Vishnu), he was denied admittance because he had no Master. Therefore, he had to adopt a Master.

Sukhdev, the son of Ved Vyas, was possessed of spiritual knowledge even while in his mother's womb, but when he visited Vishnupuri he was turned out because he had no Guru. He could not visit the spiritual regions, and had to adopt Raja Janaka as his Guru.

There is no instance in history that tells of any man making the spiritual ascent without a Guru. Saints who possess knowledge from the time of their birth are rare. They do not, however, go against the tradition, and for this reason they also adopt a Guru. Kabir Sahib, for example, adopted Gosain Rama Nand as his Guru. It is a historical fact that such Saints, although they had knowledge from the time of birth, remained in the company of Saints and derived benefit from them. Guru Amar Das said that it is ordained by the Lord from the beginning that He cannot be realized except with the help of a Guru.

It has been ordained by the Lord since the beginning; no one can know Him without a Master. (Bihagara Var M5, 556-2)

This being so in the case of those who are born Saints, it

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follows that a Guru is all the more necessary for common people. According to tradition, even the incarnations of Lord Vishnu – Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, adopted the Rishis Vashist and Garg respectively as their Gurus. These instances are mentioned solely for our benefit. Rama and Krishna, who were Lords of the three worlds, had to obey the law; lesser men can claim no exception. In support of this, Guru Nanak Sahib says that no one has ever had knowledge without a Guru. You can verify this truth, he says, from Brahma, or the great sages Narad and Vedvyas.

Oh brother, none but a Master can tell the secret of God-Realization. You may ask this of Brahma, Narad or Vedvyas. (Sri Rag M1, 59-7)

Tulsi Sahib says:

No one is greater than Rama and Krishna; but they also had a Guru. They were the Lords of the three worlds; but they depended on the Guru.

Whoever progressed on the spiritual path did so at the instance of a Mahatma. Ashtavakar imparted knowledge to Raja Janaka. Gorakh Nath obtained it from Bhartri Hari, Arjun from Lord Krishna and Vivekananda from Ramakrishna.

Amongst the Sikhs it was Guru Nanak who inspired the second Guru, Angad; Guru Angad inspired Guru Amar Das; Guru Amar Das inspired Ram Das; Guru Ram Das passed on the Light to Guru Arjan, and so on, till the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh.

Maulana Rumi says that it was Shamas-i-Tabrez who changed his life.

The man of mere learning that I was, I did not become Rum's man of God until after I became the slave of Shamas-i-Tabrez.

He again says:

Oh Master, give Maulana Rumi a kind look. I say without shame or reserve, as do Qalandars (God-intoxicated person), that I am a slave of Shamas-i-Tabrez.

Many Mahatmas have mentioned their Gurus in their hymns, while some have not done so. The principle, however, is the same. The Guru is a Light that lights another, and a Life that gives rise to another. It is very necessary for us, who are engulfed in Maya, to obtain initiation from a True Guru.

Before and After Guru Nanak

Bread is for the hungry, and water is for the thirsty. Nature provided milk for a child born five hundred years ago and also for one born a thousand years ago. Nature is also providing milk for children being born today. The law of nature is immutable. It is against the law of nature to say that no help was available for one seeking the spiritual path before Guru Nanak, or that no help is available for a seeker born after Guru Nanak's time. It is not correct to say that True Gurus visited this earth for a period of two or three centuries only and that the world has been without them both before and after. It is not correct to say that the 'law of supply and demand' operated for this period alone.

The teachings of the Saints are for all the world and for all times. They are not confined to two or three hundred years only.

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*Great Saints speak eternal truths for all the world and for all times.
(Sorath Var M3, 647-1)*

In the verses of the Mool Mantra, as well as at other places in the Adi Granth, the Gurus use the words,

He is one and is realized by the Grace of the Master.

It is a clear declaration that the great Lord mentioned in the “Basic Mantra” and at other places in the Adi Granth is realized through the Grace of the Master. This has been stated as an eternal principle and the self-evident Truth.

In the “Anurag Sagar”, Kabir has stated that he was born in all the Four Ages to preach Naam (the Divine Sound). The banis (hymns) of the Bhagtas (great devotees) contain teachings of the Gurus of many earlier times. It is clear from the Adi Granth and the hymns of Bhai Gurdas that Perfect Masters or great souls, the True Shabd or the Word, have emancipated seekers in all the ages.

Krishna and Bal Bhadar meditated at the feet of the Master. (Gauri M4, 165-6)

Nama, the dyer, and Kabir, the weaver, obtained salvation through the Master. (Sri Rag M3, 67-13)

The Word called out in all the Four Ages; it gave the message of Eternal Truth. (Sri Rag M3, 35-9)

True is the Shabd, true is the Word. The devotee sings its praise. He sings throughout the ages. (Asa M3, 424-5)

Happy was Raja Harish Chandra, he had the charming Tara as his consort. But he preferred to be with the Lord in the company of Saints. He carried out the wishes of his Guru. (Var 10, Pauri 6)

The Great One suddenly appeared in the courtyard of the courtesan. (Var 10, Pauri 21)

It is mentioned in the Janam Sakhi of Bhai Bala that Guru Nanak said that in the Kali Yuga (Iron Age), the Saints have to redeem people by taking a number of incarnations.

There will be seventy Bhagats and fourteen Perfect Masters. They will take thousands across to the abode of Saints. Those who obstinately turn away are doomed to disaster, the self-centered ones are not accepted. (Janam M1, Sakhi)

From the above quotations, it is clear that Gurus and their teachings have always existed. Gurus are present in the world at all times so that those who are seeking for the Lord may reach Him through them.

At all times throughout the ages the Gurus did exist. Throughout all the ages the Masters exist, and men of faith who follow Naam. (Sri Rag M4, 79-4)

In all the ages your Saints have existed. (Maru M1, 1025-15)

Granth and Scriptures and Learned Men Cannot Take the Place of Gurus

Guru is the name of a very pure spiritual being who has access to Sach Khand (True Region). He has experience of the gross, subtle and causal regions. He has experience of spiritual matters and is free from the bondage of the senses. Unless we become connected with such a person, our spiritual aspirations do not awaken.

The Guru, in fact, is a glowing lamp whose light rekindles the lights that have blown out. A burnt-out lamp can-

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not do this. Many persons say that we can light the lamp of knowledge by merely reading religious books. They say that we need no Guru and that the books will serve the purpose of the Guru. Let us consider what these books are. They are invaluable records of the spiritual experiences of Saints and holy men. It is, therefore, good to be fond of reading such religious books. We must have respect and love for them. But persons who depend upon books alone have yet to understand the difference between insentient and sentient beings.

Books stimulate the desire to hear about spirituality and to understand its principles, and to read accounts of the lives of Saints. All this can be of great benefit to us, but it cannot activate the spiritual life within us. We can obtain this spiritual life only from some spiritually-realized soul. Only a burning lamp can light another lamp. It is impossible to get life from inert matter.

Similarly, spiritual knowledge cannot be attained by the mere reading of religious books, were it even for millions of years.

Spiritual knowledge cannot be taught. It is a 'touch' which can be had only from a man of realized experience. "Spirituality cannot be taught but caught." The experience of Saints cannot be had except by revelation. It is not simply a matter of knowing it; one has to realize it as an experience.

The Gurus have discussed this at considerable length.

To worship the Guru is to serve the Lord; He Himself by His Grace takes us across. Others worship the dead or their graves; they waste their labors in vain. (Malar M4, 1264-2)

Religious books and Mahatmas of the past ages advise us to come to a living Guru and render loving devotion to Him.

Drink the water that has washed the feet of Saints; surrender your life to the Saints. Bathe in the dust of the Saints. May I be a sacrifice unto them! (Gauri M5, 283-7)

Serve the Saints, this is the way for the disciple. (Asa M5, 400-8)

Bhai Gurdas says:

The Vedas and Granths deal with experiences about the Lord; they tell us of means to cross the ocean of existence. But Reality cannot be understood without a Master. The Master comes and makes us understand. (Var 1, Pauri 17)

People study the Scriptures regularly throughout their lives. They may become intellectual giants or very learned persons. They may deliver lectures for hours on end. But do they possess spiritual knowledge even in the slightest degree? Actually, they are blank so far as spiritual life is concerned, because they are not connected with a living Master. It is said in 'Asa-di-var':

We may read whole cartloads of books, and make great piles of them. We may read shiploads of books, and build up huge libraries. We may read for years on end, we may read for months and months, we may read for life after life, we may read till our last breath, but the thing that matters is just one Word. Oh Nanak, the rest is labor lost. (Asa M1, 467-14)

Oh Nanak, one may read pages weighing pounds. One may know their mysterious accent. One may write without a break. One may write with the speed of the winds. Oh Lord! You cannot be valued thus; oh Lord! Your Name cannot be described. (Sri Rag M1, 15-2)

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Books contain knowledge about the Lord, but:

*Knowledge is absorption in the Melody, which is indescribable.
It is like a fruitful green tree, which has immense shade. (Sri Rag
M1, 59-8)*

That knowledge is within you. But unless you know the method of going within and opening the knot of consciousness and gross matter, you remain without realization of it. If spiritual knowledge were to be had from books, the learned ones would have become self-realized. But they are no more than walking encyclopedias, and are as lifeless as a mansion of bricks and stones. The brain full of book-knowledge is like a donkey that is carrying a load of sandalwood but is unaware of its scent, or like a spoon that remains in the halwa day and night but does not know its taste. If one could become spiritually-minded by reading books, there would be as great a flood of spirituality as there is a flood of books. But how many really enlightened souls do we come across in this age of books? Hardly any.

Whenever Saints come into the world there is a flood of spirituality. Numberless seekers are dyed in the color of the Saints and turn to the spiritual life. A soul can get spiritual uplift only from another soul. An intellectual teacher cannot do this. One may be very intellectual or learned, but unless he is himself spiritually evolved, he cannot help another. It is very easy to give discourses or talks on spiritual matters, but it is quite another matter to lead a spiritual life. No one can become spiritual by simply studying books on the science of spirituality. Any claim to spirituality based on such a study would be pretentious. It is useless to expect that one can obtain spirituality from a learned man.

Maulana Rumi says:

Take shelter with the Master, one should not tread the path with an impostor.

He whose company and example awaken the desire for spiritual progress in the disciple is a Guru. Such persons are Oceans of Mercy. Whoever takes shelter with them is saved from the wheel of eighty-four. We should serve them with body and mind. The Gurus say that our bodies, minds and wealth belong to the Saints. And it is owing to their Mercy that we taste the Nectar of Naam and obtain peace. No one except the Saints are truly charitable. They lead all who come to them to the higher regions.

Body, mind and wealth belong to the Saints. By the Grace of the Saints we meditate on Naam and gain happiness. Except the Saints, there is no real benefactor. Whoever takes shelter with the Saints is taken across by them. (Sorath M5,610-8)

The object of having Guru as an ideal is purely spiritual. It is not a doctrine of man-worship. By the Guru, we mean not only the Master in human form, but also in the form of the Shabd. The body is like a robe which has to be cast aside both by the disciple and the Master. But blessed is the body in which He works! We respect it and it should be worshipped. It is also called Guru. We have a body and we can be taught only by one having a body. Those who describe the sitting at the feet of a Master as man-worship do not know the Reality. Even if this criticism is taken as true, it is far better than book-worship or idol-worship. Man is a conscious being, and only a conscious being can teach another conscious being. Khusro says:

People say that Khusro is an idol-worshiper; yes, yes, I am. I have nothing to do with the world and its creatures.

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The devotees of God and worldly-minded persons cannot get along well together. How can those without any love for the Guru, know what a Guru really is? He is a resplendent sea of the Light of the Lord. The spiritually-minded are dyed in His color. To understand this secret one needs to have eyes that can see.

In reality, the Guru is not the name of a man. He is a power which is manifested in this body temporarily. He is our true ideal in the light of which true spiritual progress is made. He is full of Radiant Light, like an electric bulb. While He shines, the thought of the structure of the bulb does not enter the mind. The seekers after spirituality sacrifice themselves like moths over this Divine Light. Kabir Sahib says:

They who consider the Guru to be human are ignorant fools! They sink in the ocean of the world again and again. They who consider the Guru to be human are deficient in body and mind. They identify the Guru with the body.

How can they be redeemed? They who consider the Guru to be human, how can they have any devotion? He is certainly an ignorant one; he cannot cross over, nor can he help others to do so. They who consider the Guru to be human, and consider the water that has washed His feet as ordinary water, are surely doomed to a life of hell, and shall wander like stray dogs from birth to birth.

The Guru is a Superman, is an Ideal or Spotless Man and Even More Than That

Amongst men the Guru is a perfect man. A perfect man is the fulfillment of spiritual evolution in human beings. It is impossible to praise Him adequately. He is possessed of all virtues and is the fountain-head of spirituality. What-

ever there is in the universe, is within Him. The virtues of all the regions, from Sat Lok (the True Region) down to this world are within Him. They are all manifest in His person. It is difficult to find them elsewhere. It is difficult to swim across the ocean of the world or to bathe in it at all. Bathing is always done on the beach. The perfect man is like the beach of the ocean of life.

You may ask what is special about this perfect man; whence and where from He has come after traversing the various regions? Where is He living? What does He do here? The answer to these questions is that He comes from Sat Lok (the True Region). He has come to this Bhulok (land of death) and lives here. He is manifesting the glory of the Highest Reality. The influences and virtues of the various higher regions are found in Him.

The Lord resides in His heart. The Guru manifests in His being the virtues and personality of the Lord. In this worthy man, perfection of personality and perfection of virtues have met at one place. The virtues of Divinity are manifested in Him. If you wish to see God, you should see the Guru. According to the Jews, God made man in His own image.

He has hidden a sun in man. (Maulana Rumi)

When the inner eye is opened, one realizes that the Master is the one before whom all should prostrate themselves. He is the life of the universe. He is Truth personified, or Reality in human form. He is of the Truth and reflects the Truth. He is the top of creation. There is no one better than Him. There is no one greater than Him here or hereafter. Both the worlds should bow at His feet. All the good qualities to be found in the astral and causal regions find a place in Him. All virtues are centered in

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Him. He who has seen Him has seen the Lord in human form. All the virtues of the Lord are reflected in Him. He is the image of the Lord in this world. He is His viceroy and does His work in this world. His intellect and wisdom are unique, and His judgment is sound and unquestionable. He may not have received an education in any school or college, but He is nevertheless the fountain-head of all learning. He understands its meaning.

Even if you look at Him from the human point of view, He is the most perfect man. He is the source of all virtues. He does not belong to any particular country or nation. He belongs to all countries and nations. He serves all and teaches all. He has love for all. His teachings are for the entire world. He is a citizen of the world. He lives in this world radiating love, and has come here to spread the Light of the Lord as His messenger.

The Guru lives like an ordinary human being. He lives in the world but remains unaffected by it. He treats every one lovingly and sympathetically. His love and care is many times greater than that of a mother. He is a perfect man and has no defects. He takes pity on us despite our faults.

In outward form he is a human being. He is, however, a superman. He is beyond good and evil, and is the most exalted of men. He is the Lord Himself in human form. He is a mixture of morality and spirituality. He shows himself powerless, even though he is all-powerful. He is humble in spite of His greatness. The blending of power with solicitude and humility, and of wisdom with love – the ideal which has been placed before the world by Plato and other philosophers, is to be found in a Satguru only. In actual fact, the Guru is more than a superman because His reach extends beyond human limits. He works in regions

which are not perceptible to our senses. He has access to subtle and causal regions and even beyond. These cannot be perceived by our senses, even with the help of external instruments.

The scientists are unable to see these regions, since it is not possible for them to travel beyond the material universe. They confine their activities to the world of the mind and intellect. They have experimented a great deal and will continue to do so. But there are subtle regions and worlds beyond the reach of the mind, and the regions of pure consciousness lie still higher. The Master travels through these regions every day.

A Gurumukh comes and goes at will. (Ramkali M1, 932-12)

Those who live according to His Will can see those regions. But how can we find such a person? Saints and holy men say that all the worlds and regions, the treasure of spirituality, mercy, knowledge and bliss are inside of man.

All things are within our home (body); nothing is outside it. How can you find outside what is really inside? (Asa M2, 425-11-15)

He who searches without is lost in doubt. (Majh M5, 102-4)

Everything is inside. Those who know the method of going inside can find and possess everything.

There is everything in the body, vast lands, regions and under-worlds. The life-giver resides in the body, and sustains all. The treasures of spirituality are inside the body; the springs of devotion are also there. In the body are the nine regions of the earth, and all of its crowded commerce. In the body is the treasure of the Name, but can be found only through the Shabd of the Guru. (Suhi 7M5, 54-7-11)

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Hakim Sanai says that in the regions of the soul there are beautiful heavenly regions and also their rulers. There are many mountains and rivers and seas and deserts in the way of the soul, and these cannot be even imagined. This world is like a piece of seaweed in that ocean of creation.

There are skies in the regions of the soul. Their rulers are also there. On that path there are hills and dales, high mountains and mighty rivers. (Sanai Sahib)

Inside man are seas, deserts and mountains; all faculties of thought and imagination are overwhelmed to stillness seeing them. In the vast empty space, this earth would look like a thin hair in the full-flooded ocean. (Maulana Rumi)

The human body is an epitome of the universe. It is the microcosm. One who knows it knows the universe.

What is in the macrocosm is in the microcosm. He who seeks finds. (Pipa, Dhanasri 695-15)

The human body is a microcosm which is an epitome of the macrocosm. If we know the body we know the universe also. But ordinarily we see only the external appearance of the universe and not the inner reality. In a way, we water the leaves of a tree and not the roots. The roots of the tree of creation are in subtle regions to which we can gain access only by searching inside ourselves. We have, however, never done so. Emerson says, "Tap inside." All the Saints lay stress on this point. How we can go inside is explained by the Masters, and this has been explained at another place in this book.

Saints and holy men are scientists of those regions, the bliss of which can be experienced only by the soul. They

say that the gross physical universe is full of suffering, but that beyond it are numerous subtle and causal regions which are full of Light and nothing but Light. Satgurus visit these regions at will every day and testify to the existence of these worlds. Those who visit the laboratories of the Saints see them (just as we see the gross physical world) and experience it as a certainty in the same way that two and two make four.

Gurus Come From Sach Khand Under the Order of the Lord for Taking Back the Souls. They Are free From the bondage of Body and Mind

Our soul is a particle of God, but it has been imprisoned in the cage of the body and mind. Saints come from the original home, which is the true home of all the souls, so that they may take souls back and unite them with the Lord. The Lord Himself, according to whose orders the souls come into the world, comes in the form of the Master and says,

Come to your abode of peace by transcending the three gunas.

He who sent you here, now calls you back. Come home to this land of calm, which no winds of passions can ruffle. (Dhanasri M5, 678-2)

The Masters are one with the Lord. They come here simply to redeem the souls. In the hymns of all the holy men it is said that the Masters come to the world with the mission of redeeming the souls. Shamas-i-Tabrez says:

You do not know what kind of birds we are, or what we are reciting silently. We are apparently beggars in this world; find the Reality and you will see that we are kings. We appear to be poor, but if you look into our hearts you will find what treasures we have. Since we

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are kings in our own land, what does it matter if we are in prison here for a while? How can we live forever in this house? All of us are guests in this house. We have made promises to our king; and we shall not go back on our promises. As long as we are wearing this mantle (of human body), we do not grieve, nor cause grief to anyone. We are full of Light and blessing as in Heaven we eat, make merry and laugh.

Guru Gobind Singh similarly says,

From duality we merged into one. I had no desire to come into this world, but the Lord so willed it and sent me here.

From two we became one. I did not like to come; the Lord willed it, and sent me to this world. (Bachiter Natak, Adlyai 5)

Kabir Sahib also says:

Oh Kabir, we are the knowers of the secret. We have come here as ordered.

The Reason for Master's Coming to the World

The Gurus come to the world for our good. They leave their bliss and come to the Land of Death in order to emancipate souls engulfed in the darkness of Maya and the snares of Kal, and take them back. They assume human bodies and move about in the world in the same way as we do.

They are free from birth and death and are immortal. The aim of their lives is to lead us to the spiritual path and to unite us with the Lord in the highest spiritual regions within us.

They are free from birth and death; they have come for the good of the people. They give Light and teach devotion; they unite us with

the Lord. (Suhi M5, 749-2)

There is a great difference between our coming and their coming into the world. The convicts and the doctor who looks after their health, both visit the prison. The former go there to undergo imprisonment for their misdeeds, while the latter goes there to treat them. We come here to work out the consequences of our karmas, or good and bad acts, but the Masters come here to redeem us.

There are many kinds of good deeds done by people that are of help to others; but the good deed done by the Master is of the highest degree. He takes us out of the prison of Kal and the deceit of Maya, and unites us with the Lord.

As an illustration, let us say that there is a big prison in which there are eighty-four lakh (8,400,000) cells for different kinds of prisoners. There is only one door by which to get out. A bald-headed blind man wants to get out of the prison and goes around feeling along the wall with his hands. Whenever he comes near the door, however, his bald head itches, and he takes his hands off the wall to scratch his head. While he is doing this, he passes by the door and again goes the round of the eighty-four lakh cells.

A social worker takes pity on the prisoners and serves them with milk. That is a good deed, and they are pleased for the moment. Another kind person brings them sweets to eat. They are again pleased and are happy for a short while. A third person supplies them well-made clothes, and their bodies are properly clothed for some time. In spite of all these good deeds, they however, still continue to remain prisoners. Another person, the Guru, comes, along with a bunch of keys in His hand. He opens the

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door, releases the prisoners and sends them home. All of these helpful persons did good acts, but the best act is the one done by the last person.

There are many kinds of good actions in this world, but in spite of them all we are not freed from the cage of the body and the mind. The Master comes to the world, which is a prison with eighty- four lakh cells. He sets us free and takes us home. His act is the best, the really helpful act. His purpose is to give life and to free souls from the prison of eight-four lakh cells and take them to the Lord.

The Work of a Master

A Master is a donor, and not a beggar. His benevolence is for all, whether rich or poor. He feels happy in rescuing souls from physical bondage. The Saints may be in any garb; but they work only for the good of the soul and for its spiritual evolution. They do not found any new religion or creed, nor do they interfere with the rites and rituals of prevailing religions. They do not believe in blind faith, and they do not ask anybody to believe blindly. They speak of a faith that can be tested right here and now, on the counter, as it were. They do not promise release or emancipation after death only. All that they say is meant for all and is open to inquiry – it is the message of the wide, open road.

Unless I see with my own eyes, I believe not in the words of the Master. (Swami Ji)

It is true that we have to rely on the Master to enable us to experiment; but when we realize the truth of his teachings through our own experience, we become steadfast in the faith which cannot be shaken even by the opposition of the whole world. One sees the sun rise. If hundreds of

bats should swear that there is no sun, one's belief would not be disturbed, because one has seen the sun rise with one's own eyes. Those whose inner eye has not opened remain deprived of this truth.

Whenever a Master appears in this world, seekers for the real truth are attracted towards Him like moths, and like bees they hover round that living flower of spirituality and enjoy its taste. They are attracted towards Him as the moon-bird is attracted to the moon in the sky. They cannot endure separation even for a moment. Because of the Divine Power of the Master, souls are attracted towards Him, and the fire of steadfast love and devotion is awakened in them. This love and devotion is the means of making the disciple a recipient of the Lord's Mercy and of taking him to the Original Home.

The Master sees only the inner condition, and not the external condition, religion or nationality of the disciples. Whomsoever He deems fit He initiates in the inner path, and declines others whom He finds unprepared. What touchstone He uses for the purpose is known to Him alone. But He can see the seekers' sanskaras (effects of past karmas) as clearly as one can see pickles or jam in a glass jar. Ordinary persons cannot see them.

The Master, through His Divine Powers, imparts teachings to the seekers after truth, whether they be near or far, and can reveal Himself to them without writing or speaking to them.

Whoever is taken by the Saints under their protection is stamped with the seal of the Lord's Mercy. He is saved from Kal and his hard reckoning. He is free of Kal's demands on his upward journey.

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Any punitive tax or customs duty does not have to be paid; the Master stamps His disciples with His own Divine Seal. (Asa M5, 430-17)

Oh Nanak, meet the Master who will settle your account. (Asa M3, 435-17)

I have met the Master. May I be a sacrifice unto Him. (Prabhati M3, 1347-2)

Whenever Masters manifest themselves in the world they teach by their own living example, and open the flood-gates of spirituality. Those who act upon their teachings benefit from them. Those who meet them feel elevated and purified. A beneficial current flows from them. Sufferers are relieved of their sufferings by the mere touch of their robes.

The Duties of a Master

The duties of a Guru are infinite. One of His prime duties is to mend the broken souls or to unite the separated souls with the Lord. This He does with the help of Naam or Shabd, the Divine Sound. He enables the soul to ride on the Sound Current to its Original Home. This Shabd, like radio-waves, is all-pervasive; but we cannot perceive it owing to Maya. The Guru, however, frees souls from the bondage of attachment and Maya by means of the Divine Sound or Shabd. One may become familiar with the teachings of the Saints, but mere intellectual knowledge, without the help of the Guru, cannot free one from bondage.

The primary duty of the Guru is to prepare the disciple and then to take him to the Court of the Lord. The Master takes the responsibility for those who take shelter with Him. To take care of spiritual seekers, Masters come to

this world again and again and show them the spiritual path.

Those who seek refuge with the Master, the Lord comes to protect them. He who shoots an arrow at them, finds that the arrow turns around and hits him. (Kanara M4, 1311-15)

The Masters, like shepherds, have many sheep to look after. But they shower light on the entire world. All those who have association with them become entitled to cross the ocean of existence.

The Master is the Manifestation of the Lord

The Lord is unfathomable and unknowable, but He is manifested in the Master. The Master manifests His Glory. The Lord has locked the inner door in our body and is sitting behind it. He Himself takes on the form of a man and carries the key to open the door.

The form which He takes is particularly loved by us, and this form should be worshipped by us. The glory of the Lord shines through the Master. He takes the human form outwardly and lives amongst us. Having a body like us He undergoes pain and pleasure like us. Therefore the visible form of the Lord, seen by our eyes, is dearer to us than the original and invisible form of the Lord.

The Master is not distinguishable from the Lord. He is one with Him. How, then, can one be greater than the other? In fact, Saints and the Lord are not different. The Master is a blessing for this world. Maulana Rumi says:

When you accept the Master, realize that in His person are included the Lord and the Prophet. Do not consider them to be different. Do not look at them as different beings, and do not talk of them as

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being separate. Consider the Master as one who is merged in the Lord. If you have a defect in your eye, the Master and the Lord will appear to be different; and you will lose both yourself and the reality of spirituality. He who regards the Lord and the Master as separate is a dead body and not a disciple.

Do not think of them as two; do not see them as two. Do not say that they are two. Know that the Master is merged in the Lord. If you consider the Master to be distinct from the Lord, you are ignorant of the soul and substance of this knowledge. If owing to a defect in his eyes, a man sees the Master and the Lord as separate, he is really a dead person (murd) and not a disciple (murid).

The Master is that form of the Lord which can be seen. We can, in His company, visit all regions (gross, subtle and causal and those beyond). The Lord Himself is, however, different from all forms.

A point that should be considered is whether this form of the Master which accompanies the disciple in this world and in the spiritual regions is better than the form which is indescribable, unfathomable and unknowable, and which is not as yet known to the disciple.

The Master is God-in-man, a God-man or Man-in-God. All the qualities from Sat Lok, the True Region to Bhū Lok, the created world, are to be found in Him. He helps the disciple in every region. He reigns over every region with a glory and splendor that is unique. He sustains the devotion of the disciple. He is the Supreme Lord in the human form. The Master is God-in-man, an incarnation of the Immortal One. He is the greatest of all. Although the Lord, like electricity, pervades everywhere, the Master is the point where He shines out as light.

The Supreme Lord comes to us in the form of a Master.

He knows and feels our sufferings and loves us. Where is the Lord? We can see Him in the radiant and glorious form of the Master and nowhere else. Unless we reach the regions of pure consciousness beyond the reach of the mind, senses and intellect, we cannot see the Lord. In this world, the Lord is merely an idea for us; we are simply clinging to a mental idea of Him. But this becomes manifest in the Master. He lives amongst us and we can see Him.

The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. (Bible)

Unless we meet the living Lord (the Master) we cannot know the Supreme Lord. We are living in the gross material world. We want a God who will reveal Himself. Man teaches man. Affinity between similar things is natural. We need the Lord's conscious self to be manifested so that we may know Him.

The Shabd or Divine Creative Sound takes bodily form, connects us with itself, and unites us with the Lord. It is a link between us and the Lord. At one end it merges in the Lord, and at the other end it is one with His creation. The human form of the Lord serves as a great link.

Maulana Rumi says that we should sit at the feet of a person who knows our heart, who can understand our difficulties and sufferings, who can share our sadness and who can remove it. We should sit in the shade of a tree bearing fresh flowers and fruit, which will refresh our mind and heart, and from which we will get the fruit of spiritual life to eat. We should not aimlessly wander around in the streets of this world like vagabonds, but should sit at some place where we can have the Lord's Nectar. The Masters are the keepers of this Nectar, and they can share this wealth with anyone. They are agents of

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the Lord through whom the Lord distributes His wealth.

Oh heart! Sit by one who knows the Inner Sound. Take shelter under the tree that has fresh flowers. Do not loiter aimlessly in this market of merchants, but sit at the shop which deals in honey.

Maulana Rumi again says: Catch hold of the garment of a person who is familiar with the gross, subtle, causal and spiritual regions.

As long as you are in this world, He will be with you, whether you are in jungles, mountains or deserts, and He will be with you in pains and pleasures. He will also be with you in the subtle and causal regions and even beyond, both when you die while living, to leave the body during meditation, and after your physical death.

Oh brave friend! Catch hold of the Master's garment, for He is above all ups and downs. He will be with you both here and hereafter, whether you are in this world of mind and matter, or beyond.

The form of God-in-man, which frees us from the bondage of time and Maya, and takes us out of darkness and helps us in all the inner regions, is far better than the Lord held in our mind simply as an idea. The Master is the incarnation of the Lord. We bow to many gods such as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Ishwar, Parmesh-war, Par Brahm, Sohang, Sat Naam and Anami. We read about them in our religious books. They are all our imaginary ideals and are mentioned in stories. But when we realize the Master's Form, it shows us the relative importance of all these deities.

Unless we meet a Perfect Master, we cannot know the lower value of these gods. They have always been in existence, but a Master is necessary to make their value known. The Lord assumes the human form and informs

us about His own Being. Guru Amar Das accordingly says that it has been ordained from the beginning that one cannot meditate on the Lord except through a Master.

It has been ordained by the Lord since the beginning: No one can know Him without a Master. (Bihagara Var M3, 556-2)

The Master is greater than the Lord is the conclusion one comes to when one thinks deeply.

By remembering the Lord you will remain in this world; but by remembering the Guru you will travel above and beyond it. Kabir Sahib says:

The Master is greater than the Lord; this is the result of careful thought. Meditate on the Lord and you will remain here; meditate on the Master and you will rise above the world.

The Lord has always been inside us, and yet we have had to be born hundreds of times. When we meet the Master, we are connected with Naam and are freed from birth and death. Unless we are connected with God-in-man (Guru) and God-in-action (Shabd), we cannot cross the ocean of existence; mere mental meditation does not help. The only means of “crossing” is Shabd.

None can cross over without the Shabd. (Maru M3, 1068-15)

The Shabd is manifested in the Master, and it is only through His Grace that it can dwell in us.

There is some help if the Lord is displeased; but there is no help if the Master is displeased. (Kabir)

If the Lord is displeased, we can seek the help of the Master. The Lord can be appeased through Him. But if the

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Master is displeased, what shelter can a disciple have? The Lord is not visible and if the disciple has fallen out with the person in whom He is manifested, which way will he turn for help? The Scriptures say the same thing.

If the Lord (Shiva) is displeased, the Master protects us; but if the Master is displeased then there is no one to protect us.

In this connection Sahjo Bai says:

If the Lord is pleased, it is good; but if He is not, it does not matter. But without the Grace of the Master even our intellect misleads, since without Him, there is no method of realizing the Lord. I can give up the Lord, but I will not give up the Master. I do not consider the Lord equal to His manifested form (God-in-man). There are several reasons for this:

God created the universe and gave me birth; but the Master released me from birth and death.

God set five thieves after me; but the Master, considering me to be helpless, protected me from them.

God involved me in the attachment to my family; but the Master broke these chains.

God involved me in disease and suffering; but the Master made me a yogi and released me from them.

God involved me in meritorious deeds and actions; but the Master showed me my real-self.

God concealed Himself from me; but the Master gave me the lamp of knowledge and showed God to me.

God created the conditions of bondage and release in this world; but the Master cleared-away all my doubts about release and bondage. I will sacrifice my mind and body at the feet of my Guru, Charan Das. I would give up the Lord but would never give up the Master.

If God is kind, it is good; if not, it matters not. But if the Master is

not kind and gracious my mind will be completely wrecked.

I would give up Rama, but not the Master. I do not consider God equal to the Master. God sent me to this world, but the Master freed me from birth and death, God set five thieves after me, but the Master saved my lonely soul. God ensnared me with family ties, but the Master removed my attachment. God involved me in disease and suffering; the Master made me a yogi and freed me from them. God involved me in meritorious acts and deeds; the Master showed me my real self. God hid Himself from me; the Master gave me a lamp and showed God to me. God involved me in bondage and release; the Master removed all my doubts about them. I sacrifice myself to Charan Das; I will give up the Lord, but not the Master. (Sehjo Bai) Rishikesh, 1948

CHAPTER 9. PSEUDO-MASTERS OR FALSE AND IMPOSTOR MASTERS

A pseudo-master is an inefficient and in adept master who is ignorant even of himself but is ever ready to advise others. Of such persons it is said:

Blind masters and blind disciples, the one leads the other to hell.

If one follows such a dangerous person, then the following saying applies to him:

Oh Brahmin, you will drown yourself, and your followers will be drowned with you.

One cannot cross a stream by catching hold of the tail of a sheep. Rather:

By catching it one is always in doubt. (Bhai Gurdas, Var)

But one can cross a stream by catching hold of the tail of a cow.

The world is full of the so-called masters. They are to be met with at every step. There are more masters than disciples. It often happens that when seekers after Truth wish to meet a Guru, they visit these self-styled masters and serve them with faith. But when, while living with them at close quarters, they find that the master is also entangled in the mind and senses like others and is hankering after wealth, they decide not to have him as a master and quite

frequently raise an agitation against the institution of Mastership itself. They even go to the extent of saying that the mention made about a Master in the Scriptures was valid only at the time it was made and not for all times; that there is no necessity for a Master in these days, and that the Scriptures can serve the same purpose as a Perfect Master. The result is that the living Master is not worshiped, but instead the custom of worshiping the dead has come into vogue. No living Saint or Mahatma is respected, but instead, houses are decorated with pictures of dead Seers and Saints. The real roses are not being smelled, but paper flowers have become the fashion of the day.

No one studies the book of his own self, but studies paper books instead. No one seeks a living Saint. Instead, worldly newspapers, monthly magazines and tracts are made to serve the purpose. The ignorant think that the Master should be a learned man, who can make speeches or give discourses. They think that He should be the author of some books, should possess occult powers for granting boons or flinging curses; should be able to read the thoughts of others and gather persons around Him. If this were correct, then all learned persons should be Masters, but it is always easy to see that learned persons are also subject to the vagaries of the mind and senses, as are others. The condition of these theoretical thinkers is similar to that of a donkey who carries a load of books or a bundle of sandalwood, but is ignorant of the knowledge in the books or the scent in the sandalwood. If persons with occult powers are masters, then the hypnotists and magicians, who wander about the streets to earn money, are also masters.

The real Master knows the essence of spirituality and though He is possessed of various powers, He does not use them for the purpose of show. It has happened that

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because the number of impostors is very large, the true and real Saints are also quite frequently considered to be impostors. As a consequence, some people do not believe in them. One who has been bitten by a snake is apt to be afraid of a rope. After once being deceived by a pseudo-master, people sometimes hesitate to believe in a real Master. Because of our painful experiences with impostors, we have become extremely cautious.

It is very difficult for a seeker to find a Perfect Master and to recognize Him. One who is not familiar with a path cannot be certain of the sights on the way. It is a mistake to test a Master, but there is also a risk in blindly accepting a Master because an imperfect master cannot lead one to salvation.

No release can be gained through an imperfect master. (Ramkali M1, 932-11)

Being a Master is not similar to carrying on a profession. It is a gift of the Lord. But the impostors and pretenders have lowered its prestige.

Something is whispered in the ear, and the Brahmin becomes a master! (Asa M1, 471-4)

Of what use is a master who cannot remove our doubts? He will be drowned, and those who accompany him will also be drowned.

Oh Kabir, shave the head of the self-styled master as that of an outcast, for he cannot dispel doubts. Such masters are lost in the Vedas. They drown their disciples also. (Kabir, Shalok 1370-1)

They are drowned in scriptural learning, and so will their disciples be drowned. He who has not crossed the

ocean of the universe himself cannot carry others across.

He who is himself sinking cannot save others. Oh Nanak, he who is imbued with love is saved and saves others. (Maru M5, 1101-7)

When a so-called master is himself blind, how can he save his disciples?

When the master is blind. The disciple also stumbles around blindly. (Sri Rag M1, 58-3)

Guru Amar Das Ji says that one who does not know the inner path and whose inner eye has not been opened, cannot see beyond this gross world. How then can he guide others on this path?

When the master is ignorant and blind, how can the disciple find the way? (Gujri M3, 491-11)

Such a so-called master is himself being robbed by the five dacoits of lust, anger, greed, attachment and egotism. He is ignorant and cannot recognize the spiritual path.

When a blind man leads, how can one know the way? His mind is shallow, and he will not find the way. (Suhi M1, 767-1)

Such a master tells untruths, feeds on the dead, and is looted by Maya. He is totally blind, not for lack of sight but for lack of enlightenment. Such a person is called blind.

The truly blind are not those who have no eyes to see. Oh Nanak, the truly blind are those who do not see the Lord. (Ramkali Var M3, 945-15)

He who is such a blind person and yet claims to guide

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others, undoubtedly misleads his companions. He is not honored in the Court of the Lord.

He tells lies and feeds on the dead, yet he presumes to guide others; he is deceiving himself and deceives others. Oh Nanak, such are the leaders of today. (Majh Var M1, 140-1)

Guru Nanak Sahib says:

Oh Nanak, when a blind man leads, he misleads; when he ventures beyond, he comes to grief. (Majh Var M1, 140-14)

Only he who is blind will tread the path shown by such a blind man. If he has eyes to see the Truth, he will not tread the wrong path.

Only a blind man will follow the path shown by a blind man. Oh Nanak, a man with eyes will disdain his leadership. (Ramkali Var M3, 954-15)

A blind master cannot dispel doubts. He does not know the right path and goes astray. He is full of the poison of Maya and is bound by Maya.

A blind master cannot dispel doubts. He abandons reality and goes astray. He is so imbued with the poison of Maya, that the poison fills him. (Gauri M3, 232-1)

When a master is blind, his disciples also remain in the dark. They follow their own will and tell untruths.

If the master is blind, his disciples do dark deeds; they act according to their own wills, and always tell untruths. (Ramkali Var M3, 951-7)

It is not easy to be a True Master. It is a job of great responsibility. The Master has to unite the soul of the dis-

ciple with the Lord. This can only be done by one who is fully competent. Anyone else causes harm and damage to himself. He goes astray. This applies to all impostors.

Oh Kabir, the Brahmin is the master of the world, but he is not a guru for true devotees; he entangles himself and dies in the study of the Vedas. (Kabir, Shalok 1377-7)

There should be a True Master from whom something can be gained, and who has something to give.

Oh Farid, find the pool where you can get the treasure. What is the use of searching in a shallow pool? You will only smear your hand with mud. (Farid, Shalok, 1380-15)

He alone who practices spirituality has the right to preach it. Guru Arjan Sahib says:

First practice, and then preach. (Gauri M, 185-7)

Only the teachings of one in whom the Lord dwells is of help.

He in whom the Formless One dwells, His advice takes one across. (Gauri M5, 269-6)

One who is filled with the poison of mind and matter, and of wealth and women, but talks sweetly to the people, deserves to go to hell.

He who has poison in him but speaks sweetly, goes to hell and is sorely afflicted. (Gauri M3, 194-3)

Such a person's character is low and he does wrong acts. His heart is devoid of love for the Lord, but he can always please the people with clever words and phras-

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es. The Lord knows every heart, and is not pleased with external formalities. He who himself does not practice but teaches others is born again and again.

His speech and action do not agree; he has no love but only lip-sympathy: The Lord knows all, and does not judge by outward appearances. One who does not practice what he preaches is born again and again. (Gauri M5, 269-7)

Those who do not practice but simply preach and engage in arguments, do not know the Shabd or the real substance.

Those who preach but do not practice, do not know the Shabd. (Asa M5, 380-2)

It is therefore necessary that one should first cleanse one's mind, make Ram Naam dwell in one's heart, and then instruct others.

He should first enlighten his own mind, and should then try to persuade others. His mind should first repeat the Name of the Lord, and then he may instruct others. (Asa M5, 381-12)

Just as a spoon, even when smeared with pudding, remains unaware of the taste of the pudding, similarly, those gurus who are not imbued with Naam and have not tasted it, are of little use.

The spoon moves through the food, but it knows not the taste thereof. Oh Nanak, seek out those, who are imbued with the Lord's essence. (Gujri Var M5, 521-5)

It is useless for those who have no faith in their mind to meditate and contemplate.

Those who know not their own mind, oh Nanak, how can they

impart knowledge? (Sorath Var M4, 647-3)

Those who have deceit in their hearts but talk loftily are simply churning water; no butter or any other good thing comes out of it. Deluded by Maya, such people are led astray. What useful advice can they give?

*They have deceit in their heart, yet they utter words of wisdom.
They tell lies and churn but water. (Kabir, Sorath 656-2)*

Those who are full of poison and doubts, how can they guide others? (Ramkali M3, 909-18)

Sit in the company of a person who is filled with the Divine Nectar. If a master has something to give, his servant will get it; but if he has nothing to give, the servant cannot possibly get anything. If the master is naked and hungry, how can his servant be well-clothed and well-fed? If, while serving a master, one is still accountable to the Lord of Death, his service is a source of suffering. We should serve a Master who is God-personified and the sight of whom is fruitful, so that one is not called upon to render account to the Lord of Death. Guru Ram Das Ji says:

He whose master is naked and hungry, cannot have a satisfying meal. Only what the master has, the servant can have. A servant cannot have that which the master has not. To serve a master and still be accountable to death, is of no avail. Oh Nanak, serve the Lord-like Master. Seeing Him is fruitful; there can be no day of reckoning for His servant. (Gauri Var M4, 306-12)

The world is full of false masters. The true Master is he who is imbued with the Shabd and who practices it, and connects the disciple with the Shabd. He who serves a master of the other sort is ensnared in Maya. His life as a human being, which is a rare opportunity, is wasted. The

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Gurus say,

Do not delay about giving up such a master.

Do not delay in giving up a false master, for with him you will wander and will not find the Shabd.

Seeing such deplorable conditions, people talk ill of Gurudom and criticize even the true holy men and Saints. They are so much disgusted with them that they hesitate to go even to true Saints. Even when they do go, they look at them with clouded vision and form wrong ideas about them.

The Lord, the Saint, and the company of the Saints are the three basic principles of spirituality. One cannot gain salvation without a Saint and His company. If we are on close terms with a holy man, the radiance of His holiness and perfection will begin to shine in us and all our doubts will be removed. True holiness can never remain hidden. A Perfect Master's sweet words and spiritual power will inevitably affect us, and we will begin to understand the Master as He really is.

The impostors are so numerous in the world that many people think there is no true Master, and that if there is one it is very difficult to find Him. As a consequence, they sit resigned and believe themselves to be helpless. But if one really has a sincere desire to meet a Master, the Lord Himself will arrange for a meeting. The true Master will come of His own accord. This is the Law of the Lord.

*Knock and it shall be opened. Ask and it shall be given unto you.
(Bible)*

The Guru appears when the chela (disciple) is ready. In fact, the

true Master Himself searches out a disciple.

The Gurus say:

The Merciful Lord has commanded thus: Whatever the child asks for, let it be provided. (Malhar M5, 1286-15)

There is no delay in the appearance of the Master. The delay is in our earnestness and seeking.

If we need something, we will go on searching for it in spite of any and all disappointments. If diamonds and rubies are mixed with stones, we should not throw them away simply because it is difficult to separate the jewels from the stones. There must first be the pangs of separation, and then the Lord Himself will bring about the meeting with the true Master.

The Disadvantage of Being Without a Master

This is the Iron Age in its full prime. The mind and senses are in their full power and ordinary men are avid for sense pleasures. They have adopted the principle of 'eat, drink and be merry'. They see no reality beyond the body. They think of the body alone, and do not know the soul that gives it life. Is not the soul that gives life to the body, superior to it? Actually, the body is to be respected and honored only because of the soul. After the soul leaves, no one keeps the body even for a moment. It is consigned to the fire or the grave at the earliest opportunity.

If one confines his attention only to the body and becomes entangled in the world, losing sight of his soul that gives it life, then what good would it be to him even if he should gain the whole world? We should try to un-

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derstand the true purpose of, and the profit we intend to make in, this life. Is not life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?

Man, even if he knows all the sciences and reaps their fruits, still remains a sufferer. What is the cause of this? It is a fact that he has gained control over the forces of nature before gaining control over his own self. It is fashionable nowadays for people to say that they have nothing to do with the Lord and have no need for a Master. It is surprising that we need a teacher to learn ordinary things, but have no need for one to teach us spirituality. Is the learning of spirituality, then, so very-simple and easy a matter?

Human life is the highest of all, and one can meet the Lord only when he is in the human form. Man, however, constantly wanders about outside. He does not enter the temple of the body and as a consequence, he does not know either himself or the Lord. The key of this temple is with the Master. After getting it from Him, the devotee ascends to the astral and causal regions and is united with the Lord.

Without meeting a Master this human life is wasted and one does not accomplish the task expected of him. The Gurus say that the life of a person who is not initiated is ill-spent. He dies the death of a dog, barking all the while. He feeds on dirt like pigs. He carries the burden of the world like a donkey and dies while carrying it. He spreads poison like a snake.

Cursed is he and his life is ill-spent, who has not obtained the Guru Mantra; he is like a dog, a crow or a pig; like a donkey or a snake is he. (Sahaskriti M5, 1356-19)

Cursed is the life of one who has not served a Master. He is devoid of devotion and wastes his life. What then was the use of his coming into the world?

Cursed is he and he has wasted his life, who did not serve the Master, and attune his soul to the Lord's Name. (Bhairon M3, 1131-2)

Oh brother, why was a person devoid of devotion born? He did not serve the Master, and wasted his life. (Sri Rag M3, 64-17)

We are full of the accumulated sins of ages.

This mind is full of the sins of many ages. It is utterly black with them. (Sorath Var M3, 651-1)

These sins can only be removed by the practice of the Shabd and the aid of a Master. He who is without a Master cannot obtain the Shabd and rid himself of sins.

Without the Master dirt cannot be removed. Except the Lord there is no other home. Be attuned to the Shabd alone; expect nothing from others. (Sri Rag M1, 18-1)

One cannot be truly happy in the enjoyment of the worldly, sensual pleasures. The real happiness lies in spiritual bliss, which comes from union with the Lord; and this cannot be had without a Master.

Even if you enjoy the company of millions of women; even if you rule over the nine regions; you cannot get bliss without a Master; you are born again and again. (Sri Rag M3, 26-17)

Without a Master all die weeping. They are burned by the hidden fire of Maya and get no peace.

Without the Guru all die weeping in agony; they do not get peace at any time. (Dhanasri M3, 664-7)

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Be he a leader, a prophet or a seer, be he a judge, a preacher or a ruler; no one ever got peace of mind except through the blessing of a Master. (Janam Sakhi)

The inner eye of an egotistic or proud person does not open. He remains blind, acts in the dark and suffers from being entangled with attachment and Maya.

The proud person is blind and acts blindly; he suffers in the world. He suffers from attachment and Maya. He suffers from being without a Master. (Suhi M3, 753-9)

All who are without a Master are misled and do not find the way to the door of the Lord. They go through repeated births and deaths.

Without the Master, people are blank and bewildered, and they suffer greatly, lost in error; they are born again and again; they suffer ever and know not the door of the Lord. (Bhairon M3, 1132-11)

There are a number of disadvantages of being without a true Master. One remains drowned in Maya and has many worldly desires. He suffers from lust, attachment and pride and does not make progress towards his destination. His egotism is not destroyed and the mind is not stilled. Without the Master all is dark; one sees nothing inside and can make no spiritual progress.

Without a Master spirituality cannot be properly understood, for one cannot know the method and can obtain no success.

There is utter darkness without a Master; one cannot understand without a Master; without a Master release is not attained. (Sawayye M4, 1399-16)

The mind is like an elephant. The Master is the driver who keeps it on the right path by using the goad of knowledge. One can obtain the key to spiritual progress from the Master, and can then ascend to the astral and causal regions. Without a Master the portals of the mind do not open, and one does not find the way Home. One may read many books and Scriptures and talk and argue about the Reality, but will not realize the Reality.

Oh Nanak, one should meditate on the Eternal Lord. But one does not find the way without the Master. (Asa Var M1,470-18)

One may read the Smrities and the Shastras and Puranas, and may reason, but he will not know the essence of the Truth.

One cannot know the Reality without a Master; the Lord is the True One, and true is His Path. (Maru M1, 1032-12)

Without a Master the fear of death and the cycle of eighty-four remain hanging over one's head, and he cannot cross the ocean of the universe.

Those who have not met the Master, remain in the power of death. They are born again and again; death stings them with its poison. (Sri Rag M4, 40-8)

Oh Nanak, one cannot cross without a Master; this is the real truth. (Sorath M5, 611-5)

Without the Master, one does not develop devotion and does not acquire knowledge of or love for the Name.

Without the Master there is no devotion, and one does not love the Name. (Shalok M3, 1417-11)

Without the Master there can be no devotion or love. (Basant M1,

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1170-5)

*Oh brother, no one but a Master can tell the secret of knowledge.
You may ask from Brahma, Narad or Vedvyas. (Sri Rag M1, 59-7)*

All the Scriptures and Vedas say that there can be no release without a Master. All are of one view in this respect.

*The Shastras, Vedas and Smrities all proclaim the same truth; hold fast to the conviction that there is no release without a Master.
(Gujri M5, 495-12)*

There is no salvation without a Perfect Master, and one does not find the Door of the Lord's abode without Him.

You will not find the Door of the Lord, except with the aid of a Master. (Dev Gandhari M5, 335-9)

It should be further pointed out that a Master is not found without good fortune and the Grace of the Lord.

If the Lord is kind we find a Master, and he will firmly establish your faith in the Name. No one can get this without a Master, and one's life is spent in vain. (Sri Rag M3, 33-15)

The Master may be ever so near to you, but without good fortune He is not found. There will be ignorance and doubt within you, and a curtain between you and Him. (Sri Rag M1, 40-16)

It is a bad omen to see a man who has no Master. He is in an unfortunate condition. It is impossible to describe the wretchedness of the man who turns away from a Master or criticizes Him.

In conclusion, it may be said that the teachings of the Perfect Masters of the highest order have always insisted upon two basic points or principles.

The first is the absolute necessity for a living Perfect Master who can take the souls of His disciples back to their Original Home in the highest heavenly region. These Masters point out that a doctor who died two thousand years ago cannot heal people who are today suffering from disease. No more can a Master who lived some hundreds or thousands of years ago give people of today the true initiation or baptism, or connect the souls of the seekers with their Creator and thus set their feet on the path of true and final liberation or salvation.

The second is the importance of Shabd Dhun or Naam, commonly called in English the Sound Current or the Audible Life Stream. It is the Nad (Sound) of the Vedas; Bang-i-Asmani or Kalam-i-Ilahi (Divine Sound from above or the Word of God) of the Mohammedan Saints; the Tao and the Way or Celestial Sound of Lao Tze, the great Chinese spiritual Master; and the Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit and Word or Logos of the Bible.

The Shabd-Dhun is the Supreme Creator Himself vibrating and resounding throughout the whole creation and inside every human body. It is upon its wave that we have to return to our Original Home. Only a living Perfect Master is able to put souls in direct contact with this Shabd Dhun or Naam which ultimately leads to their release from the cycle of birth and death.

These teachings are very clearly explained in the Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs, which gives the spiritual teachings that have been given by all Perfect Masters down through the centuries, and upon which most of the contents of "Philosophy of the Masters" are based.

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BOOK 4

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BOOK 4

CHAPTER 1. LOVE

It is not easy to understand love because its true nature and greatness cannot be described in words. It is a pure and delicate feeling or emotion which can be experienced only by one who is in love. It is beyond the capacity of the tongue or the pen to describe it in any human language. Actually, love is another name for God. And just as it is not possible to reduce God's greatness to mortal dimensions, so also is it not possible to describe adequately in any words known to man, the grandeur and sublime appearance of love.

Nowadays, people misunderstand the meaning of love. The spirit and the meaning of love can be ascertained only from a true lover, and its glow or spark can only be seen on his countenance. If you wish to hear it described, you should ask Mansur or Christ, both of whom went to their death serene and filled with joy. You might even ask Mirabai, who drank a cup of poison as though it were nectar. You could also ask Arjan Sahib. He sat on hot iron plates, and exclaimed, Thy Will is sweet!

Surrendering one's life to the path of love gives to life a unique and exquisite taste, which can be enjoyed only by a lover or by one whose eyes bespeak intense love.

Love is a beautiful and sublime experience of the heart. Books are full of the word love, but in the tears of love are flowing burning oceans. In the sighs of love there are thousands of tempests, and in the world of love there is no sense of time. A place where there is love becomes sanctified by it. In that environment there is a powerful current of exaltation, but it can be felt only by a heart that is filled with love. If we perform our domestic and other worldly duties with love, we shall enjoy our life in comfort and without any worries, because in the presence of love, the mind and intellect are powerless to disturb one's inner calmness. Love does not influence only human beings. Even the animals and birds are subject to its elevating influence.

Love is a complete cure for every kind of trouble. Maulana Rumi says:

Oh! The intoxication of my love, be happy, well and strong; for you are the only physician and cure for all my ailments.

If we could experience true love, we would be our own physicians and could bring peace and happiness to ourselves. Then all our pain and sadness because of our separation from the Lord, which are caused by our not understanding the principles of love, would vanish and the radiant currents of joy would fill and invigorate our minds.

It is love alone that can give peace and happiness. Without it life is dry and worthless, and even the joys of heaven are of no value. A palace will appear as dreadful as a graveyard to a person who is bereft of love. But even the ill-furnished and dilapidated huts are beautiful if they are brightened with the spark of love. Through love, even jungles become filled with happy life and without love,

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populated cities may appear bleak.

Love is the richest of all treasures. Without it there is nothing and with it there is everything. He who does not have love in his heart is not entitled to call himself a human being.

The world is beautiful and we are naturally attracted towards it, because the Creator of both man and the world is the same God, who is love. God has filled both man and the world with currents of love, and the world is supported by love. Love's magnetic power is at work throughout the entire world. The sun, moon, earth, stars, sky – all are sending out currents of love to others.

Man has been created in the image of God, and God is love. Therefore, His quality of love is predominant in the world. Because man possesses the quality of love within himself, the entire universe, which also contains strong currents of love, is constantly attracting man towards it.

Wherever there is love there is life. Where there is no love, life is worthless. Actually, a man is not a true man unless he has within him the Divine Spark of Love. God, in the form of love, is within everybody. Those whose eyes are open see all human beings as manifestations of God, like rays of the sun or the waves of the ocean. They know that the same spark of love has created them all. Therefore, who can be low or who can be high? Men in different positions of life and in different countries - be they yogis, sanyasis, brahmacharyas, Hindus or Turks – are all one in His eyes; and differences of caste, creed or country can never be of any importance to those who possess the quality of love. There is one God in heaven and one family on earth.

Maulana Rumi says:

The current of love from the one God is flowing through the entire universe. What do you think when you look at the face of a man? Look at him carefully. He is not a man, but a current of the Essence of God (love), which permeates him.

Lord Krishna says:

He who is able to see My form in everything, who realizes that there is no difference between different beings, is, in fact, the true seer. Such a person I can never forget.

God looks on all beings as the same. No one is better or worse than another. In His eyes there are no nationalities, races or creeds. For Him all are His creatures. A person who understands this Truth is not capable of hating anybody. He is a lover of God, whose Light shines in all human beings. He loves everybody. People of all faiths - Hindus, Mohammedans, Sikhs and Christians - are the recipients of His love. All religious Scriptures, Saints and Masters have always preached this Truth: we should love every created being. According to the Bible, Christ said:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. (St. Matthew 5:43,44)

A lover points out, by his own example, that the real way to love God is not through outer observances. Quarrels and disputes amongst persons of various beliefs are due to narrow-minded intolerance. Those who confine their love to their own countries or nations are also subject to the same narrow-mindedness. But one who places the ideal of love above everything else in his daily life is really

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following the command of his Lord. He is loved by the Lord.

A person who does not follow the path of love is not honored into the Court of the Lord. Such a one is entangled in the miseries of the world, and whosoever comes in contact with him is also miserable. It is the natural desire of all human beings to be happy, and happiness is the fruit of concentration of the mind. This treasure of concentration and happiness of mind can easily be obtained through love, because these qualities are the natural attributes of love. Without love, everything in this world becomes subject to miseries and misunderstandings, which cause domestic quarrels, religious disputes, bloodshed and even wars among the nations.

Man naturally desires peace of mind. He wants to be free from cares and anxieties. All this can be achieved only through love. Those who do not follow the path of love cannot have a calm mind, and these people also create difficulties for others. Without a serene mind, even the pleasures of this world are full of pain. Happiness cannot be achieved without love.

Love is not dependent upon anything else. It is an ocean of faith and fortitude. It is an ocean of strength and faith. It imparts peace and serenity to the mind and to life. It is of real and lasting value. All the things of this world appear beautiful when there is love. By the currents of love the entire atmosphere is charged with joy, and the spark of God's light is visible in love.

One who is imbued with love is prepared to sacrifice even his life willingly, and he does not follow the path of intellectual quibbling. There is no song that is sweeter than the song of love, nor is there any story more enchant-

ing; in fact, the very form of God is love.

There are many valuable gifts of God in this world, such as wealth, beauty, strength, power, good health, knowledge, fluency of speech and worship. Man is naturally fond of these things, but they are all lacking in something. Wealth makes a man proud. Beauty makes him blind.

Power and good health are the cause of cruelty and arrogance. Knowledge brings in selfish ideas. Intellect is a delusion, and to indulge in clever speeches leads one to falsehood and to garrulous talk. External religious observances and worship are the cause of narrow-mindedness and bigotry. Better than all these gifts of God is the gift of love. And such gifts are beneficial if they are combined with the sweetness of love.

God is love. He is the Bestower and demands nothing in exchange for His gifts. Similarly, love demands nothing in return. It knows only how to give; hence it is free from all selfishness. A true husband gives everything he has to his wife. True parents are those who rear their children with love and expect nothing in return from them.

Love inspires generosity and obliterates selfishness, because it has no ulterior motive. If everyone in the world would live in the spirit of love, no worldly laws would be necessary. We need these laws because all have not learned to live in love, and as a result the world is entangled in a network of animal-like tendencies. If we would learn to love ourselves, our neighbors, our country and the whole of mankind, and God Himself, we should no longer be in need of worldly laws, because love begets love. Then there would be no lack of harmony or trust among the nations, and the only ruling power would be

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that of love. Christ says:

*Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.
(St. Matthew 6:10)*

That Kingdom is in our hearts. There (in the realm of love) no law is necessary.

So long as we do not love each other, there can be no peace in this world. Warships, armies, ammunition, submarines, cannons, tanks and atom bombs cannot create peace and harmony in the world. If we are engrossed in these things, we are thinking of things that will bring destruction to mankind, and thereby are responsible for cutting our own throats. The present-day wars give a clear picture of this situation. If, on the other hand, we were to love and understand each other, the result would be that we would live in peace, because in love there is no warfare. If we think of war and make preparations for it, talk about it and also hope for it, then we shall bring war upon ourselves. But if we think of love, plan and live with hearts filled with love and talk about the blessings of love, then we shall get nothing but love. If our environment and the entire universe should receive nothing but rays of love (from everyone in the world), then there would be no need for any worldly laws. Wherever there is love there is no (need for) law.

When St. John became so old that he was not able to walk and was able to speak only with great difficulty, another follower of Christ took him to a gathering of children to deliver a sermon. He raised his head and said: Little children, love one another. Once again, he said this and then repeated it a third time, after which he was silent.

At that the people closest to him said,

Good man, haven't you anything more important to say to these children?

To this he replied:

I give this advice over and over again, because of all the qualities, that of love is the greatest need of mankind. If you would love each other and the current of love would fill your minds, you would possess all other good qualities. Love, and all things shall be added unto you.

If you love, you will be a wise man. And when you become a wise man, you will definitely love. If a person is not good, he cannot be a loving soul. Guru Ram Das says:

Those in this world who have love for the Lord, possess real knowledge, and if by chance they utter any harsh word, they do not hurt anybody because they do not forget the spirit of love and therefore love everybody. They are the chosen ones of God.

Guru Nanak says:

Oh God, if it pleases You, then only does one really and truly try to love, and the love of Your devotees is constantly directed towards You. In such a state of love they do not care for sleep. They are not arrogant because their minds are fully concentrated in Your remembrance.

In love, all the bad qualities of the mind and intellect such as anger, sloth, talking ill of others, hatred, and so forth, are removed, and we are able to control our mind by means of love. Love reigns over everything. It is so beautiful that wherever it abides, anger, hatred, and other similar emotions cannot exist.

The mind is like a crow, which has no other wish than

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to annoy people. But as soon as it is steeped in love, it becomes a swan and troubles no one.

Love is a soul quality and is inherent in all of us, but not everyone can avail himself of it. This ocean of all joys is within us, and we need not spend a penny to achieve it. As soon as the soul is freed from the filth and attachments of the world, real love automatically makes its appearance.

Arjuna Sahib says:

A man may be extremely handsome, clever, learned and wealthy, and may have in him many other good qualities, but if he has not developed the love of God in himself, he should be considered the same as a corpse.

Love is the cream of life. It is the beauty of the souls. By means of love the soul is brightened and its glow is reflected on the face of the lover. Farid says:

I am not afraid of losing my youth, provided my love for God does not diminish, for many a youth has withered away for lack of love for God.

The kingdom of love has been the highest of all realms in every age, and every Saint has said:

Love God and love His creation.

If we really love Him, then we automatically love His creatures. To love everybody is to help one's own self. If one is engaged in business or a profession and does his work with love, he will never cheat anyone nor deprive other persons of their rightful due. The world is always prepared to listen to the message of love because it is

inherent in all of us; and if we practice it daily it becomes manifest in us.

A Saint may not write Scriptures, may not build a temple, or may not give anything in charity, but loves everyone; he is loved by all. The wellbeing of this world depends on our loving everybody, or rather on all loving each other. In order to learn this, we must abandon anger, indolence, talking ill of others, hatred, and all other similar bad habits. A true lover is not confined to any one language or creed. He crosses all such boundaries and loves everybody. Love is the fulfilment of the law. If you love, then you are not doing only a single act, but many more without your realizing it. By loving, you send forth the currents of love far and wide in your environment and thus benefit the whole world.

Love is the greatest and most wonderful constituent of goodness. A truly loving man is actually the king of kings. How can anyone praise God without love? Or how can anyone serve his country? He who has not developed the spark of love in his heart may appear to be living, but he is dead within. The entire universe is beautified by the glory of love.

Those who profess to be lovers of God and His Saints but hate one another and are prepared to fight and quarrel with each other on account of their narrow-minded beliefs, cannot even be called human beings, much less devotees of God. Love is the greatest of all gifts because it instils life into dead hearts. It is intoxication, and in its ecstasy one is filled with bliss and his ego is destroyed.

People say that love is blind and mad, because a lover does not listen to anyone. But the lover of God is not blind. He has eyes that see the Truth. He sees only that

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One whom he wishes to see. He accepts only that One and believes in Him. He is not mad. He gives his heart to One alone, and is free from duality.

Love is the Divine Law. It will triumph where reason fails.

It is not possible to describe the sweetness of love's qualities. Its flavor is so enrapturing that no one wishes to stop tasting it. Its fragrance refreshes the mind and gladdens the intellect, and a lover is always in high good spirits. Love has the power of magnetic attraction, and draws all beings into the sphere of its Divine Power.

Love is God

Prior to the creation of this world, God was a vast ocean like All-Consciousness. He was all love, all bliss and self-sufficient. God was everything in Himself and was in a state of blissful quiescence. And His basic form was love. It was not love for any other being, because none existed. It was for Himself. It was part and parcel of Himself, and He did not have to depend on anything else for this. Such is the indescribable condition of love. But we may illustrate it to some extent by an example:

Suppose that you are in love with the Lord and have completely merged yourself in Him. Then your own self has been forgotten, your body and mind will be numb, and everything will be forgotten except your love for Him. You then lose yourself in the bliss of contemplating on His love, so much so that there is no difference between I and You, and you become bliss incarnate.

You cannot describe that state of mind, because God is love and love is God. Both are one and the same, and both are indescribable. God, in Himself, is a deep ocean of love.

We cannot compare the bliss of contemplating His love with any other type of happiness or bliss.

Love is a quality of such a kind that it cannot be described in speech or in writing. If anything, it can be compared to a magnet which has extremely powerful attraction. Love was in the beginning of the world, and its influence is even now permeating all material and spiritual regions, whether visible or invisible. That is how all things are attracted towards each other and this world is inexistence.

Everything is the Result of Love

God is love, and love was in the beginning. The entire creation is the result of love. We have been sent down into this world through love, and the cause of our return will also be love. The Path of love is the real ideal. Whosoever is following this path is following the True Path.

Shamas-i-Tabrez describes love as follows:

Islam and unbelief are of recent origin, but love and God existed even before the creation of this world. Therefore, if any person becomes a victim of love, you should not call him an unbeliever.

Love is the State of Giving Away One's Heart

Nothing that has been created in this world is devoid of love. Love in its full and complete form was the Ocean of Bliss. Therefore, in the Ocean of God's Bliss, there was nothing but Bliss and Oneness only.

The meaning of Prem (love) is the merging of one's self into the object of love. It has a wonderful attraction or strong pulling power. The word 'prem' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'pre', which means a thing that pleases

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the heart and attracts it. Another definition of 'prem' is a surrender of the heart.

How does one give away his heart? It is done by casting attentive and loving eyes at the beloved, while directing towards him the currents of loving emotions. The lover sees no fault in the beloved and considers him to be worthy of his high regard for him. This is giving away one's heart.

Who is a lover? He is a person who becomes a slave of his beloved. After having placed his heart in the hands of the beloved, he roams about in constant anguish of separation.

The natural quality of love is remembrance with a concentrated mind. Concentration is the sequence of intense love. It is a feeling of self-forgetfulness.

Love is the term used for giving away one's heart on beholding another's attractive form or qualities, and having warm feeling in the heart for that being.

Love is that which transforms the small drop of the soul into the ocean of God. Love is also that which diverts the mind from all desires of the world and attaches it to the one Beloved, i.e. the Lord.

Love has a concentrating force, which is produced when love is attained to the highest and the fullest extent. It is a condition in which the lover completely forgets himself. In order to tread the path of love, one has to forget oneself entirely. By thus losing himself the lover is able to gain Life Eternal. Such a condition is by no means lassitude of mind, but rather an awakening of the energies which enable one to merge oneself forever in the con-

sciousness of the Lord. Love is an infinite, endless ocean, which cannot be described.

Condition of a Lover

Love is a music whose beauty does not diminish. It is a pain which is full of sweetness. It is a feeling which, once experienced, can never be forgotten. If you wish to know about love, you should ask a worshipper of love, or you may ask a nightingale that has fallen in love with a rose. Or you may ask a moth that has sacrificed its life, without hesitation, for the flame. Therefore, do not ask about love from any other person except a lover himself, because he alone can tell you anything about it.

Only a lover knows how to describe love. In his own beautiful and well-chosen words, he will help you to understand it clearly.

If you wish to see the spark of love, you should look into the eyes of one who is intoxicated with love. Then you will see how all intellect, reason, knowledge, mind and thinking have been swept away and have merged into the ocean of thoughts of the Beloved. From such a one you may get some idea of love.

Saints are an ocean of love, because they are already merged into the Lord, and the Lord is love. The currents of love emanating from the Saints spread out and influence every nook and corner of the world. By receiving such currents, one's heart is inclined to meet the Lord.

Love in which there is even a small amount of selfishness or selfish desires, or even a tiny thought of some bargain, is not real love. True love is only for the sake of love itself. The only wish of a true lover is to be united with

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the Beloved. Love is awakened when the currents of love, which emanate from the Beloved, enter into our hearts. This is true love, and it is not dependent on any outside influence.

What is Prem (love)? This is a question the answer to which is in the hands of a lover. Others cannot understand even a small fraction of it.

If you wish to know about love, go to a Saint and ask Him. If you want to know how the heart goes out of your hands, ask one who has lost His heart.

True Love Implies Giving Up the Ego

What is true love? Shamas Tabriz said that it is the surrendering of one's own self. Unless one's self is completely surrendered, nothing can be achieved on the path of love. There is no half way.

The mind should be cleansed of all thoughts and desires, and thus become like a highly polished mirror. So long as one entertains greed and desires in his heart, the face of love will not be visible. By love alone the Saints achieve conscious union with the Lord. In other words, if there is any self-interest then it is not true love.

Prem (Love) is a Constant Magnet

Everybody talks about love, but very few really know what it is. Sometimes a person thinks he is in love, and at another time he is not in love. Sometimes he is sad in love, and sometimes he is happy. This is not true love, for true love is constant and keeps the lover's mind fixed in one direction. It has nothing to do with the rise and fall of emotions, because a true lover is constantly absorbed in

one thought alone – that of the Beloved. Kabir says:

Everyone talks about love, but no one knows anything about it. One who is absorbed in it day and night alone knows love. There was one who loved, but where has his love gone? He laughs and cries. Many people have seen him in this ever-changing condition. This is not Prem (truelove).

Guru Ram Das says:

Those who have fallen in love with God are constantly absorbed in love and are happy with the Grace of God and Satguru.

True Love is Permanent

God is Love. He is omnipresent. The soul is a drop of that ocean and it swims like a fish back into that ocean. Once the magnetic power of love establishes itself in a mind, it will never be destroyed. Arjan Sahib says:

Love has a unique pulling power. Once a person experiences it, he becomes so completely absorbed in it that even if he wishes to leave, it will not cease nor vanish.

Guru Amar Das says:

True love is permanent. Pens and ink pots, as well as writings made with them, become obliterated; but true love for God, which has been bestowed by Him, will never be effaced.

Guru Arjan says:

Oh God! Your humble servant has become absorbed in the elixir of your love and now that he has tasted it, he will never leave it.

Love has been in existence in all ages. It will never vanish from the world. If one has true love, then by seeing

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his Beloved he becomes indescribably happy. Persons in whom the love of God has been awakened and who are happily absorbed in it, are real Saints. And if their disciples love them, then their love will also not vanish. Their love will be everlasting, because the Saints continue to pull their disciples towards them with the cord of love. Such Saints are our real friends and benefactors.

Love is the Nectar of Our Existence

Love is noble and pure. It purifies us and ennobles our life. It is the very essence of simplicity and purity. It is also the sustaining power of this world. Without it the world would be desolate and our life would be aimless. Love is the sustainer of life. Without it a man would be useless. It acts like a binding or uniting force, to keep everyone attached to each other. It induces us to work and to be active. It stimulates our intellect and energy of mind. It is the essence of true purity. It is the spiritual light that brightens our soul. It is the straight path that takes one to the Lord. All Saints and poets sing its praises. The story of love is indescribable. Nobody can really describe it, since it can only be experienced.

Prem (Love) is Naam (Word)

God is love. God is also Naam and Shabd (Sound Current, Word). In other words, love is the Treasure of Naam and it contains that most powerful Elixir by obtaining which all our evil tendencies are destroyed.

What is the Effect of Love?

We find that an ordinary sword will cut an object into two pieces, but the sword of love is quite different. When it is used, it unites two (souls) into one. It has the same

influence whether a person is rich or poor. Love is a scale that will weigh stones and pearls alike. It settles on kings as well as on beggars without any distinction, because it does not discriminate between rich and poor. All are equal in the sight of love. It makes everyone restless and its effects can be seen with equal force in all conditions of life.

When a person is in love he is in a unique state of mind. In this state the flowers of separation bloom, cool and refreshing currents flow from sighs, and the heat produced by the sighs burns and destroys the duality in man. Whoever enters into love will experience all the phases of love. If love did not exist and if there were no sighs caused by love, the world would be deprived of many of its sweetest stories and most touching descriptions.

Whoever goes a-hunting in the arena of love, himself becomes the victim.

Love for God bestows such uplifting power, even in the destitute, that a lover considers kings and their crowns worth no more than a straw. A lover weaves silk and velvet with the blood of his heart, and places it under the feet of his Beloved. It is only love that can take a man into the Court of the Lord. To achieve it is the true aim of life.

If you wish to read the true story of a lover's success, look at his face. You will find the glow of love on it. By drinking the blood of life, through love, the flowers of happiness bloom. A true lover is always immersed in and saturated with the love of God. On this path of love, innumerable persons have sacrificed their worldly lives by spurning the power and pelf of the world.

The Signs of Love

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The state of a person's mind is always reflected on his face. Happiness or pain, love or hatred are reflected in his expression and if he speaks, then everything in his mind comes out clearly into the open.

When a spark of love for the Lord is lit in a person's mind, it cannot be concealed. His very eyes disclose it, even if the mouth is locked, love will burst out in the form of teardrops from the eyes. The body trembles, the hairs stand on end, and the lover smiles but cannot speak. Kabir says:

Love cannot be concealed once it has entered a person's heart. He does not speak it out but his eyes reveal it. Once love enters a man's heart it keeps him happy at all times, for he then becomes free from worries, and the currents of love flow out from him automatically.

When love is awakened in the mind of a person, it keeps him happy and without worries. The currents of love emanate from him.

How can one become the recipient of this wonderful gift of love for the Lord? It is impossible to obtain it without following the instructions of a Master. It can be bestowed only on one who possesses a noble heart, and through the special Grace of God.

What are the signs by which love can be recognized? If you see a person who is miserable in his troubles and in a state of dejection, then you may know that he is devoid of love and is unfit to move in the sphere of true love. Even if the entire world should become full of thorns, the heart of a lover would remain fresh and blooming at all times, like a garden of flowers. His Beloved is always concealed in his arms, and you should never consider him to be alone.

Even when the entire universe is full of thorns the heart of a lover will ever blossom into the beautiful flowers of remembrance of his Beloved. Never think him to be alone, because the Beloved is always concealed in his bosom. (Persian)

In the mirror of my heart is the picture of my Beloved. I can see Him at any time by simply bowing my head.

Four Things are Necessary in Love

No other idea should creep into the mind except that of the Beloved. The question of bargaining or give and take should not arise. All types of fear should be removed. The lover should not be in a state of enmity or hatred with anyone.

Such persons are never disappointed or lose hope. Their Beloved (Satguru) is always by their side. Bulleh Shah says:

While saying my prayers I have forgotten to look at the Kaaba, because I do not know whether I should recite my prayers or should go on looking at You.

The prayers of a person who depends on rituals are said in a specified posture, but the prayers of a lover are always said in a state of self-forgetfulness (rising above the mortal self or ego). A person who says his prayers according to rituals washes his hands and his face before sitting in prayer, but a lover washes his hands of the world. In other words, so long as you do not remove your thoughts from the world, you cannot remember Him.

A lover is always happy in the remembrance of the Lord and of Satguru, who is a manifestation of God. Guru

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Amar Das says:

During Basant (spring-time) all vegetation is green and flowery everywhere. Similarly, those who remember God are always filled with life and joy. A lover remembers Him day and night and thus washes away the dirt of his ego.

He further states:

My mind always remains happy in the thought of my Satguru. How can any trouble or pain come to me?

The surest sign of a lover is that if he loses any worldly or material thing it causes him no pain whatsoever; but if time is lost without meditation, prayer or remembrance of the Beloved, it causes him immense pain.

A true lover is as fond of remembering his Lord as a thirsty man longs for water. The tongue does not speak but the mind is never empty, for the Beloved is always in his remembrance, and is never forgotten even for a moment. Love for the Lord and His lovers is always in his mind. He loves the ones who love Him, and also loves the entire creation.

When such lovers wish to speak about their Beloved amongst their friends, they are not able to speak, for their throats become choked.

Love is a Universal Attribute

Love is born out of human emotions. The sweet fragrance of love permeates the orchard of life. Whenever there is a current of love in the mind, the heart is spontaneously attracted by it. This current or force is working throughout the entire universe. Look at a cow, how lov-

ingly she licks her calf. All animals and birds love each other.

With what devotion a moth circles round a flame! A fish writhes if it is taken out of water. How a deer is irresistibly attracted towards music, and a serpent becomes hypnotized by the sound of the flute? And how a chakor (moon bird) gazes constantly at the full moon!

The feeling of love is universal. Animals, birds, insects, and even plants and flowers are full of it. The spark of the flame of love intoxicates a human being who is attracted to it. The entire universe sings its praises. There is no heart which is completely devoid of love. All are born into this world gifted with at least a particle of love. We all live on it, but those who do not follow the path rightly are sometimes drowned in it.

Love is a Natural Quality in Man

God is love and the soul is a part of Him. The qualities of God are therefore naturally found in man. The entire universe is being sustained by love. In other words, it is a form of love. God created the current of love in this world, and by this current the world is kept in existence.

A human being is either attracted by the love of the universe, or is drowned in the ocean of love, which is God Himself. If there is no love, there is no existence. Wherever there is love there is life, and all the attractions of life are in existence. If there were no love, life would have no attraction for human beings.

Love is an innate quality of the heart. It is only through love that the sublime appearance of the truth is known, because without it man would be in anguish. A person

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who has no love for anything is not fit to be called a human being, because every human being must fix his love at one place or another.

This natural quality is inherent in the mind of every person. In some places people are engrossed in love for worldly objects. At other places they worship abstract heavenly goals. But here and there we also come across people who have correctly placed their love in the Lord. The love for worldly objects is temporary and transient. The love for a heavenly goal is better, but the noblest and the purest form of love is love for God.

Actually, he who possesses love in any form and has even a particle of love in him, is worthy to be called a man. This is the touchstone by which a man may be judged. He is worthy of being called a man to the degree in which he has the quality of love in him. If he does not possess the spark of love within him, he is very far from being called a human being.

Everything in this world is judged by the degree of its quality of love. A fire is a fire only so long as it emits heat and light; at the same time, all that glitters is not gold. Similarly, every person cannot be called a human being in the strict sense of the term. Only those persons are human beings who have the spark of love developed in them.

One may be a lover of physical beauty or a lover of collecting worldly objects, but by enjoying worldly loves of this kind one does not become a human being. A true human being has a feeling of sympathy and a loving heart for mankind. Such a person forgets his own troubles and melts like wax when he sees any other person in pain or trouble. Such a person has the feeling of love and fellowship in him. Kabir says:

A person in whom there is no love should be considered as a moving statue. He is like the bellows of a blacksmith, which breathes and yet has no life.

One who is humble and has love for and surrenders himself to the Lord, has respect for all, such a one is a living ocean of the powerful currents of love. His is a cup of love, full to the brim and running over. In other words, such a person is full of good will and pleasant manners. Such a one is really noble.

The greatness of a man is not measured by the amount of his knowledge, the number of his educational degrees, or the number of books he has read. Mohammed Sahib was illiterate, but a large portion of the world still respects him. Ram Krishna Param Hans was not conversant with book knowledge, but the whole of Bengal venerates and respects him. Guru Nanak and Kabir did not gain their education in a university, but thousands of people have a feeling of the deepest reverence for them. Their constant love for the Lord and for His creation is responsible for their greatness. They were fully engrossed in His love.

Knowledge is a child of books, but love is the mother of books. Without love, all austerities and rituals are useless. They are beneficial only if along with them one has love for God and for His children. But if a person engages in austerities or rituals without developing the quality of love for the Lord and for His children, then he is like a flower without fragrance, like a well without water, like a lamp without oil, or like eyes without sight. Such persons, even if they sometimes have a spark of spirituality in them, would prefer to keep their interest centered in worldly ties, and they flit from one object to another. The entire world is entangled in this net and there is no possi-

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ble way out.

Stages to Achieve Love

It has been observed that normally, when we hear about something very good, a desire arises in our mind to obtain it. When we keep somebody's company, a connection is made with him, and our mind feels happiness in keeping that company and in seeing that person as much and as often as possible. A certain feeling is produced in connection with that person, and that feeling develops into a current of love.

Love is like a fountain of fragrance in the garden of life. When this connection with our companion becomes strong, our attachment towards him changes into love and the condition of the mind becomes such that we do not like to part company, so much so that even if our reason tries to restrain us from meeting that person, the mind is irresistibly attracted. Then the mind rules the intellect, and as this feeling gradually increases, it becomes so strong that separation from our companion, even for a short period, makes us restless, and the mind is constantly attracted towards him and yearns to be with him. There is, however, still a slight control of the intellect over the mind, but the control is gradually reduced and the feeling then takes the form of intense love. In that state a lover begins to forget himself. He pays no attention to his body or his mind. He feels happy if the beloved is with him. Otherwise, he is like a dead body. He becomes indifferent to everybody, including his own kith and kin, and the entire control of the intellect vanishes.

A lover drinks from the cup of the wine of the beautiful eyes of the beloved and becomes intoxicated. He does not care for the opinion of his friends or relatives. His intellect

and mind are completely devoid of the power of discrimination. Lord Krishna said that the feeling of love is so pure that when it is produced in a person, the ego, the idea of personal gain, narrow-mindedness and the passions, all vanish.

This is the path which a seeker has to tread in order to come near the beloved. But it sometimes happens that the currents of love irresistibly enter into the heart of a person as the result of just one gaze into the eyes of a true Master. Even one glance from the Master is enough to create in the seeker a feeling of intense love without passing through the stages of association, intimate connection and emotional attraction. The Granth Sahib says that a true Guru can achieve successful results for His disciples even by a single glance.

Four Stages of Love

Normally love is created in four steps. The attributes of a person are the result of his nature, and they result in action which creates influence. Similarly, love is of four kinds:

That which is caused by special circumstances associated with another person. So long as this cause remains, love also remains, but it vanishes when that binding factor is removed. It is like a person who has an electric battery device in his pocket to keep him warm. As long as the battery works, he has association with it and a kind of attachment for it; but as soon as the battery is exhausted or cut off, his attachment also vanishes. This means that he did not love the battery, but was in love with the action caused by the battery.

To give another example, a person may be a good artist

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or painter. Someone else may love him because he may be able to make use of his art by getting from him a beautifully painted picture or an artistically illustrated book. His love is based on this one purpose alone, and as soon as that purpose is fulfilled, his object being attained, his love for the artist is gone. This shows that his love was of a selfish nature and was not for the painter or artist.

The average type of love in this world comes under this category, and is finished as soon as one's object or motive is fulfilled.

Another type of love is caused by some specific action performed by another person. When that action or work is finished, love also disappears. We shall try to explain this by an example:

A man may love his wife only for the fulfilment of his sensual desires. As soon as his desires are fulfilled or the woman becomes unfit for that purpose, his love for the woman ends and he would like to enter into a new relationship with someone else. This would mean that his love was aroused by low desires and was not for the wife at all.

Similarly, if a servant works well and obeys our orders, we love him. But when he becomes superannuated or indolent, he is turned out. When a horse is beautiful and has a good and fast trot, we love it. When it becomes weak and old, we try to get rid of it. Similarly, so long as a bullock is useful to us in our agricultural work we love it, but as soon as it becomes old, we get rid of it. Our love is not for the servant, the horse or the bullock, but for the work they can do for us.

Someone has truly said,

We love the work done by people, but not the people themselves.

It is even mentioned in the Granth Sahib:

A man of the world has many friends, but the friendships are all instigated by desire for material gains.

The third type of love is that which is caused by the qualities of an object or a person. As soon as the qualities are removed, the love also vanishes. One person may be a beautiful singer and may have a sweet voice. Someone else loves music, and he also loves the singer; but as soon as the voice or the sweetness of the voice is gone due to illness or some other reason, his love also goes. Still another person may be handsome or beautiful and may be loved because of that quality. But if this quality should disappear (because of illness, accident or old age), the love for that person would also disappear, since he was loved for that quality alone. Normally, this is the state of love in the world. People love because of superficial beauty or external show. This is not true love. Love which is produced by a certain action or due to a quality is of a primary stage, but even this is not of a high degree, because as soon as the work or action is changed or lost, the love is also lost.

Superior to all these is the type of love which is neither dependent on, nor created by any material circumstance, action or quality, and consequently does not vanish with them. True love remains constant. Such a love is distinguished by one sign. It comes into being spontaneously, without any external cause. This love comes from the heart with strong currents, and in it there is no motive of gain or selfishness. This is known as natural love, and once experienced it becomes a permanent feature.

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Such a love is superior to all other types, because it is neither dependent upon the quality or actions of its object, nor upon its transitory nature. Not only that, it does not cease even after death, because it merges into the soul. This degree of love is not found in the other types.

If a person loves another on account of some kind of circumstance or quality, the love is far from being natural or spontaneous. But if one possesses the natural love, all the other types are included in it, and all the actions, qualities and goodness inherent in the beloved are also loved and admired by the lover.

A true lover would be prepared to sacrifice himself in defense of the beauty of his beloved; he would be enraptured by the beloved's sweet voice, and any action done by the beloved would prompt him to surrender himself. He would be glad even to kiss the footprints of his beloved. It is said that wherever Laila used to go, Manu would follow and bow down at every footprint.

If one loves another without any selfish motive, he does not bother about the qualities of the beloved, and is always prepared to disregard the qualities for the sake of love, because the qualities without the beloved have no meaning or value for him. The heart of such a person is brightened by the light of love, and the beloved appears to be the center of all qualities and attractions to him. He loves for the sake of love alone, and is not dependent on the qualities, which are of no importance to him. He is concerned only with the person of the beloved but not his qualities.

The foregoing is a description of the four types of worldly love. Similarly, there are various types of spiritual love.

Generally, people love God because they are attached to His creation. He is the Sustainer of the universe and looks after sinners as well as Saints. He bestows health, children and various other gifts and comforts. He is the Forgiver of all evils. If one were to love God not for His gifts but for love alone – then such a type of love would be very high.

Another type of love for God is of a constant or permanent nature, because God Himself is permanent and His influence, qualities and actions or energies are naturally unchangeable. But the true and real type of love for Him is that by which the heart is attracted towards Him without any selfish motives. Such a love is produced in the mind of a person who is without any desires. Without any apparent reason the attraction is there. It is beyond description, and even if we were to try to describe it, the description would be incomplete. In fact, it is not possible to describe this lofty type of love within the limitations of worldly words or ideas.

If you were to ask what is true love for God, and what is the way by which one can be attracted towards Him, it would be difficult to give the answer in mortal language. The flow of tears from the eyes does not reveal the depth of love. The lover's feeling of restlessness is no indication of the intensity of his love. But if one were to follow the path of love for the Lord, the soul would then perceive a spark of that flame of this love. But the influence that this love exerts in man cannot be described by intellect.

All Saints love God for His sake only. Their love is very different from the love of ordinary people. When conditions are favorable and one is placed in comforts of life, then it is easy to love God. But the Saints do not waver in

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their love for Him even when they are deprived of comfortable circumstances. They sacrifice their body, mind, wealth and even their lives for the sake of love for the Lord.

Actually, love is not true love if it varies with changes in conditions, or vanishes in the face of adversities. True love is everlasting. It cannot be destroyed even by tempests of hardships.

Such love is a guiding star for the world and its ignorant people. It cannot be valued in terms of money, but one may nevertheless be able to perceive its greatness and superiority over the ordinary type.

Love is not love, that alters when it alteration finds, or bend with the remover to remove. It is an ever fixed mark that looks on tempests and is never shaken. It is the star to every wandering bark, whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken. (William Shakespeare)

A lover swims happily in the deep sea of God's love, like a fish in the water. A fish cannot live without water. The intensity of a true lover's love for the Lord is of such a nature that it is in every cell and vein of his body – from head to foot. He is always deeply immersed in his love for God, which is for the sake of God alone, and is free from the filth of all selfish desires.

The Wine of Love

Hafiz describes the intoxication of true love in the following words:

Oh Master, take me into the circle of your lovers, for this madness of love for you is far better than the cleverness of the outside world.

The lives of thousands of intellectual persons are not worth a moment of this madness. If the senses were to know how much bliss is in store for the heart that achieves this state of madness, then people now following the lure of the senses would become mad after this Divine Love.

Again, he says:

If you are poor but have directed the currents of your mind into the intoxication of true love, you will find it to be so powerful an elixir that it makes even poor people as rich as King Karoon. This is the best prescription for making a king, even of a beggar.

The wine shop where this intoxication of love can be obtained may be approached only by those who have but one motive in their minds; whose hearts, minds and even tongues are completely dyed in the hue of their Beloved. It is not possible for selfish persons or worldly people to enter the lane leading to the reservoir of the wine of love for the Lord.

In the above, Hafiz does not refer to the material wine, but to the spiritual intoxicant of love for the Lord. It has no material ingredients and has been in existence from the very beginning of time. Prem (love) cannot be described by human tongue. Hafiz says:

Oh my Master, bestow on me this intoxication of love as soon as possible, without entangling me in the web of outward discussions.

Shamas-i-Tabrez describes this wine of love in the following words:

This wine is the wine of spirituality. Oh ye distributor, bring this wine of God and give it to those who have been writhing in the anguish of separation from the Lord.

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The Intoxication of the Wine of Love

The worldly wine cannot be compared even to one sip of the wine of true love, for this love is the elixir of life and the soul. There is no comparison between that Divine Elixir and worldly wine. Hafiz says:

Even two thousand jugs of this wine cannot equal one drop of the wine of love for my Master.

Guru Nanak was once offered bhang (a narcotic) by King Babar, but He said:

Oh King, the intoxication of this narcotic, if taken in the morning, will vanish by evening; or if taken in the evening, it will disappear by morning, but the intoxication of love for the Lord continues day and night, and it never fails.

Shamas-i-Tabrez says:

I am so intoxicated by love that the entire world would be intoxicated by it, if I were to shout in my state of ecstasy.

He further says:

There is such an abundance of love – intoxication in me that a bread prepared from the wheat grown on a field fertilized by my body would intoxicate the bread-maker with the love of God. But I cannot describe the state of the person who would eat that bread. Even the person who sets the table for such a bread would become intoxicated, and the oven in which the bread was baked would dance with ecstasy from this intoxication.

Where Can We Get the Elixir of Love?

This wine of love cannot be found in jugs. It is flowing out of the hearts of lovers. Persons who have not tasted

the elixir of love are aimlessly running after the intricacies of worldly attractions and are deprived of this Divine Ecstasy.

What is the Principle of Obtaining Love?

Just as there are regulations and principles laid down for obtaining different types of knowledge, in the same manner there is a definite code of discipline to be followed for admission to the school of love. It is necessary that these principles be followed rigidly: A lover must give up the thoughts of the world, the attractions thereof and of the world beyond, and must then be completely absorbed in contemplation of his Beloved at all times.

Love for the Master and its Advantages

We have not seen the Lord, and we do not know how to love Him. But a Master is the manifestation of His love and to love the Master is to love the Lord. To love one's Master is to lose one's own identity completely in the Master and thereby merge into the Lord.

It is easy to boast about one's love for the Master, but it is extremely difficult to be a true lover. A disciple should gradually increase his love for the Master. As a result, that love will eventually turn into true ecstasy and His Form will then imprint itself in the mind of the disciple. Without Dhyān (contemplation on the form of the Master) it is not possible to strengthen the bond of love for the Master, nor will the Dhyān be complete; that is, it will not be possible for the disciple to hold the form of the Master within himself.

The attitude of the disciple towards his Master and God should be like that of a moth for the flame, and he should

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burn in the fire of his love for Him, because by such an immolation one does not die but attains everlasting life. The lovers that forget themselves completely in love for their Master drink from the fountain of the Elixir of Life and attain eternal bliss.

We love saintly persons because they are merged in His love. To meet them and to be in their presence is to meet God and to be in His presence. Jesus Christ says:

He who has seen me has seen my father.

Once God said to Moses,

I was not well, and how is it that you did not come to inquire about my health?

Moses replied,

Oh God, you are the king of this world and of the regions above. How can you fall ill?

The reply was:

Moses, a certain very dear devotee of mine was not well and you did not go to him to inquire about his health. If you had visited him at that time, you would have automatically visited me.

This clearly shows that love and service to the devotees of the Lord is love and service to the Lord Himself. Similarly, love and service to the Master and contemplation of His form is, in reality, love and contemplation of God. But people in their ignorance call it idol worship, man worship, or gurudom (guru worship).

Satguru makes it possible for us to be in the immediate presence for the Lord by His nectar-like speeches and discourses, oh Nanak,

that person is fortunate who has his mind fixed in the Lotus Feet of God. (Adi Granth.)

Nearness to God is achieved and felt in two different ways: outwardly and inwardly. Outwardly, it is done by keeping the company of Saints, but inwardly one cannot attain it unless heart is connected with heart. And to create the path of contact from one heart to the other it is necessary to inculcate in one's self the highest form of love. When love and affection are firmly established in one's heart, then contemplation of the Beloved is easily achieved, because in the hearts of lovers the form of their Beloved is always present.

In the mirror of the heart, there is the image of the Beloved. By simply bowing the head one can see it.

In the Muslim Scriptures it is said that a Gurumukh is the mirror of God. God gives us a glimpse of Himself through His Gurumukhs, and to enable us to see Him, the Gurumukhs act as mirrors (of God). By seeing such persons we remember Him, and the sign by which we recognize such Gurumukhs is that by keeping their company and by meeting them we are automatically reminded of the existence of God. When this does not happen, we should take it that the individual is not a complete Gurumukh. Kabir says:

Oh Kabir, by the Darshan of (by seeing) a Saint I remember my God, and every such moment is credited towards the remembrance of the Lord. All other time is wasted.

One should not keep the company of a person who is devoid of truth, faith and love because he is like a mirror and we shall see our own reflection and that of our own thought currents in him.

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When a devotee has firmly established the condition of love and affection within himself, his heart is then connected with the heart of his Master by the chord of love. This can be achieved only by inculcating intense love and practicing contemplation and remembrance. Hearts that are devoid of these qualities cannot achieve true love. Therefore, lovers of God remember Him by repetition of His Name and contemplation on the form of their Master. They are then able to benefit by contemplation outwardly as well as inwardly.

A Master is a lover of God. In Him there are boundless currents of true love. He is the physical form of that love. To love Him is to find the most important medium for developing love for God, because He is a manifestation of God, and His heart is full of love for Him. His face shines with the light and energy of God. By seeing Him, love and longing for God increases. To love such a person is to love God Himself, because by loving Him we always remember our Lord.

Maulana Rumi says:

When you have accepted the personality of your Master, then God and His manifestation on earth are also automatically accepted. If you look at your Master as a different entity from God, you will lose the reality of God also. If you are searching for the reality of God, look at the face of your Master, and by looking at God through the luster of the Master's forehead, you will fall in love with Him.

A person in whose heart love for the Master has been bestowed by God is really fortunate, because love for the Master is the method by which we come to love God. To love the Satguru only for his own sake is better than any

other type of love, because the inner beauty in Him is indestructible. God's beauty is everlasting, and He shines through a Satguru; therefore, love for the Master is free from all defects. But one must remember that in order to love God or the Master, it is necessary to create true longing.

As long as a person is absorbed in enjoyment of the sensual pleasure, real longing (for God) will not come. We must consequently keep away from bad company and also save ourselves from the snare of sensual pleasures. The soul is a particle of its origin, which is the Lord, and it has descended from the highest spiritual regions. It is, therefore, not a good thing to entangle it in sensual and worldly pleasures.

By loving the Master we inculcate love for the Lord within ourselves, and a desire is created in us to meet Him. This creates a sense for contentment within and at the same time the mind is controlled by keeping it busy in repeating His Names.

With the increase of love for the Master, love for the Lord automatically increases, and one is always inclined to remember Him intensely. By repetition of His Divine Names one becomes calm, and without this one is restless.

After some time the disciple's condition becomes one of love and there is an intense desire of the heart for the Lord. By remembering the Master, who is the manifestation of the Lord, the disciple begins to long for His Darshan; tears automatically roll down his eyes, and the soul becomes restless. The restlessness of the soul makes him forget himself. The repetition of the Names becomes so intense that the disciple becomes completely absorbed in it and forgets his own self. Guru Ram Das says:

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My Master, who is God incarnate, has captured my heart, and I am restless to have His Darshan.

This state cannot be described in words, because such a person is full of the ecstasy created by the elixir of love and is awakened into a state of super-consciousness (bliss). Those who are devoid of love for the Master cannot understand this condition. In the fire of love, everything in the mind of the lover is annihilated; and because it is not possible for him to bear that state of separation (from God) and restlessness, he cries out to the world,

Please do not love.

Had I known that love results in such an affliction, I would have announced to the world with the beating of drums that nobody should love.

Only one whose mind and body are engulfed in the ocean of love can know the condition of love. No other person can do so. A lover is beside himself because of his intense longing, and people call him mad. But having tasted this unique love, he is so happy in it that he cares nothing for the world and passes his time in a state of constant love for the Lord. Bulleh Shah described this state of a lover in the following beautiful words:

I have loved my Beloved, and people taunt me. Nobody understands the condition of my heart, because I feel that I am in a strange atmosphere. Only he who has a longing for the indestructible Lord can comprehend Him. It is difficult to ascend to the summit of love. He alone knows who has done so.

The fire of your love has consumed me in a moment, and this love has made me announce to the world: 'Whoever is consumed by the fire of love is the only one who can comprehend it. No one else

knows it.

Because of separation from Thee, people call me mad, and I am spending my time in quietness, shutting my eyes and closing my ears.

Oh my Lord, please look upon me with Thy Divine Glance and be Merciful to this wretched creature of Thine! This love has been so unkind to me that everywhere people are taunting me. This butcher of love has been so unkind to me that I cannot describe it. Having pierced through my breast, it vanished. I cry stealthily to my parents by making every kind of pretensions. I am in such a state of love that people taunt me on all sides.

When one who has real love for the Master is in the Master's presence his condition is unique, and due to the burning of the fire of love caused by the Master's Darshan (sight of the Master) he appears to be an entirely different person.

By looking at the Master the remembrance of the Lord automatically comes into one's mind, and by being absorbed into it the soul soars into the higher regions and is in a state of indescribable bliss.

Thus the two souls – the soul of the Master and that of the disciple – unite. Both become one. The soul of the disciple enters into the soul of overflowing love of the Satguru, and merges completely into the form of his Master, thereby attaining the state of the consummation of love or complete union in Him. The disciple is dyed in the hue of the Master's love and imbibes all His qualities. As the Master's qualities are far superior to anything imaginable, the disciple gains tremendous benefit.

This state of love is so ecstatic that Mohammedan

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Saints have compared it to the state of intoxication caused by drinking wine. But the state of bliss is indescribable, and can be known only by the devotee who has surrendered himself completely to his Satguru. In such a state the Master guides the devotee with Grace under all conditions. People who are engrossed in the sensual pleasures of this world cannot realize this.

In order to invoke love and Grace from the Lord, it is necessary for the devotee to enrich love for his Master and to seek Grace from Him.

One person may claim to love God. Another loves his Master. Which one of these two is nearer to God? Without love for the Master it is not possible to love God, because God is invisible. So the person who claims to love God loves Him only superficially. God is visible only through His manifestations (the Masters); therefore, to love the Master is to love God. If you desire to love God, you should keep the company of His lovers.

The currents of God's love will then enter into your heart and make you a lover of God. The love for God increases in proportion to the increase of love for the Master, and the devotee begins to see Light inside.

Sometimes the Light is in the form of lightning, sometimes stars are seen, and sometimes the stars burst and the sun and moon are visible. Sometimes the luminous and brilliant form of the Master is visible within, and this enables the soul to see higher spiritual regions within and to cross Brahm and Par Brahm.

The Master forbids the devotee to reveal these secrets to others, because it is against the law of God and of Nature to do so. By the Grace of the Master these internal sights

increase in number and intensity day by day; and by contemplation on the form of the Master the devotee's love for God is also gradually intensified, thus increasing his state of happiness into one of unalloyed bliss. Such a devotee is really fortunate, and after he has reached this state, if the Master shows indifference, then his life becomes miserable and is worse than suffering from hundreds of ailments. Kabir says:

It causes no pain or anguish if God is displeased with a true devotee, because he has the support of his Master, but if the Master is displeased with him, then he has no place to go in this world or beyond.

A Master possesses the unique magnetic power of love which draws a devotee towards Him and creates within him a feeling of indifference towards worldly attractions. This magnetic power is an inherent quality of the Master and emanates from His every action and movement. Everything that radiates from the Master – the light of His beautiful face, the lines on His forehead, even his indifference when he is displeased with the devotee, the luster round Him when He speaks smilingly – all pierce the heart of the devotee and thus attract him to his Master. Through the luster of the Master's face shines the luster of God, and one sees God in his Master. Hafiz says:

Even harsh words coming from the beautiful red lips of the Master are full of love.

This state of love is achieved by those lovers who have fully forgotten themselves and have merged themselves entirely into the Beloved. But in order to attain this condition one has to cross various stages.

Sometimes the Master appears indifferent and by other

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similar signs tires to eliminate ego and arrogance from the mind of His devotee. Sometimes the Master's love for the disciple is apparent and He thereby strengthens the love in the disciple, as a result of which the soul rises higher.

Sometimes true lovers of the Master feel their life to be miserable and have an intense longing to meet Him, and in their state of separation from Him they consider every breath to be as long as a year. To them this world is a place of horror, day and night. This state of unbearable pain cannot be described, and if one were to listen to an attempt at describing it, he would tremble. O God, may such a state never be the fate of any person!

Love God and His Lovers

Everyone wishes to be loved by someone, and also desires to love someone. Everyone says,

I want to love someone and I also want someone to love me, so that I may be useful to him and he may be of help to me.

This type of love is also prevalent amongst animals. But it is necessary to understand what type of love one should have, and with whom one should create ties of love so that it may be beneficial.

Everybody knows that love for this world and worldly people and objects is the cause of many miseries, because these things are all temporary and will leave us sooner or later. We shall leave them at our death. Therefore, we should give our love to a being who is beyond death and who will never be separated from us, so that we may never feel the pain of separation.

Such a being is none other than God Himself, or His

manifestation whose soul is completely merged in God and who has everlasting life. Therefore, it is God in the form of His Saints who are worthy of our love. God is within each one of us, and consequently He, unlike worldly objects, cannot be separated from us. To love Him will never cause any pain. Therefore, it is only God or His Saints with whom one can be in love constantly till eternity. So, if you wish to love and be loved at all times, then your love should be offered to God Himself through His manifestation on this earth, who is no other than the Satguru.

The highest and the greatest boon that anyone can have is the love for God; but only those on whom God bestows His Grace can be the recipient of this sublime gift. In order to create love for God in one's heart it is necessary to create love for the Master. If we love God, He loves us. Maulana Rumi says:

If love for the Master is in your heart, then rest assured that God also loves you, because the Master is the reflection of God on earth.

Another Saint says:

You cannot fathom the Grace of God. His glance of love is on you at all times, like that of a lover for the beloved.

In the Quran it is also stated:

I remember those who remember me.

It is extremely difficult to describe true love for God. Some people say that it is impossible to love God, and that love for God simply means that we should follow His commandments. Such people are ignorant of the real Truth. Hazrat Mohammed says:

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None amongst you is a Gurumukh (true devotee of the Master). So long as you do not have greater love for me than for your parents, children and all other worldly objects, you cannot be a Gurumukh.

He then prays:

Oh my God, bestow upon me love for you and the love of those beings of yours who love you. Instill in me a longing that will bring me nearer to your love; and create in me a desire for love for you as intense as that which a person dying of thirst has for a drink of cold water – in truth, even more intense than that.

How can people who are submerged in worldly attachments know anything about God's love? So long as they are not free from worldly attachments it will not be possible for them to taste God's love. They cannot understand the valuable words of Hazrat Mohammed:

I am devoted to my God much more than to highly scented perfumes and even to beautiful women.

Praises of Love by Various Saints

God is love. Just as it is impossible to praise Him adequately, it is similarly not possible to define love. Those who have drunk deeply out of the cup of love have become intoxicated by it, and in their ecstasy have sung songs of praise for Him. Below are given a few quotations by way of example:

Love is God. It is the religion and faith of man.

Love is a pilgrimage. It is a magnetic power which attracts the hearts and everything good and beautiful in them.

A heart full of love is contented and sweet.

Love is the comforter and sustainer of hearts. It is the hope, the longing for union, and surging emotion in the heart.

It is a Power. When we love, we learn the lesson of courage and fearlessness.

It is the shield against which no weapon can be effective.

It is Truth and Reality. It is faith and sacrifice.

It is a divine flower, which imparts its perfume to the entire universe. It is a fragrant flower through which man's life is beautified.

It is a light by which the universe is illuminated.

It is a source of perfume which wafts spring-like fragrance into the hearts of men.

It is a story which will never end, and a problem for which there is no solution.

It is a silent emotion full of sweetness, in which man forgets himself completely.

It is a heavenly gift and good for the soul.

It is the nightingale, whose sweet songs have a magic effect on man.

It is the permanent union. Both, the lover and the beloved are imperishable. It is an indescribable state of their hearts.

It is a rare gem, and a man's heart is its mounting.

It is a priceless jewel, which is within us at all times but is not obtainable (without guidance.)

It is as brittle as glass but as strong as steel.

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It is a current of purity and a rare gift of God, bestowed on each one of us.

Love is the greatness as well as the purity of the heart.

To love is the real aim of man and the most needed ingredient of his life. The arrows of love are silent. God does not wish for anything but love for His creation.

Love is such a potent elixir that even one drop of it will awaken the dormant energies in man.

Love is the purest and the greatest benefactor of life.

Love is an unfailing medicine which sustains the heart and brings new life into it.

The key to heaven is love and not intellect.

Those who are devoid of love are also devoid of God, for God is love.

There are waves of unselfishness in the ocean of love, which can be seen and felt but are beyond description.

Love is not artificial. It is natural.

Love is not lifeless. It is life and full of activity.

Love is not blind. It increases vision.

Love is not a malady. It is the proof of spiritual awakening.

Love is the best means of seeking freedom from worldly worries.

Love is stable, imperishable and infinite. In the end all one's ties and connections with the world are broken, but it is impossible for the relationship of love to be destroyed. It is stronger than chains of steel and unbreakable even by death. Because it is a part of the soul,

even when the two bodies perish, its impression remains in the two hearts.

What is love? Two souls with but one thought, two hearts with but one tongue.

The Treasure of Love is Rare

In this world there are innumerable treasures. We are well versed in knowledge and philosophy, but the state of being in love with the Beloved, expressed by painful sighs and tears because of separation from Him at night, is the lot of a rare few. Hafiz says:

I have innumerable treasures of knowledge and of intellect but, alas, I cannot write the story of the tears shed in separation at night, nor of the sighs of longing for my Beloved.

Matter and Spirit

God is infinite. He has no form nor name. He is free from all limitations and qualities. But we have a physical form, and a lover's heart naturally prays that his Beloved should also similarly appear before his eyes so that he may behold Him. The lover's eyes long to see Him, his hands long to touch Him, his ears long to hear His sweet voice, and he wishes to embrace his Beloved. He desires to express his love, and therefore he wants to cloth the spiritual with a material form.

When we cover the spirit with material raiment and worship it, we call it material love. The Persian poets have named it physical worship. Hindus worship it as Sargun (spirit with qualities). But the worship of Nirgun (spirit without qualities) is known as spiritual worship. In different Scriptures it is called the worship of God, the worship of the Kaaba, and so forth. The object of physical and spir-

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itual worship is the same. People who perform spiritual worship have to go to the Kaaba or to Dehr and bow their heads in worship there. The radiance of the same God who is in the Kaaba is in a Saint. The only difference is in the conception of the devotee.

Love for the Spiritual and Love for the Physical

Love is of two kinds. One is physical and man-made and the other is natural or divine. Physical love is the love of worldly people who are continually tied to the world and its objects. Divine Love is that of the devotee of the Lord, and it establishes a permanent connection with God.

The satisfaction of sensual desires is not a man's goal in life. These pleasures, besides pulling him down, have no permanence in them whatsoever. The real object of life is to connect the soul with the unchangeable Lord and thus be united with Him forever in eternal bliss.

Some people dislike the physical type of love, and others call it the first step towards spiritual love. There is a downward tendency in the expression of physical love by which the lower senses are excited. In spiritual love, the senses are all under perfect control.

The expression of love that is produced as a result of physical attraction is not the true form of love. Rather, it is the cause of one's fall in the eyes of God. Extremely rare is the case of a person who can attain spiritual love through physical love.

Some of the Muslim Saints, however, considered it necessary to attain spiritual love through physical love. They considered physical love as the first step towards spiritual love. Their contention was that just as a staircase or a lad-

der is necessary in order to ascend a high wall, similarly to ascend the heights of spiritual love, one had first to experience the ladder of physical love. But this is necessary only for gaining concentration through contemplation.

Once such concentration has been achieved, one should immediately try to develop only spiritual love because the other method is beset with risks and obstacles.

Those who attempt to ascend to spiritual love by means of physical love usually remain at a standstill in the condition of physical love, which is nothing but an animal instinct. They cannot make spiritual progress. Maulana Rumi says:

The physical love is like a bridge, and a bridge is meant only to cross the river and not to live on. Those who stay on the bridge do not achieve any progress in their endeavor to meet the Lord.

Saint Bernard says:

Love begins in the flesh and ends in the spirit.

The outer love should never be considered more than the first step towards the Divine Love. Both types of love are good, provided there is no motive of gratification of the senses. Love should be for the sake of love alone. The foundation of true love contains no trace of selfish aims or desires. Like God's love for us, our love should also be expressed and offered to Him without any selfish motive or desire for reward.

Selfish love is called attachment, and is merely a physical emotion. When love is imprisoned within the limitations of low, narrow and selfish qualities, the result is pain and misery. This selfish love is advocated by some lectur-

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ers and leaders who have only their own personal gain in view. Their lectures do not deal with the real love, which is for God and His entire creation – whether Hindu, Muslim or Christian, and of any caste, creed or nationality.

Look at the state of adoration and self-abnegation of Manu! He ran after his beloved Laila like a madman. Even if he saw her footprint, he would consider it a sin to pass by it without first bending his forehead to touch the footprint with it in homage. It is written that once he was seen kissing the feet of a dog, and when asked the reason why, he said:

This dog sometimes walks in the vicinity of Laila's residence.

Manu's love for Laila was so deeply imbedded in his heart that he had no room for anything else. Manu, however, remained at a standstill in physical love for Laila. Love for the physical form (which itself is not eternal) is only the play of lustful desires. Worldly love is usually of this nature. The only lasting and true love is for God, and is not confined to worldly forms. Worldly love keeps one away from Him.

After Laila's death, Manu realized the truth. He said that his mad love for Laila caused him to feel ashamed. He regretted having showered all his love on a mortal being, for he then realized that the best friend is the one with whom we can be united forever.

Give your heart to the Being who is eternal. Why attach yourself to one who is subject to death and decay?

Saints have therefore taught us to avoid the expression of physical love and have directed us to love our Satguru instead of loving worldly forms, for the Masters are free

from all worldly dross, and love for them will not entangle us in the ties of this world. And love for the Master is necessary, because His love reminds us of God. Such a state has been described by the Saints as merging oneself into the Satguru. As the Satguru Himself is merged in the Lord, one who merges himself into the Satguru automatically achieves the next step, which is to merge oneself into the Lord. Thus one attains God-Realization.

A love that is produced as the result of action, qualities or personal influence is all worldly love. True love is a living force.

Shamas-i-Tabrez says:

How long will you keep the dead beloved in your embrace? Why not take hold of the soul, for it will never die!

The true lover and the Beloved exist forever. You should not give your heart to flesh and bones, for they are perishable and will one day decay. To give one's heart to a destructible thing is to kill oneself. The physical type of love only succeeds in confusing the lover, moves him farther away from divinity, and prevents him from crossing the ocean of death.

Therefore, turn your mind away from the worldly love for your children, for your wife, for your wealth and treasures, for your sovereignty and fame. These are all ephemeral. Instead, we should turn our faces toward the Lord through His manifestation on earth, the Satguru.

Muslim Scriptures state that to die in love for the Lord is the real sacrifice. This means that whoever has died in such love has died a real death. The world is a dead thing and those who hanker after it are no better than dogs.

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Since this world is transitory and man is at the top of creation, it is improper for a human being to stoop to the worldly type of love.

There is no contentment in worldly love, whereas in love for God there is complete tranquility. Hafiz says:

What is the use of giving your love to a person who does not respond? The fault lies in the fact that there is not enough intensity of longing, although the healer of this pain of longing is always there.

We should learn the lesson of sacrifice from the moth which never wavers even though it is burnt to death by the flame by which it is attracted. Again, Hafiz says:

It is certain that so long as one is not prepared to sacrifice his life on the path of love, he cannot reach the Beloved.

Method of Creating Worldly Love and Spiritual Love

Whenever we have a desire to express our love for someone, we should try to discover what kind of love the beloved would prefer. We should then inculcate in ourselves those qualities or actions by which the beloved is pleased and we should always talk about those things only, for by listening to them he will naturally be attracted.

Love is not created by sight alone. It is also awakened by constantly listening to speech or song about the beloved, and by talking about him. When you are able to develop the qualities that are liked by the beloved and he is satisfied that you have actually developed them, he will then automatically bestow his love on you. Take an exam-

ple.

If you are interested in painting and have mastered the art, then as soon as a lover of art sees your proficiency or hears about it, you will naturally become the object of his interest or love.

Someone else may be fond of music or may be interested in poetry, and you may study music or poetry and attain proficiency in it. Then, whenever that person listens to your music or poetry, he will be automatically attracted towards you.

We have many such examples in nature. When one is attracted by a certain quality or action, the lover should also develop the same kind of quality or type of action in order to become eligible for the love of the beloved.

The above methods are the means for the development of worldly love. But if such a love is developed with the object of satisfying one's own sensual desires or is subject to any other ulterior motive, it becomes the cause of attachment and must be shunned. If one indulges in this type of love, he loses his own good qualities and retards his progress towards the real love.

On the other hand, if this worldly love is not covered with the filth of sensual pleasure nor motivated by some selfish aim, then the true love, which is pure and divine, will ultimately be developed. Maulana Jami says:

If you have physical love which is not subject to any selfish or ulterior motive, then such a love is welcome, because it is the means of creating in you, love for God.

Sufi Saints have also described physical or worldly love as the first step towards spiritual love. They say:

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Love, whether it is material or spiritual, should be in every heart, because in the mirror of material love there is the reflection of spiritual love. The light of worldly love illuminates the path of Love Divine.

Everybody, whether consciously or unconsciously, is in search of a beloved. And every place is suited for love, whether it is a mosque, a temple or a church. This universal search for a beloved is a reflection of the Divine Love.

Hafiz says:

True and False Love

True love is like a bright light, in which a moth will sacrifice itself in a moment. It is not feeble like that of the weak glow of a candle, of which the light itself will feel ashamed.

Again:

Oh harken ye, loud-crowing cock! Why such a din? You should have taken a lesson of love from the moth, who burns to death without even a sigh.

Life is Useless Without God's Love

Of what use is the drinking of nectar to one who has not tasted the unique elixir of true love! Of what use is life for one who has not sacrificed himself on the path of love! Of what use is the reading of Scriptures or even the reciting of them if one has not understood their meaning! Such a one is only superficially calling the Beloved by the names of love, and has not created true love for Him within himself. Of what use is it to weep outwardly if one has not shed silent tears for the Beloved within!

Of what use will it be to a person to drink the Amrit (Divine Nectar) if he has not tasted the elixir of love? Of what use is it to one who has not sacrificed himself at the altar of love?

Worldly people have seen the world and have enjoyed its fruits and its orchards. They have also read and recited books and Scriptures, but all this is without gain.

Wali calls his Beloved incessantly but the Beloved demands the surrender of the heart, without which He cannot be won. Thus Wali's crying, 'Oh my Beloved!' throughout the night is fruitless. (Wali Ram)

The people of the world are engrossed in reading Scriptures, but they have not really understood them. If one should read only 'two and one-half' letters of 'love', he would then understand the real meaning of love. [In Hindi language the word Prem (love) consists of two and half letters.] Shamas-i-Tabrez says:

The soul that does not contain love for God would be better off if it did not exist at all, for if such a soul is dwelling within a human form, it is receiving no benefit therefrom and is living a life of shame.

A person who has not been dyed in the hue of love has no more value in the eyes of God than a piece of wood or stone.

The life that is passed without love is without any benefit, for love is an elixir for the heart.

Shamas-i-Tabriz further states:

Love is attained only through great good fortune. Without it, life is fruitless. Only a very few extremely fortunate persons are blessed with the gift of love. The part of life that is wasted without love for God should not be counted, for it is all useless. If life is passed

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without love, one will be shamed before the altar of God.

Kabir Sahib also says the same thing:

A person in whose heart there is no love, and who does not have the Name of God on his tongue, is no better than a beast; and he dies without having received any of the benefits of his human birth.

Devotion without love is all sham. Ignorant people lose all the benefits of the valuable human form with which they have been endowed by simply filling their stomachs like beasts. The body in which love does not exist should be considered a crematorium. Such a one is breathing without life, like the bellows of a blacksmith.

Guru Arjan says:

A person may be very handsome, may belong to a prominent family, may be extremely wealthy and clever, and may be a gifted speaker; but if he does not possess devotion to God, he should be considered no better than a corpse.

Except for the Divine Love, all other types are undesirable. So long as we do not sacrifice that to which we are most attached, at the altar of God's love, we cannot obtain Salvation. Our soul is the hidden treasure of love, and it is most essential that we turn our attention from the world and its objects and direct it towards Him.

Love of Saints and of Ordinary People

Saints always teach only love, because love and God are one. God is love, and God's reflection is love. The only difference between the Saints and other people is in the quality of their love. Saints are love incarnate and bestow the gift of love on others. They love the evil people as well as the good ones, and their love is of the highest type.

Love is the true religion and real guide.

Some people say that we should love God's creation, so that we may be able to love God. On the surface, this principle appears feasible, but if we go deeper, we shall be able to see that this principle is not entirely correct, for pure love is free from all attachment to the world of matter and illusion, and is found only in the regions beyond the reach of mind and Maya (matter and illusion).

In the lower regions, love is entangled in physical matter and attachments. Consequently, it is covered with worldly dross because of our selfish motives. The love of those who are engrossed in the pleasures of the world is full of the poison of physical attachment. This way of living cannot create pure love in us, because such poisonous love causes us great harm; and it is impossible for us to free ourselves from it by our own efforts alone. This lower type of love will further entangle us in worldly attachments and will definitely not create Divine Love.

The Saints, however, possess the pure spark of love for God alone. If we love them, then love for God will be kindled within us. God is omnipresent. So, when we love Him we love His whole creation, and we thus radiate currents of love for all.

God is Shabd. God is love. Therefore, Shabd is also love. Saints are Shabd incarnate. They bestow the gift of Shabd on others. Those who practice Shabd and listen to the Divine Music become oceans of love. They love everybody and by the currents of this Divine Love radiate a virtuous influence in this world.

The highest form of all practices is to create love within. If the spark of love is removed from rituals and ceremo-

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nies, they are nothing but empty formalities and are unable to attach us to the love of God. We may succeed to a certain extent in creating love within ourselves for human beings, but such a love will naturally not be lasting. Real and lasting love can be achieved, however, if we sit at the Lotus Feet of a highly evolved soul (a Saint or Master).

The dormant love within our souls can be awakened by the practice of Shabd, which keeps us above the dross of Maya. Generally, lecturers or teachers who are devoid of any practical spiritual consciousness and who have had no opportunity to seek and love a Master, advocate in their speeches that there is no harm in love for each other – male and female; but in actual practice many cases have occurred where people who listened to such advice have fallen into the pitfall created by the snares of Maya. We should love only Ram Naam, that is the Name of God, or His Saints. All other types of love only succeed in binding us to this world.

The teachings of the Saints do not imprison a disciple in rituals and ceremonies. Their teachings guide us to awaken the dormant love within ourselves, the love that is inherent in the soul. This love can be awakened by devotion to the Master, and by the inner contact of Shabd.

Nowadays religions are considered to be embodiments of noble ideals with virtuous and philosophical thoughts added to them. Prayer is also added, and all these things aid us in creating in our minds an appetite for God's love. But this is not food for the soul, which is hungry and which can be fed only by Shabd or Naam: By means of Shabd the real love is kindled within us, and that is the food which alone can satisfy the soul. Once this love has been awakened within us, it will do everything for us, and we will find this food of love in the entire world. Without

awakening the true love within ourselves, we cannot tread the path of true spirituality.

Love is True Worship and True Austerity

Many people subject themselves to austerities and perform various difficult practices. If the object of these austerities is to achieve supernatural powers, it is actually a trap to further entangle one in the snares of Maya. Such practices only succeed in moving one farther away from the goal of God Consciousness.

A devotee practiced various austerities with considerable diligence for many years and finally acquired the power to walk on water. But actually a devotee (one who spends the same amount of time in practicing Shabd), who crosses the river in a boat by spending a trifling sum and conserving his spiritual powers, is far superior. The labor expended during many years in achieving the power to walk on water is without any actual spiritual value.

Love is the true austerity which bestows humility, teaches us to remain in the Mauj (Will) of the Beloved, and removes the attention from worldly pleasures and pains. Such a mind does not waver and is always fixed in the Beloved. If such a person were to face difficulties or troubles, he would bear them without complaint, for he remembers only the Beloved in his heart, and he creates a new world of love around himself. He is not attracted by the outer world nor affected by its troubles. In addition to this, the spiritual secrets are disclosed within him and he comes nearer to God-Realization.

Such a happy state of love is the possession of a rare devotee. This love is sweet and has attractive powers. When it is achieved, all other attractions are burnt up, and

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only the Name of God remains in the heart of the devotee. This love is a bright flame in which everything is consumed except the Beloved.

Actually, when the fire of love is fully kindled, nothing remains in the devotee, because everything is consumed by the flame of true love.

Love is the Basis of All Activity

All activities, religions and repetitions or remembrances are based on love. It is a true and beautiful ornament which decorates the soul.

Oh my mother! The love in my heart is my daily activity, is my prayer, and is also the True Ram Naam (Name of God). (Adi Granth)

The bride (soul) has bedecked herself with ornaments, viz., the necklace of virtuous qualities, the bindi (dot on the forehead) of love, and the jewels of spiritual knowledge. (Adi Granth)

Love is True Prayer

Love is the true prayer to God. By this kind of prayer the lover is so intoxicated with the ecstasy of love that he cannot even walk with steadiness and staggers. When the flame of love is kindled in his heart, his eyes light up with happiness and joy, and he thrills to the rapturous currents of ecstasy. Such a state of intoxication in the remembrance of the Lord is far better than thousands of other methods of trying to reach Him.

By repeating the Name of the Lord only once, love is felt in every cell of the devotee's body.

In other words, it (repetition) comes from the heart, and

tears flow from the eyes in an unending stream.

If you wish to go to Kaaba (the highest place of Muslim pilgrimage), you should go by the path of tears in your eyes. Then you will reach that place in no time. Fasting without devotion and prayer, without tears, will not bear fruit.

Prayers without tears, the counting of beads without melting of the heart, repetition (of the Name of God) without love, reading Scriptures without devotion, are all roads leading towards the door of God. However, in these activities there is no devotion in the heart, not any tears in the eyes, and the road is naturally dry and endless. But if one's heart is drenched with tears of love flowing from the eyes, communion with God is attained much sooner.

Love is the true form of worship of God. Without it, knowledge and contemplation are useless, and he who remains without love is unable to inculcate within himself the secrets of achieving God-Realization. Prayer and meditation without love will not achieve the desired results, even if performed for years. So long as a person does not kindle the spark of love within himself, he remains without the secret knowledge of God.

Various methods are practiced with the aim of attaining communion with the Lord: repetition or remembrance, austerities, devotion, detachment, knowledge, the practice of yoga and many others.

But true love is a much higher and nobler observance than any one of these. The very basis of all these methods is love. Without love, no method or its practice will take a person to the Court of the Lord. Without love, yogic practices are as good – perhaps as bad – as a disease, because

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one cannot succeed by such methods.

Guru Arjan says:

Repetition, austerities, pleasures, comforts, arrogance, fame – all these should be sacrificed at the altar of Love, even if only for a second.

Maulana Rumi says:

That eye is fortunate which sheds pearls of tears in the remembrance of its Beloved. That heart is fortunate which is burning in separation from its Lord, because every spell of remorse is accompanied by a unique happiness. A person whose only aim is towards this end is the most fortunate one.

Just as rain is a blessing for the earth and enables it to produce multicolored flowers and beautiful shrubs and trees, in the same manner when tears from the eyes fall on the earth of the heart, the buds of the secrets of the knowledge of God burst into blossoms. The path of love is therefore the highest, so much so that God Himself is love.

Love is the life and spirit of all practices. No practice can be beneficial without love. Love is a force that has no equal, and its praise is sung in the Vedas, Puranas and other religious Scriptures. All Saints, Sages, Fakirs, Incarnations and evolved souls such as Guru Nanak, Kabir, Tulsi Sahib, Swami Ji, Shamas-i-Tabriz, etc., were worshippers at the altar of love, because it is the easiest and the shortest path leading to communion with God.

Through love alone can God be realized. Guru Gobind Singh says:

I am telling the truth to you all and you should listen to me with

attentive ears. Whosoever has practiced love has achieved communion with God.

Tulsi Sahib says:

Whosoever has loved has found God. Nobody has succeeded in achieving this end without love.

He further says:

A holy person, a thief, a robber – all try to remember God; but He cannot be pleased without the spark of love.

Kabir Sahib says:

A yogi, a celibate, an ascetic, a philosopher – none amongst them is able to realize God without love, because the region of Satguru is the most difficult to approach.

All austerities and practices are empty without love. Knowledge and contemplation in themselves are also unsuccessful efforts, but all these practices are performed only to inculcate love. If there is no love, then all meditations are dry and useless.

Love is the most powerful and effective of all practices to meet the Lord. It is the only method by which one can attain communion with Him in an instant. Shamas-i-Tabrez says:

If the road is lengthy, you should fly on the wings of love. When you unfold the wings of love, you need not ascend by means of the steps.

He further states:

You should ride on the steed of love and go forward without fear,

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because that steed is very swift. The path may have ups and downs, but it will take you to your Goal in no time at all.

Love is Higher than Religion, Rituals, etc.

The state of love is much higher than that of religion, rituals, etc. A person who is intoxicated with the wine of love will reach the goal by means of a single sigh, as compared to thousands of years spent in other methods.

Who can understand the waves of ecstasy that arise in the heart of a person intoxicated with Love? Only he can taste this, who has himself trodden the path. A heart devoid of love cannot understand this.

One Has to Dedicate His Life, Bravely and Quietly in True Love

True love is like a fathomless ocean which has no shores, and there is no help for anyone overwhelmed by such love unless he sacrifices his own life. Hafiz says:

You must go on burning in sorrow and pain and you must not resort to any treatment for this condition, for there is no remedy for this pain. It is a burning longing for communion with the Beloved, and for this there is no remedy.

Just as life is not possible without breath similarly a lover's life exists only in his beloved. The lover is always unhappy in the love for his beloved, and sacrifices himself like a moth that flies into the flame as soon as it sees a spark of fire. Hafiz says:

When the Emperor of love presented a robe to me, the meaning of the gift was very clearly explained to me in the following language: 'Oh Hafiz! Be careful. You must remain quiet because this is not the path of the talkative. It is the path on which one has to merge

oneself in love and become love itself.

Again, Hafiz says:

Have patience in your heart, for so long as you do not sacrifice your life on this path, you cannot travel up to your Beloved.

Love is the Path of Surrender and Sacrifice

In love there is no law except the Will of the Beloved. Whatever the Beloved orders or commands, the lover bows his head in obedience. A wealthy man cannot dream of his own commands in the state of love, where one must undertake to be humble and agree to be subservient. Ego and love cannot remain together. Kabir says:

*If you wish to taste the Nectar of Love, you cannot be arrogant.
Two swords cannot be contained in one scabbard.*

A lover prefers to be wounded by the arrows of love than to wound another person with them. Love knows only how to give, its principal characteristic being the surrender of one's life and breath. Love does not know how to command. A lover considers it to be his good fortune when he is bound by the commands of others.

Real love removes the lover from the worries of pleasure and pain, praise and blame, poverty and wealth, and takes him beyond all such limitations. Love enters every cell of the lover and gives him unlimited power, so that he is never in need of wealth or fame, or honor or name. He has no desire for this world or the next. He is freed from the web of heaven and hell. He is no longer tempted into the snares of rituals or worldly ties.

To demand worldly conveniences from God is to sep-

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arate oneself from the aims of love. Not to remain in His Will, nor to be contented in happiness or even in pain is to fall down from the heights of devotion. A lover loves only the Beloved, and the Beloved is the be-all and end-all for him. He sees only the light of his Beloved in this world and in the sky above. The Beloved is his real world. Nearness to the Beloved is his heaven, and being away from the Beloved is his hell.

Only the Name and praises of his Beloved are on his tongue – nothing else. The repetition of the same Name is never-ceasing, and sighs of separation when the Beloved is farther away from him are wrung from his body as well as his heart. He asks for nothing from the Beloved except the Beloved and longs to surrender himself entirely to the wishes of the Beloved. In the ecstasy of his love and in his complete surrender, he considers poverty or wealth, pain or pleasure, health or illness, and whatever else may happen as gifts from the Beloved. He feels no difference between pleasure and pain. By the Grace of love he rises above these things and remains above the limitations of the body.

Real love demands complete surrender. Not only this, but one must be happy in the happiness of the Beloved, and must not wish to go beyond the Will of the Beloved. To him all worldly things are dead, and he leaves them for the persons hankering after them. He shatters the glass of his own intellect and remains only in the Will of the Beloved. He has only one aim, and that is the remembrance of the Beloved. His life is spent in the Will of the Beloved. He wishes for neither happiness nor sorrow, but is contented in His Will. If a misfortune comes to him, he forgets the pain of that misfortune. People of the world, at one time or another, make demands from God.

But a lover asks for the Beloved and nothing else.
Sheikh Sa'adi says:

People tell me to demand something from my Beloved, but I shall demand only Him from Him – nothing more.

Similarly, a disciple bows his head to the Will of his Master in the same way that a dead body lies inert like a mound of earth, without any will of its own. In such a state, one receives the highest type of spiritual wealth. Another Saint says:

One who has been wounded by the sharp sword of surrender and sacrifice receives every minute fresh life from the secret power of God.

Bhai Gur Das says:

No one has become a disciple by mere lip service. A disciple's will should be like that of a dead person. He should move as he is moved, work as he is desired to work, and should not work against His Will.

We cannot have communion with our Beloved so long as we do not remove our attention from worldly desires and do not go beyond the limitations of our own mind. Love is beyond all limitations. One reaches it only after shedding the dross of mind and intellect. A devotee sees the Light of his Beloved only when he forgets himself in the ecstasy of love. Then he sees Him everywhere.

The madness of a lover's ecstasy brings before his eyes a new world which is beyond this physical region and beyond the region of mind, and he takes every word of the Beloved as a sweet command. To live in Him is the highest and sweetest elixir. It is even dearer than life. The

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current of love takes one beyond good and evil, belief and unbelief, to a state so sublime that it cannot be described. One who is intoxicated in this unique state of bliss – in which any thought of separation or communion is lost – becomes an embodiment of love.

Real love will not permit one to follow one's own bent of mind. Real love is another name for implicitly following the desires of the Beloved and desiring only to please Him by remaining in His Will. In such a state one does not consider his own comforts or discomforts, but effaces his own self for the comfort and convenience of the Beloved. He feels a rare and special bliss or happiness, so great even in discomforts that the people of the world cannot begin to imagine them.

This does not mean that it is the lover only who suffers. The Beloved suffers much more for the sake of the lover. The moth burns only once and is free from all pain, but the flame burns all the time.

In love, one must sacrifice one's own possessions and forget the self completely. A spark of real love is eternal, and by it the self or ego is completely consumed or obliterated. Physically, the lover may appear to be suffering, but inwardly he feels a higher type of happiness which no one else can realize.

Real love turns poison into nectar, fire into ice, snakes into garlands of flowers, pain into pleasure, and blame into praise. To a lover, to be flayed alive is no more than a child's play, for to him, it is simply like removing a garment. It is nothing for him to go to the scaffold smiling and to sacrifice his life. These are all considered blessings in the arena of love. How can anybody describe or understand this? Kabir says:

Oh Kabir! Death, of which the whole world is afraid, brings happiness to my mind, for real bliss can be attained only by death.

Love is the Path of Sacrifice

There is no question of gaining anything in love. It is not something that can be bought in a grocer's shop. Love is a matter of giving, and not of taking. Surrender your body, mind, life, beliefs – then only will you know the bliss of walking in the precincts of love. Sarmad says:

I gave my body, I gave my life, and also gave my beliefs. The whole world is entangled in these things, but all these entanglements have been removed from me. What greater blessing could anyone wish for?

Mind, body and wealth are placed before my Master, and my very life is sold to Him for the sake of His love. (Adi Granth)

One should happily lose his life (give up the ego) in this path and should not expect anything in return. Khusro says:

Oh heart, you should be happy because you will be slain tomorrow in the bazaar of love, but there is no guarantee that you will see the Beloved.

Where there is love, there is no thought of personal gain. Both cannot be together. When the body is dyed in the hue of love, it is cleansed of all evils and desires. (Maulana Rumi)

Kabir says:

Love does not grow on trees. Love is not sold in the market. On this path the poor and the rich are on the same level. Whosoever surrenders himself, gains thereby.

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In the path of love we have to destroy our ego. We have to leave pride behind us. The Beloved cannot be met unless one is completely devoid of these qualities. Maulana Rum says:

One cannot reach the Court of the Lord so long as he does not lose himself. One can start with the ABC in the school of love only after he has removed his 'self'. Only that person can understand the beginning of treading towards this path who has been wounded by the arrows of love. Those who intend to travel on the path of love should heed my message, viz. that they can tread it only if they have completely lost their self.

True Love is Not for Weaklings

Love is a beautiful ocean of nectar. Once a person dived into it, he receives eternal life. In this world people talk about love in one form or the other, and everybody desires to inculcate love in himself, but the real path of love is the most difficult one. It is not for those who insist on a life of ease and comfort. It is only for those who are prepared to sacrifice their life. Those who wish to follow this path go towards it with their head (ego) on the palms of their hands. Hafiz says:

To go toward the Beloved is not the work of ease-loving people. To enter into this profession of love is the work of Saints who are always in a state of ecstasy and are not concerned with the worries of this world. To love is not the work of weaklings and cowards. Only the brave and strong-minded can enter it.

To take to the path of love is not the work of ordinary people. Only these who are fearless and who are prepared to sacrifice their very lives can do so. Cowards cannot approach it. The Lord of love is very high and it is not possible for weaklings to gain access to His Court. So long

as we do not sacrifice our head at the altar of our Beloved, we cannot succeed on the path of love. Hafiz says:

The least condition that love demands is the surrender of one's head (ego). If you are not able to do this, you should go away and not even talk of love.

Kabir says:

The cup of love can be enjoyed only by those who are prepared to sacrifice their head (ego). It is not the work of a greedy person who is not capable of sacrificing himself. His talk of love is only superficial.

Kabir further states:

Love is not an easy thing. Only he can enter the abode of love, who is prepared to leave his head on the ground. Not only should he place his head on the ground but he should also step on it. If one can do this, he is ready to tread the path of love; for then alone will he be able to taste the elixir of love.

This means, in other words, that when the soul is concentrated at the eye-center, it is supposed to have entered the home of love, and only then is it able to taste love's unique elixir. Kabir says:

This is not the home of your aunty (mother's sister). It is the home of love. You can enter it only after you put your head on the ground and step on it. Kabir says: If you can do this then you may enter, for this is the home of love, the indescribable path – high above – and you can come near it only if you are able to cut off your head and put your foot on it (completely surrender yourself).

Another Saint, Nag di Das, speaks in a similar vein:

Only those who are able to cut off their head (banish their ego) and

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step on it are able to enter the garden of love.

On this path one has to sacrifice his very life. It will be better if you give it to your Beloved. Otherwise, one day, the Angel of Death is sure to take it away. Why not do it yourself?

Love knows only how to give. One has to abandon all desires and to leave all power and fame, and has to become the slave of someone. Such is love. To achieve true love is to lose one's self completely in love. One has to awaken in one's Beloved and completely merge in God. That is love. It is a work of sacrifice and surrender. To meet the Beloved is very difficult, because one has to bargain for this path with one's own head. Guru Sahib says:

If you are fond of playing the game of love, come to my lane with your head on the palm of your hand. You should travel on this path only if you are prepared to surrender yourself and claim nothing.

The Path of Love is Difficult

The path of love appears to be quite easy, but it is as difficult as Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga or the path of Vedanta. In order to travel any one of these paths, it is necessary to efface one's self.

How very difficult it is to please anybody in this world. Man tries hard to do so but is not always successful. How much more difficult it is for him to please God!

The path of love is as sharp and as narrow as the edge of a sword. There is room for only one to tread on it. Here God and the devotee have to become one, and the least waver or negligence on the part of the devotee will cause his downfall. Therefore, only the strong-willed can follow

this path with the support of God and the Master and by surrendering themselves at all times into the lap of the Beloved. Such fortunate devotees are guided at every step and cannot fall.

Love is Not the Work of the Greedy or the Conscience-Sellers

Love is a pure emotion. Everybody cannot obtain it. Those who are given to worldly pleasures only waste their lives in enjoying transitory pleasures and remain devoid of the true wealth.

Sarmad says:

God does not bestow the pangs of love on those who are lost in worldly greed. How can a bee realize the burning sensation of a moth which loses its life the moment it sees a light? It takes a long time to meet the Beloved, for the treasure of love cannot be given to everybody.

Jami Sahib says:

The pangs of love for the Beloved cannot be obtained by everybody in this world. This treasure is only for those who are living for it alone.

Love cannot be gained without devotion to a Master. A worldly man cannot understand it. Only those who have one-pointed attention can share it; that is, those whose mind and heart are one, and who have faith and devotion. A person who is prepared to sell his conscience or, in other words, to deceive himself, cannot drink from the cup of love. To tread the path of love is the work of those resolute souls who will not turn back no matter what may befall them. They alone can meet the Beloved. But those

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who have only shallow pangs of separation fall down long before they are able to reach the Goal.

Love is the Path of a Madman

This is not the place for vain arguments and discussions. Hafiz says:

So long as your mind is spread out in cleverness and knowledge, you will not be able to know the real Truth. I wish to give you one piece of good advice. You should not admire yourself, but destroy your ego so that you may attain freedom.

He further states:

Do not try to search for the pearl of love in schools. If you desire to find it, you should go beyond them. You should hide your heart in the locks of your Beloved's hair, and become totally oblivious of the world. In other words, you should remain in a state of ecstasy in the contemplation of your Beloved, for the arguments of your intellect will be harmful in the path of love.

Again, he says:

The path of love is full of innumerable dangers. The first requisite is that you should leave your intellect behind.

The Influence of Love

Love itself is the beginning and the end. It is a pure emanation of God's current, which enters the heart of a pure person and spreads its influence all round, thus purifying the entire area. The heart of a lover is pure, and at the same time those who have the opportunity of meeting him cannot escape his purifying influence. If one comes across such pure souls, his heart is so greatly influenced that he feels as if purity has entered into him from head to foot.

Love is not worldly or material. It is divine. If you see two hearts sacrificing their very existence at the altar of love, you should understand that they are vessels filled with divine influence. By their mere touch, even withered hearts become fresh and are renewed. You cannot conceal it.

Even if the tongue does not speak, the eyes reveal it by the tears that fill them. Kabir says:

Try hard to conceal love. But it cannot be concealed once it has taken hold of a person. Even if one does not talk about it, the eyes disclose it.

The refreshing rainfall comes from the sky, but when the eyes of two lovers meet, they are flooded with tears of love. It takes time for a Swanti drop to turn into a pearl, but the water oozing from loving eyes flows like a string of shining pearls. The dryness within is removed and one's entire being is refreshed from head to foot.

Just as milk and water become one when mixed, the two loving hearts blend themselves into divine union with the water of love. It is then difficult for them to be separate entities. Love is true. It contains no deceit and no superficiality. Coming under its influence, two hearts unite into one in such a manner that one cannot detect any difference between them. Then one is not able to find out who is the disciple and who the Master, who is the lover and who the Beloved. The curtain of duality is removed. The lover and the Beloved become one.

You are me, I am you. You are body, I am the life. Let nobody say hereafter that I and you are different.

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If I am the body, you are the life. If I am the life, you are the body. You have surrendered your heart to me. I have surrendered my heart to you. Two bodies now have one life and one emotion. This is the ideal of love. How can a third person realize it!

Love is a sword by which two lovers combine into one. The lover adores the Beloved to such an extent that he becomes his very self. It is said that Radha was so deeply engrossed in her love that she considered herself as Lord Krishna. In this state of rapture she would ask her friends if they had seen Radha anywhere. This type of union has also been described by Bulleh Shah, as being a characteristic of Heer.

I have been crying, 'Ranja, Ranja' and I have become Ranja. Please do not call me Heer anymore, because I am now Ranja.

Dadu says:

Real love is that in which a lover transforms himself into the Beloved, and on such lovers even God showers His Grace.

When love produces this condition in one's heart, he needs no meditation, prayer or any spiritual effort, because love is the real meditation, is the real prayer, is the real union. A true lover is a real believer in the oneness of God and is a true discerner of the jewel of His non-duality. But this does not convey the correct meaning. Actually he himself becomes the very embodiment of His attributes.

True union and one-pointed attention come only with love. The spiritual progress achieved by means of meditation over a number of years can be had in a moment through love, because the union of inner sight takes the lover immediately to the goal. This is real love and this is true yoga. In fact, this is the be-all and end-all. This should

be our aim. This should be our goal, and this should be our fast, our prayers, our meditation and everything else. You should therefore kindle the light of love within you and burn away the rut of repeating mantras, performing austerities, etc.

The value of a man's life is greatly enhanced by love, for the influence of love is unique. It lifts a man from the state of being a mere nothing to the celestial heights. Maulana Rumi says:

With love, even bitter things become sweet, brass is turned into gold, and everything that is soiled becomes clean. With the pain of love in one's heart, love itself becomes the remedy for it. Thorns then give the same pleasure and fragrance as would beautiful flowers. Under the influence of love even the peevish temperament, which is as sour as vinegar, turns into a sweet intoxicant as that of wine. People become as smooth as oil, as soft as wax, even if they were as hard as iron.

By love, poison becomes nectar, and a tiger is turned into a harmless mouse. Disease turns into a blessing, and tyranny into mercy. The dead are even brought to life, and kings become slaves by means of love.

Love is an intense light which shows us the way of spirituality. A person is blind without love. He is also lifeless, and a dead body is no more than food for beasts.

Love Eliminates All Worries

The object of love is to lose oneself in the identity of the Beloved. True love is continuously on the increase and always radiates its fragrance. It never wanes. Bulleh Shah says:

The spring of love is always fresh.

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The devotee becomes true and pure through love. In him there is sympathy and there is love, by means of which he achieves the realization of union (with God). Love is an alchemy which turns simple folk into spiritual gods. Love is the remedy for all ills. It removes all pain and sorrow.

By means of love the dirt of the mind is washed away, and the soul shines forth in its own light and becomes worthy of meeting the Lord. The intoxication of love removes all dross and helps the soul to rise and travel upwards through the (super-conscious) spiritual regions.

The Reward of Love

The flame of love is lit within a few fortunate devotees. As soon as it is kindled, all dross is burnt away, that is, the devotee becomes pure and clean internally, and can then see the Light and hear the Shabd (Word or Sound Current) of God within himself.

One who desires to achieve communion with the Almighty Father should first of all wash the dirt from his mind with the water of love. The bandage of ego should be removed from our eyes, because then alone it is possible for us to see the Lord. And this bandage can be removed only by emptying ourselves of everything except the remembrance of the Beloved. No thought of any kind should be allowed to enter between the devotee and the object of his devotion.

Love is so exalting that it takes us beyond the conception of good and evil, and completely merges us into the Beloved. Muinuddin Chishti says:

There is no evil. There is no good. I am so absorbed in the form of my Beloved that He has become my form within me and I have become His form. We two have become one.

How very fortunate is the devotee who sacrifices himself in the fire of love, and thereby destroys his ego and meets the Lord. So long as one does not lose himself, he cannot see the Lord. If you wish to purchase God, you have to sell yourself to Him.

One who is devoid of love is imprisoned within the circle of selfishness. His life is worse than that of a beast, for he is caught in the net of selfishness and is blinded with the arrogance of his own ego. He is a prisoner within the limitations of his own self. He can see nothing beyond himself.

Love is essential for attaining God-Realization. That is why true seekers always ask God only for His love and nothing else. Maulana Rumi says:

The attraction of God's love is more intense than any other attraction. It is the attraction of the devotee for the Beloved, and this is also the key that enables one to unlock the secrets of God.

The scattered attention cannot be concentrated without love and it is not possible to enter the spiritual regions. So long as the soul does not go up, one remains ignorant of the knowledge of the spiritual regions.

Therefore, in order to achieve true knowledge, it is essential for one to love a True Master. It follows that without devotion to a True Master, we shall remain devoid of the realization of the nearness to God. True knowledge cannot be attained by intellect. It is to be perceived by the soul. In order to achieve God-Realization, we necessarily

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have to devote ourselves to a True Master.

There is no such thing as caste and creed in love. A lover cannot hate anyone, and whosoever has even a slight remembrance of God is very dear to Him. Lord Rama ate fruits which were half eaten by a low-caste woman. Devotion is not attained so long as there is in the mind any question of caste and creed, high and low.

There is no law in love. There is no knowledge of any outside activity, for the mind is occupied in love to such an extent that even the days of the week are erased from the memory.

Kabir Sahib says:

Wherever there is love there is no formality. There is neither intellectual nor professional status. As soon as the mind becomes absorbed in love the idea of dates and days of the week completely disappears from memory.

It is by the magic of love alone that a lover removes the covering of his pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow, knowledge and ignorance. In love, gain or loss are equal.

Love and Intellect

There is a vast difference between intellect and heart. It is as great as the distance between the earth and the heavens. Knowledge is connected with a person's intellect and is of a restless nature. It tries to take a person towards cleverness, and establishes a stronghold of selfishness in him. But the heart is connected with the inner currents emanating from a place where love and devotion are generated.

In the path of spirituality the heart is more effective than the brain. Intellect merely brings light, but the power of spirituality is produced in the heart. Intellect is the cause of one's attention being scattered out into the world; but love removes us from this completely, by the concentration of attention.

The display of knowledge is a type of exercise for the brain, and its result is ego, anger, hatred and lack of faith. Love is another name for true affection. Pure love is essential in the development of spirituality.

When the heart is pure, God immediately attracts it towards Himself. If we have love for the Beloved, we shall certainly be attracted towards the object of our love. In our present state the world is our beloved. Love for wife and for children has completely captivated our hearts, and we are no better than their prisoners.

If one worries about himself and his possessions, and loves and longs for wealth, heaven, and the like, how can he – a man of the world – attain God-Realization? So long as the dust of worldly desires is not removed from our heart, how can our Beloved attract us towards Him?

While living in this world one may give all his possessions to his relatives, friends, wife and children, but should not give his heart to anybody. The heart is the property of God, and one should not be false to this sacred trust. One should keep his heart for the True Beloved, and may give away everything else that he has.

There is a unique type of ecstasy in love which cannot be experienced by men of intellect. If people of the world were to know that the heart becomes extremely happy when it is drowned in the ocean of love, then many intel-

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lectuals would run after it in order to be tied down by the chords of love.

A man's intellect is limited. It cannot see beyond the world and its objects. Only true love can reach beyond these bounds, because love transcends all limitations and sees things which an intellectual cannot conceive of, even in his dreams. Shamas-i-Tabrez has described the difference between knowledge and love in the following words:

Knowledge says that the world is scattered in all the six directions – north, south, east, west, above and below – and that there is no path leading beyond this. Love says, 'There is a path and I have been on it many times'. A lover may be full of troubles, but in his mind there is always a surging wave of joy for the Beloved.

The intellectuals of the world spend their lives in groping the dark, which is full of worldly worries.

The human intellect says that there is nothing beyond this body or physical life. It is followed by death and nothing else. The path of love is full of the thorns of troubles, and one should not tread that path under any circumstances.

But love says, 'Thorns there may be, but there are also life-giving flowers on that path. In love, one goes beyond this body, because then only can one find the life eternal. Therefore, do not be afraid of the thorns of this apparent death.'

Shamas-i-Tabrez further states:

The intellectual cleverness is an impediment on the path towards God-Realization. You should free yourself from it, and then the path will be clear.

Knowledge may appear to be attractive, and its attractions also appear to be pleasing to the heart, but it is like a thick covering over

the soul and life, and the path of spirituality is hidden. You cannot unravel the way to this path with your intellect. When you disengage your heart and your life from the grasp of the intellect, then only will this path become easy for you.

Again, from Shamas-i-Tabrez:

Whosoever has become a slave of the love of God is a real emperor of great fortune. You should close your mouth like that of an oyster. You should not speak; otherwise, this very tongue of yours will be the enemy of your life.

When a person receives the secret of love and is intoxicated with it, then only will he know its depth and will no longer need the help of intellect and cleverness. Hafiz says:

You should become so mad in the intoxication of love that others may be worried about you. On the other hand, the increase of intellect and knowledge in you will bring a corresponding increase in your worries.

There is no greater remedy than the madness of love. By means of this madness (ecstasy) you should transcend all worldly ties. Some people lose faith in their beloved because of their shallow knowledge, but have you ever seen a man lose faith on account of his madness (ecstasy)?

If pain and worry have increased, then you must become love-mad, because by this madness the pain will decrease. Some people run from this world into the wilderness on account of worldly worries; but if they were to drink deep from the cup of the madness of love they would be without worries even in this very world.

The whole world, whether a king or a beggar, is with-

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out this ecstasy of madness. But the few who are in this state of rapture are happy in this world. If you can find the wings of the ecstasy of madness you will ascend into the heavens above, as did Christ. This ecstasy of love opens up for us hundreds of gates of the secrets of spirituality.

On the spiritual path there is room only for lovers. Here cleverness is of no use. Clever people have no respect or regard for others, and are not better than a particle of dust. They are not fit for this path.

Intellect, which is considered to be of the highest value in this world, hangs on the scaffold of a lover like a thief. People who are considered highly intellectual and of great knowledge in this world are perishable, and suffer from the disease of worldly obstacles in the eyes of a lover.

Swami Ji says:

In the eyes of a devotee who goes up to the spiritual regions, people who have only intellect and knowledge are considered to be ignorant.

Hundreds of thousands of clever acts and intellectual acrobatics are responsible for our ties to this world. And not one of them is the least bit of help to us in meeting the Lord. (Jap Ji)

Love is not to be found in self-appraisal, nor in knowledge or pages of books. The kind of love that is commonly understood by the world has nothing to do with the path of real lovers. True lovers give up the limited knowledge inherent in man and become free from greed and avarice. Real lovers, who have fully imbibed the effects of love, say that they have passed thousands of miles beyond the dirt of worldly knowledge and the

intellect.

True lovers say that you may be as learned as Socrates, but we will have nothing to do with you. Your path is different, and you must go your own way. Our path is the Name of God and we cannot join hands with you. (Shamas-i-Tabrez)

Without the help and guidance of a Master, the soul is unable to reach the goal of love. Limited knowledge and intellect alone cannot reach the place where only ecstasy and madness of love can go. The heart of a lover cannot be trapped by the net of the body and physical attractions, because it has already reached a place which is nameless, limitless and beyond the reach of matter. (Shamas-i-Tabrez)

The souls of such lovers of God find His Abode in the spiritual regions, far above, where the Negative Power and Illusion do not exist and cannot ensnare them into their net. Swami Ji says:

Masters came into this world and turned the souls of their devotees from crows into swans. They have the power of attracting lovers towards themselves, and for such lovers the Negative Power becomes helpless. The Masters have given us an Abode which is indescribable. I am unable to praise its greatness.

Hafiz also says:

Oh, Negative Power, be gone! You should spread your net somewhere else, because my home is now much higher.

A Master is the King of lovers of God. He has pitchers full of the Elixir of Spirituality for releasing people from the bonds of limited knowledge and the intellect. Whenever a person of high attainments, be he a philosopher like Socrates or a physician like Luqman, comes to the Master in search of Truth, the Master makes him as innocent as a child by giving him a glimpse of Himself, full of the light of Spiritual Knowledge, and He fills such a one with the

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currents of the intoxication of love. Then all limited knowledge and argument is destroyed, and the mind is no longer confused.

A Master is like the huma bird, and on whomever his shadow falls, even the lowliest of the low becomes a spiritual king. (Shamas-i-Tabrez)

The limitations of knowledge, as this world knows it, are the foundation of all our worries. Under the influence of the intellect, one is always drowned in mental worries and whirlpools of thoughts to such an extent that the heart becomes practically lifeless. A cold heart does not have the ability to love, for which a warm heart is essential. Shamas-i-Tabrez says:

Man receives life energy by plunging into love. A heart which does not possess life and energy cannot reach the gates of love. Who is alive? Only those who have been born into love. If the current of love is blown into dead hearts, even they will receive life forever, and such a heart never dies.

It is necessary for a lover to have a beloved. Love is entirely dependent upon this essential factor. In the religion of lovers, it is considered sacrilegious to be away from the Beloved even for a single moment.

Love is another name for attaching the heart to the Beloved. It is not a child's play. Only those of sterling worth, who are free from the ties of the world, and who are fearless, can become lovers. It is the work of one who is free from all worldly desires, and who is able to keep his mind clear of the dirt of duality. When the leaven of love begins to act, then a lover cannot turn his attention towards any object except the Beloved. He will have nothing to do with anybody except his own Beloved – the Master. His heart does not jump from one branch of the world to another.

He remains absorbed in the love of his Master by freeing himself from all other thoughts.

He is tied to the apron strings of his Master, and in such a state the wings of intellect and worry cannot flutter. (Shamas-i-Tabrez)

Love is the most effective means of taking one to his Beloved. There is no comparison between lovers and people who are steeped in the limitations of the intellect. The intellect cannot reach up to the condition of love.

Khwaja Farid-ud-din Attar has very aptly compared love with finite knowledge and has described the influence of both of them in the following words:

What does love accomplish? It causes the drop to become an ocean, the soul to merge into the Lord, and the lover to become oblivious of the two worlds. Love is an experience through which the soul awakens into the Lord and becomes free from all attachments and worldly ties. It is another name for the annihilation of one's ego and for union with God.

The knowledge of a person, which is limited, can see only the superficial causes, but love calls out, 'Do not lay eyes on these superficial causes'. The human intellect says that one should search for good in this world and the next, but love says, 'Do not search for anything except God.'

Man's limited knowledge compels him to achieve worldly status and to make material progress, but love teaches one to efface even one's own self. Intellect wants us to search for the remedy of all ills and to experience all pleasures, but love orders us to seek the pain of separation. God has created this world and the next, out of love.

The way of finite knowledge and the way of love are different. The former scatters one through the desires of the mind, while the latter teaches one to concentrate on

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one object only. The former asks you to see the world and fill your mind with the different kinds of knowledge that exist in the world; but the latter says that the Beloved is the fountain of all knowledge, and that you should dance attendance in the lane of love and concentrate on Him within yourself. The former persuades you to associate with your friends and companions; but the latter warns you to remain away from friends who would lead you astray from your Beloved.

Intellect goads you to achieve a high status in this world and to become a leader of your country or creed; but love says,

Sit in a lonely corner and be happy in the remembrance of the Lord of all regions.

Limited knowledge asks you to acquire intellectual superiority and proficiency in the arts; but love wishes only to take you on the path where the soul is truly enraptured in Divine Ecstasy. The human intellect considers it impossible to meet and see the Lord, because intellect is limited. But love beholds to its heart's content, His manifestation in both the worlds.

Due to their limited knowledge, the majority of the people do not believe that there could be a Living Master in the world today. But love says,

You should remove the bandage of ignorance and selfishness from your eyes. Then only will you see not one but many Perfect Masters. It is due to our own faulty mind and intellect that we fail to meet a Perfect Master.

Intellect believes that comfort and happiness in this world are entirely due to wealth. But love says that real

happiness is in concentration and stability of heart, and one should not run after the worthless treasures of the world.

The human intellect goads us to remain in comfort and to pamper ourselves; but love says,

Sacrifice your head and your dear life to your Beloved.

At most, the intellect will take you to the pleasures of heaven. But love says that to ask for anything except the Beloved, or to desire anything else, is the cause of misery, pain and sorrow. Therefore, one should never desire anything else.

Ordinary mortals consider lovers to be mad and call in physicians to diagnose their ailment; but the lover says that he is active and intelligent through the help of his Master, and prays to his Beloved to remove the limited understanding of the ordinary mortals,

Oh my Beloved! Please take them out of this darkness of ignorance.

Does this mean that knowledge and intellect have no merit? All Saints and holy men teach the people of the world through their discourses. They differentiate between truth and untruth by intellectual reasoning. If that is the case, then how is it that knowledge described above is depicted in such disparaging terms?

Limited knowledge cannot see beyond the physical self and keeps one devoid of love for the Beloved. A man may be very learned and also highly intellectual, but he cannot reach the gate of the Beloved by mere learning. So long as he does not merge himself in the Lord, who is all love, he cannot be successful, and his intellect will beguile him

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towards the wrong path. If, however, knowledge is used without the negative influence of the intellect, then it can be free from its limitations and dross. Otherwise, one will always remain submerged in sensual pleasures. But one can have communion with God, who is omniscient, if the mind and senses are under the control of knowledge. Such a state can be achieved only by one who is guided by a Living Master. Then he really meets his Beloved.

Hazrat Mohammed Sahib says:

One small particle of such a knowledge – knowledge of virtue and of a Master – is better than fasting and prayers. A person who has this type of knowledge is my life, and his soul would give its fragrance to my life. But those who are without this type of intellect are fools. You should keep away from them, because it is fools of this kind who are responsible for so much bloodshed. You should endeavor to make your intellect One with His. Then your mind will no longer be scattered and, through concentration, you will be able to know the inner secrets of God.

A man should not be guided by his limited knowledge, but should seek guidance from the All- Wise, because his limited knowledge is the cause of his perverted intellect. The All-Wise is capable of giving true Light. Limited knowledge keeps one scattered in the darkness and entangled in worldly activities, and like a snake or a scorpion continually injects into him the poison of Illusion.

A human being is superior to a beast because his intellect is capable of discerning between good and evil. This power of discernment is essential for every human being, because through it he can clearly distinguish the difference between Truth and untruth. Guru Nanak says:

The life of those who sell the Name of God by writing it on paper,

is unworthy. If the crops are withered, the storehouse for them will be of no use.

No one can reach the Court of the Lord without true and real effort. If we are destroying our knowledge in useless discussions and arguments, we cannot be called truly intelligent beings. We should contemplate and think of the Master with discrimination, because by this means alone can we achieve Grace in His court. We should carefully try to understand the meaning underlying the writings of wise and noble men and thoroughly consider them in all of their aspects. When convinced that the path of spirituality is the right path, only then should we follow it and in good faith. This is the only way to tread the path of God and spirituality.

Except for this, all other paths lead one towards the Negative Power.

Detestable is the life of those who sell the Lord's Name for a livelihood. If one's crops are destroyed, of what use is the storehouse for them? No one can receive honor in the Court of the Lord unless he works for the Truth with Devotion (without any thought of reward).

Knowledge which is wasted in discussion is not the real knowledge. But if one serves the Lord with true wisdom, then he also receives honor along with it. It is through knowledge alone that one can understand what one reads and can discriminate while giving charity. Oh Nanak! This is the True Path. All else is the path of the Negative Power. (Guru Nanak)

It is, however, necessary to develop love in order to achieve contact with the Truth and merge in it. The soul is a particle of God, and its inherent quality is love. Knowledge or learning is necessary only to be convinced that the path of spirituality is the one to follow. When one has

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been able to distinguish the difference between Truth and untruth, the need for knowledge no longer exists. Intellect is necessary only to help us in selecting the path which will enable us to merge in the Truth.

Learning and intellect are our guides only in the beginning but after we are convinced which is the right path to follow, then we have to become one with it and to merge into it. This is possible only through love. If a person continues to be guided by intellect or learning alone, then these guides become a barrier.

Reasoning is the help and reasoning is the bar.

The soul is wrapped in four coverings of the individual mind:

Chit – Memory; inner attention;
Mann – Mind; character, inclination;
Buddhi – Intellect; power of discrimination;
Ahankar – The ego

Only after all these coverings are removed does the soul become capable of beholding Him. The mind should leave reasoning, and with it the intellect should also go. Then alone will our footsteps go towards spirituality. The Upanishad says:

The senses of knowledge and mind should be concentrated. Intellect should also stop working. In such a state, the highest spirituality is attained.

We should sacrifice our own entire learning in our love for the Beloved, because intellect is supported by love alone. Intellect is like the shadow, and God is the Sun. A shadow has no comparison with the sun.

Love and Beauty

Physical beauty is subject to destruction, but true love or real attraction never perishes. Beauty may perish, and even good works may cease. Graceful actions and attractive deportment may be no more, and even the beautiful face may vanish; but true love lives so long as the lover is alive. Even after his death love does not disappear, but merges into his soul. Physical beauty is temporary. It may be glamorous today and gone tomorrow. After youth and good health pass away beauty fades, but love remains forever.

Physical beauty rests on a weak foundation and is ephemeral. But love is the natural quality of the soul and is eternal. A life full of love enhances beauty, and beauty of this kind radiates soul force. Beauty of this type has a unique attraction, because it produces love. If beauty is not dyed with the attraction of soul force, love does not exist. A nightingale loves only live flowers. It is not attracted by artificial flowers or by those painted on a wall or on a piece of paper.

Love never perishes, even if the bones of a lover are ground fine like powder. Just as the perfume of sandalwood does not leave it, even if it is completely ground up, similarly the basis of love is the soul, and it is indestructible and therefore eternal. Beauty can be destroyed, but not love.

Wherever there is love there must be beauty. Love brings joy and luster to the eyes. The currents of love emanate from Saints and men of God. Their beauty is doubly enhanced. Their love is of the soul and not of the physical body. Such persons are handsome or beautiful despite

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their color or physical deficiencies. They have developed the inherent love of the soul, and their physical body is dyed deep in the spiritual color which reflects real inner beauty.

Love and Knowledge

The difference between knowledge and love is that knowledge continually tries to banish duality but love retains it as a precious treasure and itself remains without duality. Love is a condition like that of one life and two bodies. A devotee is so absorbed in the love of the Lord that he is not aware of any distinction between himself and the Lord, he does not see the Lord as a separate entity, but realizes that he and the Lord are one. Intellect cannot understand this, because it is one of the mysteries of spirituality and cannot be comprehended by intellect alone.

Shamas-i-Tabrez says:

I am a strange Shamas-i-Tabriz, for I have become the lover of my own life; by looking within and worshiping within myself, I find God and nothing else.

Dadu says:

The love for my Beloved has been so ingrained in my body that every cell cries out, 'Oh my Love, oh my Love! Except for You there is no other'.

The truth is that it is necessary to write love letters to the Beloved only if the Beloved is really at some distance, but when He is in the body, He is in the mind, and He is in the very life, how can one send messages to Him by means of letters? (Kabir)

People generally do not consider that knowledge and love are necessary for spiritual life, and they select either

the path of love or that of knowledge, according to their inclination. There are others who consider the path of action to be the true path and therefore spend their life in doing good deeds for others. Actually, both knowledge and love should completely combine and manifest themselves in the form of good actions.

Love and knowledge awaken discernment in us, as a result of which virtuous actions are performed spontaneously. Love and knowledge are really not two different paths, but the combination of these two is the very core of life. They are also the beauty of life and in their combination lies true life. They are the two sides of one Truth, the two wings of the same bird. If true knowledge is awakened or developed, the river of real love immediately begins to flow.

The heart is the haven of love. For the One, whom our intellect wishes to know by means of knowledge, our heart tries to feel true love. We can meet that One by means of knowledge, but real union can be attained only through love. Knowledge takes us up to that One, but love makes us merge into Him. Those who consider it sufficient to meet Him cannot experience the ecstasy of merging into Him. There is no difference between love and true knowledge.

What is love? It is another name for dedicating one's affection. The Ish Upanishads says:

Whatever is in existence in this world is filled with God. You should therefore cover this world with the Name of God.

One has to surrender oneself to God. Then there is nothing but God. This is love. This is knowledge. You may think about this and you may even carefully discuss it, but

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you will not find any difference between true knowledge and love.

The heart is given away and it makes its center in the Beloved and remains fixed there. This is true knowledge. Knowledge does not mean merely to understand or to know. It actually means to become that which we really are, i.e., to know ourselves. The Upanishad then continues:

Whatever has been given by Him you should enjoy by renunciation. Do not be attached to it, and do not covet the wealth of another.

The highest type of love for the lover is to live in the Will of the Beloved. If we imbibe this quality, we attain true knowledge. Those who are entangled in desires and in greed cannot achieve true knowledge.

To know God, in other words, is to love Him and to merge into Him, to be filled with His unique beauty and to become one with Him.

Love and Detachment

Real detachment is not merely running away and leaving everything. Rather, it is that pure state of the mind in which all desires are burnt up by going beyond all attractions of the world. But without understanding, detachment is an impossibility. When such a state is combined with the longing to meet the Lord, it is called love. Therefore, love and detachment are not two different qualities. They are two separate names for the same state of mind.

One may be termed a devotee or a lover in proportion to the degree of his detachment. Those who do not pos-

sess love for God in their hearts do not have even a particle of detachment. As the mind becomes free from desires, to that extent is it filled with love. One who is steeped in attachment for the world cannot be a lover. You should bow before God by saying good-bye to worldly desires; otherwise the prayer is not genuine.

Detachment and true love are one and the same thing. So long as the mind does not have an aversion to worldly desires it cannot attract love. No doubt it has been noted that sometimes devotees, in the beginning, in spite of being detached, do ask God for material necessities. There is no harm in this, provided one is treading the spiritual path with the proper attitude and not for the fulfilment of any desire connected with the senses.

I need only the bare necessities of life; that is, wheat flour, a pinch of salt, a little pulse – as much as will keep me alive. Then I also need a bed, a pillow, a mattress and a blanket to protect me against the wind and cold. I do not want anything else except the privilege of being devoted to Thee with all humility. I have no other desires except Thy Name. (Kabir)

Actually, a detached devotee never seeks anything from the Lord. He asks for only Him, because everything else is transitory and is the cause of pain.

To demand anything from Thee beyond Thyself will cause nothing but worry and pain. Oh Bless me Thou with Thy Blissful Name that I am rid of the craving of my mind. (Adi Granth)

Such a devotee does not ask for anything from the Lord, because he does not feel the need. His pains, worries and prejudices are all destroyed. Whoever has tasted the elixir of love will not run after anything else, and whatever he says will be acceptable in the Court of the Lord. This

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means that a devotee of this kind will not pay any attention to any material thing.

Love and Attachment

Love is not attachment. There is a vast difference between the two. In attachment one is entangled with his body, wife, children, relative, religion, caste and country. In other words, one has a feeling of indifference or estrangement regarding everything that is not related to his attachments. Attachment is finite, and a person in that state cannot be guided by real knowledge.

There is a strong feeling of selfishness connected with attachment. But in love one sees everything with the same eye – whether it is a human being or a beast. He loves all alike; in fact, he loves the entire creation.

The ideas of selfishness and of a limited sphere of interest enter into attachment, and to fulfil these ideas man may stoop to evil designs and actions. The result is misery and nothing else. Love is free from this dross. A lover loves all.

In attachment, one falls low. He cannot look at everything with a disinterested eye. The world of attachment is like a bargain counter, where one gives only in exchange for gain, otherwise he has nothing to give. Love knows only how to give.

A lover also knows that the true love, which is God, is within every creature. He loves everybody – the good and the bad – without any idea of gain. Love is the support of life. It is the giver of energy.

Love and Lust

Love is not the name of sensual desires, in which there is a preponderance of lust. True love cannot be found in everybody. Generally, people love with selfish motives. Love and sensual desires are two different things. There is a world of difference between them. One is a unique life-giving current, while the other is a filthy evil that drains life out of the body.

Lust is always for selfish gains. A lustful person tries to make the other person the object of the satisfaction of his desires. But true love aims at giving happiness and comfort to the beloved. Such a lover has the quality of enduring pain in order to give pleasure and happiness to the beloved, and is happy in the will of the beloved.

Love sacrifices body, mind, beauty, youth, intellect, wealth and even life at the altar of the Lord's temple. A lustful person is always restless and desires to keep the object of love with him. Lust is full of darkness. Love is full of light, like the sun. Lust is selfish, but love wishes to give even itself. Lust aims at self-gratification, but love is satisfied only when it sees others happy. Lust is like a dark whirlpool of agitation, but love is like a clear stream. Lust is like coal, but love has the value of a diamond.

Love gives away everything for the Beloved and is restless if the Beloved is not constantly in his mind. Lust causes the loss of all strength of mind and cannot concentrate on any one thing. Lust is limited and causes increasing debility and selfishness. It is the cause of trouble, hatred, dejection, peevishness, and restlessness of mind. A lustful person falls low in his own eyes, but a lover is free from all these evils and is able to detach his soul from the world. He actually makes love a spring-board for meeting

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the Lord.

The innate quality of a man is love. But this very power or current of love, if directed towards sensual desires, removes a person from the path leading to God-Realization. This misdirected energy is termed lust. But when this very current of love forsakes the pleasures of the senses and is directed towards God, it becomes the True or Divine Love.

The difference between lust and devotion to God is only in the direction in which the current of love flows. Jalhan says:

It is not difficult to realize God. One simply directs the current from one end to the other.

For devotion to the Lord or His love, it is not sufficient merely to renounce the desires for sensual pleasures superficially. It is necessary to give them up sincerely and with a strong will; otherwise the current of love will not move towards God. It is essential to eliminate all desires of the senses from the mind. By not loving or dwelling on the outer pleasures the inner attraction of the soul will automatically awaken.

Love is the natural inclination of the soul. It is impossible to separate it from the soul. A lover seeks a True Master, and love is the means of placing a man at the feet of the Lord in much the same manner as a worldly lover sacrifices himself for his beloved by forsaking his name, fame, etc.

A Lover

The status of an ordinary worshipper is better than that of person attached to the world. The former has meditat-

ed, has done good works, and has abstained from evil in order to find a place in heaven and to save himself from the fire of hell. But better than a worshipper is a hermit who tries to avoid all evil actions and desires only communion with God. Such a one has sacrificed the world in his desire for heaven, and is engaged in the worship of God. And better than hermits is the status of lovers, who have ascended the steps towards the love of God and have forgotten this world and the next in their love for Him. They have no fear of hell and no desire for heaven. They want to travel only on the path on which the Beloved takes them.

We have no concern with hell; we have no desire for heaven. We shall go wherever our Beloved will take us.

Bu-Ali-Kalandar Sahib says:

Lovers of God are not afraid of the fires of hell. Nor do they feel tempted towards heaven. They are the lovers of their Beloved. What should they do with the beauties of heaven?

Sheikh Sa'adi says:

Only he who forgets this world and the next is able to taste the wine of union with God.

An ordinary worshipper or hermit desires to go to heaven; but a lover desires only to see the rays of God's Light, for that is his heaven.

This world is really a prison house, and the world hereafter is the place of satisfaction of one's desires. A lover does not care to purchase either world even for a farthing.

Some people are overwhelmed by worldly troubles,

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and others are filled with desire for getting the pleasures of the world beyond. A lover is above both of them. He desires neither this nor that.

Sheikh Sa'adi says:

Once a lover was asked if he wanted hell or heaven. He replied, 'Do not ask me anything about them. I want only that which my God wishes for me'.

The aim of a hermit is heaven. A lover wants only the Lord. Consequently, there is a vast difference between the two. An ascetic is happy in his austerities and rituals, but a lover is absorbed only in the experiences of love.

Hazrat Mohammed Sahib says:

This world is not attractive to those who have the aim of achieving the world beyond; the world beyond is not attractive to those engrossed in worldly pleasures; and both, this world and the next, are not attractive to the lovers of God.

The same idea has been expressed by Muin-ud-din Abdulqadir Jilani. He says:

If a person wishes to reach heaven and enjoy its pleasures, he should turn his attention away from worldly objects and desires. But if a person desires only nearness and communion with God, he should turn his mind away from the desire for heaven.

Hence, one should forget this world in order to get to the world beyond; and he should forget the world beyond in order to divert his attention towards God. One whose mind is happy in the remembrance of God cannot be satisfied with anything else.

A hermit has his mind fixed on the desire for heaven. He may be living in this world but he is not a man of the world. Similarly, a devotee of the Lord may talk about the world beyond but he is above both, this world and the next. He is always absorbed in remembrance of the Lord and has a constant desire for His Darshan. He has no attachment or desire for the beautiful things of this world such as gardens, palaces, etc. Hazrat Shah Niyaz Ahmed says:

I have sacrificed the austerities of this world, my meditation, etc., at the Lotus Feet of my God. My religion is love for Him and to be intoxicated in that bliss. I keep myself dyed in the color of His love. Oh, you ascetic! Please listen to me in the name of my God! You should discontinue your austerities and rituals, and instead should drink the cup of wine of the love of God. The intoxication from that bliss is much more exhilarating than any other intoxication. You cannot find such a bliss anywhere else.

Lovers do not believe in salvation by means of reading Scriptures alone. They read only the Scripture of love. A lover is indifferent to outward praise and talk of his Beloved. His only desire is to merge in Him. A Faqir says:

Oh my Teacher! Please close all the books and teach me a lesson of love. I have completed this course and now you should show me the face of my Beloved.

Shah Niyaz Ahmad says:

Oh my Lord! Teach us the one word of your love. I do not wish to waste my life in reading stories about you.

Hafiz Sahib has also described the same idea in beautiful words:

This austerity and ritual, whose covering I placed over me, have

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now been pawned for a cup of the wine of my God's love. Detachment and sacrifice are useless. I have drowned them in the pure wine of the love of my God.

Hafiz Farid-ud-din Attar says:

An atheist and a man of the religion of the world may be happy in his atheism and in his religion respectively, but, oh my Lord! grant my heart a particle of the pain of longing for you.

Hazrat Mohammed says:

People of the world are like eunuchs; people who desire the world beyond are like women; but those who want only the Lord are real men.

This shows that the status of a lover is the highest of all. The description of the rituals and austerities by which one can gain heaven is given in religious Scriptures. But the description of love is confined in the hearts of lovers alone. It cannot be described in any language.

Lover is the name of one who has sacrificed his heart. Shamas-i-Tabriz says:

The giving away of one's heart means that the lover should go straight to the Beloved and should not conceal himself in any corner.

Who is a true lover? One who has cleansed himself from the dirt of all worldly thoughts and desires by burning them in the fire of devotion and separation. His mind is always restless to meet the Lord, just as thirst makes a man restless for water. The lover's mind and body have been pierced by the arrow of God's love. His real friend and Beloved is none other than God Almighty.

My mind is restless without the sight of my Lord, just as a thirsty person is restless without water. My mind has been pierced through by the arrow of the Name of God, and no one now resides in my heart except my Lord. (Adi Granth)

A lover's attention is withdrawn automatically from this world and the next, and is fixed only in the Lotus Feet of God.

I have given my true love to you by breaking away from all others. My love has now been fixed in your Lotus Feet because this is the true, complete and pure aim. (Adi Granth)

A lover's inner attachment is only for the Lord. Everything else appears to him to be bitter. If he does not have His Darshan then every enjoyment of this world appears distasteful. (Adi Granth)

Guru Amar Das says:

So long as a lover breathes, he seeks the Lord and tries hard to meet his dear Beloved. He keeps awake night after night in devoted attention to this end.

The happiness which a lover gets by meeting his Beloved cannot be described in any language. Guru Ram Das says:

When a person has imbibed true love for his Beloved Master, his mind and body both become cheerful by meeting Him, for a Master who is a manifestation of God has a strong and true attraction for the heart. By having a glimpse of the light of His beauty, one forgets his own self. Such a lover is fully absorbed in that bliss. The eyes of a lover are always drowned in love, and they see only God and God's Name. The eyes that see anything else except God should be removed. (Adi Granth)

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Paltu has also described the state of a lover, saying:

Oh my mother! My heart has been so completely given away to my Beloved that I cannot live. I am prepared to sacrifice my life for the sake of my Beloved. This is my ailment and it will cost me my life. There's only one remedy, and that is that my Beloved should meet me. The snare of love has captured my heart and I have become senseless and indifferent to everything about me. Oh Paltu, who can teach us the way without a real physician in the form of my Master! Oh my mother! I have given my heart away and I am restless.

Love is a burning fire into which everybody cannot leap. That can be done only by a rare lover. Hafiz was so intoxicated by this fire that he cried out:

Yes, my Master! Let the passing round of the cup filled with the wine of God's love continue. In the beginning this love appeared to be easy, but it has now become very difficult. Oh my Master! Please be kind and show me the path by which the real Light of my Beloved can be seen in God's Truth, for there is no remedy for the pain of love except meeting the Beloved and drinking that wine.

Love appears to be a child's play in the beginning, but it is full of many dangers. To follow this path is not the work of an ordinary person who is given to greed and other worldly temptations. A crop destroyed by water-logging can be revived only by judicious watering. Similarly, the pain of love is removed only by the ecstasy of love. Therefore, we have to pray before our Master, begging Him to take us to the world where we may be free from sin, where we will be free from all anxieties and ties with this world and the next.

We should remember that we are talking about true love – a love that is not to be found in the satisfaction of the senses or in sensual pleasure. Maulana Rumi says:

This is not the love which is generally experienced in this world, and brought about the luxurious living and rich food. Here love means attraction for God, which is the true purpose of human life.

A beloved is loved by the lover, and the lover longs for the beloved. He is the worshipper of his beloved and does not turn his eyes towards anybody else. He is always thirsty for the sight of his Beloved and he cannot live without his beloved even for a single moment. You may give him wealth and all other valuable things of the world, but his hunger or longing will not be satisfied, except by meeting his beloved. Love for his beloved is in every cell of his body and his mind. He cannot be sustained by anything other than the sight of his beloved.

Whatever pleases the Lord brings happiness to the lover. Just as a thirsty man cannot live without water, similarly, the lover cannot live without the Lord even for a moment. Oh my mother! I have no appetite even if you should put all kinds of delicious and tempting food before me. Nothing can sustain my mind except the Darshan of my Beloved. (Adi Granth)

He prays for the sight of the Beloved. He even goes so far as to taunt the Beloved and says:

Oh my Beloved! If you are really my true Beloved, then do not conceal yourself from me even for a single moment. My life and my body have been wounded by meeting you (and then being separated). When shall I have a glimpse of you? Oh my Beloved! I have seen and enjoyed the whole world, but there is nobody like you. You should come and let me embrace you so that my mind and body may be happy. You are the only friend in this world. I place my head at your door. My eyes are longing for your Darshan. When shall I meet you? There is a storm of restlessness within me for your Darshan. Without you all decorations of the body and all pleasures are useless. (Adi Granth)

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A lover is steeped in the love of the Beloved. Where else can he go? Fish cannot bear separation from water and will die without it. The life of a lover is in the Beloved. Without Him, he is dead. Guru Arjan Sahib says:

Oh my mind! Merge yourself in the Lotus Feet of God, for I am becoming restless and thirsty without His Darshan. Oh my Beloved! How I wish that I might have wings so that I could fly up and be near You. (Adi Granth)

Guru Ram Das says:

How can they live if they have true love within them and are separated from the Beloved? We have been separated from Him for many ages. Oh Beloved, please make it possible for us to meet Thee! No one can live without his Beloved once he has been pierced by love for Him. Happiness fills every cell of the body whenever a lover gets even a glimpse of His Light.

Guru Nanak has drawn a beautiful picture of the state of mind of a lover:

A current of deep depression fills the mind of the lover who longs for his Beloved. The Beloved is far off. She sends messages through persons going towards His dwelling and longs to obtain news of her Beloved, and her eyes are full of tears in separation from the Beloved.

A real lover does not see anything except true love. Love is his home, his wealth, his religion and his belief. He is a worshipper of love. He regards places of worship that are filled with worldly activity as being completely empty of love. Love can live only in the place of love where there is nothing else. Bulleh Shah once uttered the following words expressing these thoughts:

In a Dharamsala (a place of worship) live cheats. In temples one finds robbers. Swindlers are to be found in mosques. But lovers of God remain aloof.

The path of a lover is different from the path followed by others. The sky of love's land is also something different. Love is the pilgrimage of lovers. If places of pilgrimage and worship are devoid of love, then they are useless.

Lovers do not hate anyone. In their eyes there is nothing but love and more love. They seek love and their thoughts are always concentrated on their Beloved. It is there that they pray and bow their heads. Where does their Beloved live? The reply is: everywhere, in each one of us. God is love and love is another name for God. He is in everything and His current is flowing everywhere.

Love is the form of God, just as God is the form of love. Both of them live as one, like the sun and the sunshine.

When love completely fills a person, the limited desires of that lover's ego are destroyed, and he lives in the boundless love of the Lord. He does not find pleasure in anything of this world that can compare with his attachment for Him. To a lover, the wealth of love makes him look upon all the treasures of the world as mere nothing. He is prepared to sacrifice everything for his Beloved, including his religion, this world and the next. Hafiz says:

If my Master should give me the power to control my mind, then I would be prepared to sacrifice this world and the next even for the one black mole on His face.

The Religion of Love

The religion of a lover is nothing but love, under the

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influence of which a unique type of concentration and a feeling of loneliness enter his mind. His thoughts pass beyond the limit of union and duality. If one imbibes even a small particle of love, he will consider the whole world worth no more than a straw. The heart of one who has tasted even a few drops from the cup of love finds no taste at all in the worldly pleasures. He desires neither heaven nor salvation.

Paltu Sahib says:

Saints do not want salvation. They have no desire for the four treasures of the world, because their desire is neither for the treasures of the world nor for salvation. They spurn supernatural powers, and they run away from the seat of heaven. They do not go on pilgrimage; they do not fast; they have no desires in their mind. Even good actions have no attraction for them. They do not want heaven, nor are they interested in coming into and going from this world. They consider even the seven heavens no better than a piece of straw. The devotees of God have such a desire, O Paltu! That they do not want salvation nor do they desire the four treasures of the world.

God lives in His own latent state of love, and a lover frees himself from the bondage of body and life and becomes a form of God. When the fire of love is kindled within a lover it destroys everything except the Beloved.

Love is such a strong current that a glimpse of the Light of the Beloved attracts the lover. When it plants the deep-rooted bliss of intoxication in a lover, the heart and the life are then automatically sacrificed for the Beloved. Knowledge, intellect, fame and reasoning or discussions are all swept away in the fast-running currents of love. In fact, whenever someone tastes even a few drops from the cup of love, his intellect and his worries all vanish.

A lover sacrifices everything for his Beloved. His belief, religion and life are all given to his Beloved, and he forgets everything in his love. He cries out and exclaims with very great joy:

I am now a slave of my love, and free from the worries of both the worlds.

A lover is dyed in the hue of God's love. His talk is the talk of the Lord, and he is emancipated from all the sensual pleasures. Jammi Sahib says:

Now that you have become a slave of love, you should abandon your ideas of the fame and the superiority of your family, because these have no merit on this path.

A lover who is intoxicated in the love of his Beloved lives only in thoughts about Him. He has no connection with the good or the evil of this world.

Hafiz Sahib says:

For a lover, the feet of the Beloved (Master) are the feet of God. He considers the gardens of heaven, the beautiful trees there, and the palaces with beautiful women in heaven as being no better than a particle of the dust of His lane.

The power of love becomes very strongly attractive within a lover. His sole desire is to meet the Beloved. It is said that even if the home of the Beloved were in the center of the ocean, or if the path to it were beset by hundreds of snakes and even ferocious tigers and lions might be roaring in his way, and the angels of death were also trying to obstruct the way, even then a lover would not be deterred from walking on the path of his Beloved. Noth-

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ing can deter him from going to his Beloved, because his world exists only for the Beloved. Hafiz Sahib says.

*Nothing can enter my mind except the thought of my Beloved.
Give both the worlds to my enemies, because for me my Beloved is
all that I want.*

There is no room in the heart of a lover for anything except the Beloved, and he always wishes to be in constant contact with Him. Kabir says:

*My Beloved is in my eyes like a thin coating of collyrium. How
can there be any place for sleep in my eyes when He is there all the
twenty-four hours and there is no other work except to remem-
ber Him. The true and faithful wife is she who does not keep her
husband away from her eyes even for a single moment and does not
look at any other person. She closes her eyes and is plunged deep
into his remembrance, and in the remembrance of love, she blos-
soms like a rose and speaks only of the sweetness of love.*

Such devotees of the Lord always speak of Him with love and devotion. And when they speak, their throat is choked with love, their hair stand on end with the strong current of their love, and pearls of tear-drops flow from their eyes. If the Beloved is by their side, then they beg for longer nights in order to be with the Beloved for a longer period. Such a lover feels that the state of intense concentration will come to an end if the night were to end sooner. Therefore he prays for the nights to be long and that they should never end, so that he may not be separated from his Beloved. He desires to sleep less so that he may not be away from his Beloved. The family into which such lovers are born is worthy of all praise. As soon as the mind of a lover concentrates, he imbibes the qualities of God and becomes a master of many extraordinary powers.

The mind of a lover is strong and deep like that of an ocean. It does not contain tempests of other thoughts. His aim is one-pointed and there is only one thought in his mind – that of the Beloved. When we love, then love becomes the sustainer of our soul, and our complete attention is concentrated in the Beloved. Then all superficial ties are cut, and the soul is freed from the shackles of this world and flies to the regions above. That highest region is its true abode.

Swami Ji says:

Your abode is there, my dear. But, alas, you are tied down by the strings of this world.

In its true abode the soul enjoys at all times the bliss of union. Love transforms it from the material and physical attachments to the finer, spiritual regions, and the drop of the soul is merged in the ocean of the Lord. In such a state a lover is not an ordinary person. He is the master of supernatural powers. Love, in reality, is such an alchemy that it turns even common persons into spiritual emperors.

Kabir Sahib says:

The lovers have such great power that they can even take a leap to the highest region by simply exerting their own internal force.

The lover's attention is then constantly fixed in the Beloved, and his mind suffers a state of restlessness on separation.

The unique quality of love is this: If a seed of love is sown into its field, it is followed by pain, burning, separation.

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These are the crops that grow. The lover sometimes complains, Oh, why did I ever love? Sometimes he berates his eyes and reprimands them for ever having cast a glance on the Beloved, despite the fact that he had stealthily cast a glance at his Beloved. He will not speak about this subject to anyone who is not able to understand the condition of his heart, for to talk of the pain of one's heart to a person who has never felt such pain is to invite more pain. He, however, keeps the Beloved within his eyes, wherever his eyes go. He regards his Beloved as of more importance than even his own life. Khusro Sahib says:

I have become an infidel on account of love. I do not need this superficial religion of mine. Every cell of my body has been filled with the rays of love. I do not need even the sacred thread. We lovers have no anxiety regarding the dissolution of the world, because our aim is to continue to see the glory of our Beloved.

Tulsi Sahib says:

A lover, even when he is awake, is asleep to the world. Whether sleeping or in a state of wakefulness, his soul's attention is fixed on the Beloved, and that link never breaks. His love is like that of the moon-bird for the full moon. It continues to gaze at it as long as it shines. It will strain its neck backwards till it almost touches the ground, but will not change its position from the time the moon appears in the east till it sinks in the west.

The Intoxication of Love

In the religion of love-intoxicated people there is neither day nor night. They are constantly engaged in the contemplation of the Beloved day and night, and they do what cannot possibly be done by people of the world or even by very intellectual and clever people. The nights of the world are their days. In other words, they are awake

in remembrance of the Lord day and night. Even the force of calamities cannot remove their attention from their Beloved.

The heart and the mind of lovers are always drowned in the remembrance of the Beloved. They have no concern for their body, because they have lost themselves in the remembrance and contemplation of their Beloved. They have no rest or peace unless their mind is fixed on their Beloved. Worldly troubles, poverty, pain, hunger or anxieties do not distract their attention.

Sheik Sa'adi says:

There is no patience in the heart of a lover, which is like a sieve through which water of patience immediately passes.

Lovers are not affected by any calamities or unrest in this world, because they remain aloof from worldly distractions. They should keep silent, because nobody is able to understand the secret of such lovers. The lovers of God are not even aware how and when the sun rises.

A lover has become mad after his Beloved, and there is joy in that intoxication. He has broken the cup of his body and has no feeling about it. What effect can anybody's clever and intellectual talk have on him? He has passed beyond the gardens of intellect.

He is so intoxicated in love that the wine of ecstasy drips down his eyes at all times. Maulana Jammi says:

I am so intoxicated with the bliss of love that the wine of intoxication is overflowing from my eyes.

Shamas-i-Tabriz has also described the state of intoxication of a lover of God in the following words:

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I see the caravan of camels as well as their drivers happy from head to foot in the intoxication of love. The rich are intoxicated, the priests are intoxicated, my friends are intoxicated, and even my enemies are intoxicated. I see them all in a state of unique bliss. Oh heaven, how long will you continue moving! Look at the movement of the elements: Earth is intoxicated; water is intoxicated; wind is intoxicated; and even fire is intoxicated. This is the state which I see outside. But please do not ask me about the state of my inner being. My senses, my intellect and even my soul are intoxicated, and they have achieved a permanent bliss of intoxication. The roots of these tree-like bodies are drinking the secret wine of love. Have patience, because even you will one day wake up into this state of intoxication. In my mind there is a festival of bliss. You should try to feel the effect of the wine of Divine Love, so that even the walls and the doors are all intoxicated.

When the wine of God's love is flowing in the mind of a lover, he sees that bliss everywhere. Shamas Tabriz has very forcefully pleaded for an increasing ecstasy of God's love in the following quotation:

If you are intoxicated, increase it and become senseless in it. Try to know yourself, and become wise in it. We cannot do anything without.

He further says:

Oh you men with superficial eyes! If you are not familiar with our nature, please go away! Try to understand the true nature of our intoxication. This Divine Ecstasy has now given me all its qualities.

Even death cannot mar the happiness of those who have been pierced by the pangs of love, because contemplation on the face of the Beloved has become a shield for them. How can the arrows of this world pierce them?

The Emotions of a Lover

As soon as love is awakened, the lover is dyed in its hue. A lover always desires to continue to see his Beloved and listen to the Beloved's words most attentively. Every part of the lover's body, from head to foot, is attentively engaged in seeing the Beloved and in listening to the words of the Beloved.

A lover yearns to see the face of his Beloved as one longs to see the moon, and is delighted by its beauty. There is always a strong desire in his mind to listen to the words of the Beloved, for to him they are full of nectar. He feels that if his arms cannot embrace his Beloved, they should be broken and if his eyes cannot enjoy the sweetness of the sight of the Beloved, they should become blind. He desires the Beloved to live in his eyes so that he may not see anybody else, and the Beloved also may not see any other person. Kabir Sahib said that a lover conceals his Beloved in his eyes. He does not see any other person, nor does he permit the Beloved to see anyone else. He says:

Oh my Beloved! Come into my eyes. As soon as you come, I shall immediately close them so that I may not see any other person and that you also may not see anyone else.

In love there is no other desire, just as nothing remains in a burning fire. The people of the world demand fulfilment of their desires from God. But a lover in whom the fire of love has been kindled demands only God from God. Guru Ram Das says:

If the precious jewels and treasures of all the seven worlds and the seven oceans were taken and placed before a lover, and someone were to ask him whether he would prefer this wealth or the Beloved,

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the lover would not even consider the treasures. He asks from God for only the nectar of His Name.

Hafiz says:

The beggars in the vicinity of the Beloved do not even have any desire for heaven, because the victims of love are actually free from both the worlds.

When a lover is fully absorbed in love for his Beloved, he does not give a thought to anything belonging to this world. A lover imbibes the beauty of the Beloved in his mind at all times, and tries to understand the greatness of the Beloved in his heart. He does not see anything else in the whole world.

How Should One Love?

Love is the inherent quality of the soul. This cannot be described in any language. Even the Saints and other wise men have to explain it by giving examples. Love is the sustainer of life, just as a lotus lives on water, its growth is in the water and it blossoms through the currents of water in it. Similarly, love is the life of the soul, and the existence of the soul is dependent on love of God. The soul becomes happy when love takes hold of it. Guru Nanak says:

God is the Elixir of our life and you should love Him. As your love for Him increases, your soul will blossom on the water of love like a lotus.

He further states:

Love for the Lord should be like that of the lotus for water.

Water is the sustainer of the life of the fish, which feels

happy and comfortable in streams of water. Without water, it feels so much pain that it cannot live. Just as the charak (rain-bird) is thirsty only for drops of rain and does not drink the waters of streams and tank; just as the dawn bird longs only for the sun and does not sleep the whole night because she is always looking for the sun to rise when her mate would come and meet her; or just as water has love for milk and if put on the fire will burn itself first (will evaporate) and will not allow the milk to be burnt, in the same manner you should love your Lord.

Oh my mind! Give your love to the Lord just as fish loves the water. If the water is plentiful it is happy and its mind is at peace, but without water it cannot live for a single moment. Oh my mind! Have love for the Lord as the rain bird has love for the drops or rain. It will not drink even a drop from the tanks and streams filled with water before it.

Oh my mind! Love your Lord as the water loves the milk. It protects the milk when put on a fire and does not permit it to be burnt. Oh my mind! Have love for the Lord like that of a dawn bird for the sun. It does not sleep the whole night, because it longs for the sun to rise to enable it to meet its mate. (AdiGranth)

Just as a rain bird is thirsty only for the drops of rain, and a fish longs for water, oh Nanak! My thirst will also be quenched by the Elixir of God's Name. (Adi Granth)

Guru Ram Das says:

A lover is attached to the beloved just as much as the lotus is to the sun; just as much as a peacock loves the clouds; and whenever the clouds appear the peacock starts dancing in an ecstasy of happiness.

He further says:

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Just as the kunj (a bird that flies far and high) keeps its mind always fixed on its little nestlings, even during its distant flights above the earth, similarly you should keep your mind always in the remembrance of God.

Guru Arjan Dev has also given similar examples and has strongly advocated love for the Lord in the following words:

Just as a butterfly is intoxicated with the fragrance of the flower, so much so that it confines itself within its petals and dies rather than come out to save itself; similarly a lover should have an equally great love for the Lord and should attain eternal life by meeting Him.

Just as a deer places its head on a musical instrument or a calf loves to meet its mother; or a wife longs to go to the house of her husband; or as a hungry man longs for food; you should love the Lord with the same intense longing.

In the same manner, many other Saints have given us examples of love for the Lord, all of which are worthy of our attention.

Saints are surging oceans of God's love, and they act as lighthouses in our life's journey in this world. Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan, Kabir Sahib, Tulsi Sahib, Swami Ji, Lord Chaitanya, Paran Hans Ram Krishna, Shamas-i-Tabriz, Maulana Rumi, Hafiz and many other Saints have left their footprints on the sands of time for our guidance. Their lives were oceans of love. By studying their writings, love for spirituality will be awakened in our minds. But above all, we should meet a Master who is the manifestation of God, so that we may receive guidance and be able to obtain within, the nectar of love.

The Place of Love

Love is above the three gunas (attributes). Our body, our life and our mind are connected with the three attributes of Nature, but love is very much above them and is a part of the soul.

Therefore, it is free from the taint of Tamas, Rajas and Satvic desires. That is, it does not wish to remain, to receive, or to be anything. Divine Love is free from the mixture of illusions and is always pure in the regions above; but in the regions below it is mixed with physical matter and the low desires of animalism.

Where can we obtain love? It is within us, but everybody cannot get it. We may feel it, but we cannot grasp it. The whole world is busy searching for it. We can experience it only within ourselves. Maghrabi Sahib says:

When I looked in, I found within me that which has been sought for ages by all mankind, from one corner of the world to the other. We have been searching for it for many ages here and there, but we have found it only in our heart. Therefore, you should not search for your lost Beloved outside. You will find Him only in the recess of your heart.

The place of love is in the soul which is a particle of God, who is love. It is therefore inherent in the soul.

Love is manifested in various ways, that is, for children, wife, family and other relatives, etc. When we look at a thing with the eyes of love, it becomes beautiful. When love kindles, it beautifies everything. Actually, love is a feeling of beauty – sometimes it is concealed and sometimes it is revealed. When feelings of hatred are manifested, love is concealed. When feelings of attraction appear,

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then love also appears. But it is within us at all times. Our very life is love. We have come from love and we live in love. We have to merge in love, as it is the protective cover of our body.

Truth is love and it resides in our heart. Love is Naam. It is deeply engraved in our mind and in our body. Whoever tries to search for it, gets it. Love for the Lord is awakened in the disciples of a Master. Thus all their desires are satisfied and they worship only the Lord. They tread the path of love and are fully engrossed in its bliss. The love of a Gurumukh is true love. By means of such a love he meets his Beloved and is happy in the enjoyment of love's bliss day and night; and he achieves the state of Sahaj. [Sahaj means easy, natural, real. Esoterically, it means the transition from the state of becoming into that of being one with the Supreme Lord; hence a state of supreme bliss].

This kind of love is awakened in Gurumukhs by the Beloved (Master) Himself, and they are absorbed in it day and night.

Gurumukhs have love in their hearts. That is the true love by means of which they have communion with the Lord. Day and night they are happy in their love. This love is awakened in the hearts of Gurumukhs by God Himself and, oh Nanak, they remain happy in that bliss and ultimately merge into the eternal state of Sahaj. (Adi Granth)

Teachings of Love in the Old Scriptures

We can find teachings concerning love in the Scriptures of all the religions, according to the customs and circumstances prevailing at that time. Muslim Saints mentioned love profusely in their books. In the sayings of Christ there

is also particular emphasis on love. In the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Shastras we also find teachings about the path of devotion. The path of love or devotion is, however, achieved only through the Grace of the Lord.

The Upanishads lay great stress on self-surrender to the Will of the Lord. Teachings concerning the path of love have also been described in the Adi Granth and by many Saints, such as Tulsi Sahib, Swami Ji, Dadu Sahib, Paltu Sahib and others, in a unique manner. It teaches the doctrine of oneness while leading a life of love as a householder in this world.

Love is Our Birthright

God is the ocean of love, and the soul is in essence a drop of the same ocean. Love is inherent in our system. Love is the Emperor, and we are His children. We must take good care of the kingdom of our love. How long can we remain confined within the limits of our body? It is shameful for us to remain entangled in the worldly attachments of wealth, etc. We should not desire anything except love.

Love is Only Available Through a Perfect Master

This tree of love is concealed from the eyes of the ordinary worldly people, and it can be seen only by the rare few children of the Lord, even though it is indescribable. To understand the mysteries of love is not the privilege of everybody. You should therefore keep the company of a person who has eyes that can see the greatness of love, who sings songs of love like a nightingale, and who is always happy with the flowers of love. Such a one is not subject to any law, because this treasure is bestowed only through the special Grace and Mercy of God Himself.

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Love is another name for losing one's heart to another. How it is lost can be answered only by those people who have experienced it.

What is Love? You should ask a Master. How is the heart given away? You should ask one who has lost his heart.

Love Not Reduced to Speech or Print

The story of love cannot be reduced to cold print, just as it is impossible to limit an ocean to its waves. A pen is powerless to describe love's mysteries fully and clearly. It is also beyond the power of the human tongue to describe love. The description of love cannot be expressed in writing or in speech, so one cannot get it from the pages of books.

Whatever people may say about it, their words are not the path of love. The roots of love are in the Infinite, and its green leaves are spreading beyond limits. The tree of love is not supported either by the earth or the sky. It is described to a certain extent in the Scriptures. The people of learning are unable to give a faithful description of it because it is indescribable. Only a rare person (a true Master) can impart the knowledge of love correctly to a true and real seeker. The worldly people are all ignorant of it. Hafiz says:

If you wish to join my class, throw away all of your books. The knowledge of love is not found in them.

The Form of Love

There is no difference between love and God. God is love, and love is God. Both are beyond thought and de-

scription. The Elixir of Love can be tasted only by inner experience. All descriptions of love are far from the love itself.

A lover is actually like a doll made of salt. When plunged into the sea in order to find its depth, the doll dissolves in the water and no trace of it can be found. Or a lover is like a moth that goes near a light but does not return. Just as a dumb person feels happy by eating something sweet but is unable to describe its sweetness in words, similarly the taste of love, even when it is experienced, is indescribable.

I met my friend and asked her the signs of her Lord. But she does not know how to speak, because she is filled with the intoxication of the bliss of love. (Adi Granth)

Love cannot be described in any language. But if and when a rare individual experiences true love, it is manifested in every cell of his body. In other words, it is like seeing the very Lord Himself in that manifestation. Love has a definite existence which can only be experienced and cannot be described by superficial examples. As and when it is experienced, no other proof is necessary.

The very appearance of the sun is the proof of its existence.

This Elixir can only be tasted by actual experience. It cannot be conceived by thinking, reasoning or by arguments. Mind and intellect are only confusing.

Love Can be Seen in a Lover

If you wish to see love, you should meet a lover. Then you will discover its unique currents.

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A lover is like a cup which is overflowing with the Elixir of Love, and by looking at him a desire to follow him is awakened. Shamas-i-Tabrez says:

If you are unable to detect a lover, you should at least see the spark of love in him. A tiny spark of that special current enabled Mansur to ascent the scaffold with a smile and sacrifice his life.

Love in the Beloved

The existence of love is caused by the beauty of the Beloved. Love is first awakened in the Beloved. Unless there is an attraction from the latter, any action by the lover will be of no avail. If there is need for medicine, then it is necessary to have pain, because if one is not ailing he needs no medicine. The Beloved always keeps an eye on the condition of His lover and imparts all the love that He can attract.

We have no pain (of love) within us, otherwise the physician is always there. The physician of love has the power even to give life to the dead and is a fountain of mercy, but if we have no desire or no pangs, on whom shall He bestow His mercy? You should therefore stop running after the world, but have a longing to go in the direction of love, because this alone will free you from the demon of death. You should hunt for the Truth and not care for other games, because this hunting will even scare the Angel of Death. All the thoughts in one's mind – even if they are as beautiful as flowers – are thorns if they are not directed towards the Beloved. The wealth of the spark of love can be seen only in lovers. If you turn away from such lovers, you will be sorry in the end.

Methods of Developing Love

Masters have described the methods by which love can be awakened. These methods are known to them by their own inner experience, and to follow their instructions is known as spiritual practice. The method of the Masters is the concentrated essence of the various moral and religious practices that are prevalent in the world – such as going to temples and mosques or other religious places, reading of Scriptures, prayers, worship, charity, pilgrimages, and so forth. These are all outward observances. Austerity, contemplation, and other practices are good for cleansing the mind and senses. They are all included in religious ceremonies and act as an incentive to the soul, because out of their sincere practice love for the Lord can be awakened.

Just as a nurse feeds a child on milk and is responsible for his growth and well-being, similarly these observances are helpful to seekers in their progress towards a spiritual life. The real spiritual practice works as a mother to the soul. It must be remembered that it is only a mother who gives birth to the child, and the milk is produced in her breasts. A nurse is helpful only in external care. To give birth to a child is the function of a mother.

Similarly, of themselves, ritual, ceremonies, religions, Scriptures, etc., cannot create true love. All these austerities and prayers can be given up where there is love. In spirituality, it is only the Saints or the Masters who are the bestowers of spiritual birth to a person.

A Master makes the devotee follow methods which He Himself has experienced within. He guides the seeker in this internal practice and, like a mother, helps in the spiritual growth of the child of love by making him drink the

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Divine Elixir. Then the devotee realizes the Truth.

All rituals and ceremonies by which the fire of love can be kindled are good, because in that fire all desires and temptations are burned. Guru Ram Das says:

Actions such as austerities, fasting and worship are good only if they aid in awakening one's love for God.

Bulleh Shah expresses the same thought in the following beautiful words:

Religious customs are our nurse; rituals and ceremonies are our mother; but if we wish to achieve something really worthwhile, that can be done only by spiritual practice (inner method). Then alone do we realize the real Truth.

The aim of all rituals was the same in the beginning, but with the laps of time and by not following them sincerely they have all become superficial and nominal observance. Thus, the very rituals which were intended to bring us salvation have become our ties.

Love is to be found in its original form in every human being. God is love and the soul is a part of Him; therefore, the soul is also love. But because the soul is concealed under the coverings of the mind, love is also concealed along with it. It is necessary that we remove the covering. This can be explained by an example:

Electricity is present in everything, but it is in a latent form. When we produce it by means of a battery, its currents can be radiated for thousands of miles. Similarly, Divine Love is a big electric current. We can call it human electricity, but this electricity is a thousand times more powerful and bright. When it is produced, it destroys all

dirt and unclean ideas rising in one's mind. Then the soul shines forth in its inherent brightness. In other words, the path which may have taken hundreds of years to attain by other methods is covered in the twinkling of an eye by means of love.

Love is inherent in every person and it may be kindled in two ways. One is by the Grace of the Lord or that of His manifestation in this world, namely a Master. The other method is by means of spiritual practice.

Just as electricity exists in every particle, in a latent state, but it is produced with the help of a battery and brightens a large area, similarly the spark of love is produced in the heart of a seeker by the Grace of God or a Master and this force then becomes apparent.

The second method, that of spiritual discipline, such as repetition (Simran), contemplation and listening to the Sound Current, also produces this powerful electric current of love in human beings.

In actual practice, the first essential is to awaken love for God by means of repetition and then by contemplation. As we repeat the Five Holy Names with the tongue of thought, our attraction and love for Him increase within ourselves. When a lover remembers Him and becomes fully absorbed in His remembrance, then God turns the lover's attention towards devotion by His Divine Grace.

Simran (Repetition) done with faith, produces a unique feeling in the heart. By doing Simran a feeling of bliss and divine influence fills the heart. This state is produced sooner or later, according to the individual devotee's sanskaras (predominating nature, the results of past karmic impressions).

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Dhyan is the second spiritual practice. At its beginning, with the help of repetition of Charged Names, the sensory currents withdraw from the body below to the eye-focus; that leads to the perception of the Inner Light. Then starts the second phase of Dhyan – Contemplation. It can be attained by absorbing ones attention into the Inner Divine Light so much so that one forget oneself completely. Dhyan leads to Bhajan.

The third part of the spiritual practice is Bhajan, listening to the Shabd, Naam or Sound Current. God is Shabd, and God is also love. Therefore, Naam or Shabd is love. As the soul contacts Shabd, love flows out from within. Guru Nanak says:

The love and attachment by which one merges into the Truth is not possible without Naam.

Guru Arjan says:

Love is Naam, with which the attachment to physical attractions is destroyed.

Guru Amar Das says:

Devotees of the Shabd Practice receive honor in the Court of the Lord. Love for God is awakened in them, and by it they are forcefully attracted towards God.

A Gurumukh achieves love by means of contemplation on God. By the adornment of Shabd his ego is destroyed. (Adi Granth)

The principal way towards the achievement of love is the Satsang and company of a Perfect Master, and through His Grace. Guru Arjan says:

Only those who have the Grace of the Lord on them are attracted to spiritual practice. But love for the Lord is produced in them by the company of Saints and by listening to their Satsang. It is only by the teachings of Saints that love for a perfect Master is produced in us and our love is fixed at His Lotus Feet. Without a Master, love cannot be produced and the dirt of egotism is not destroyed. He puts us on the path of Shabd. When we listen to it we 'know ourselves' and attain Sohng (I am That).

Oh Brother! Without a Master, love cannot be awakened. One who follows the dictates of his mind cannot get it. He may perform all kinds of religious acts, but they will be without rewards. (Adi Granth)

It was through the pure Grace of the Perfect Master that my love was fixed at His Lotus Feet. (Adi Granth)

Guru Arjan says:

One cannot achieve love without a Master. You should bear it in mind that God is love, and He is manifested in the Master, and it is the Master who enables one to meet the Lord.

One cannot be truly devoted without a Master, nor can one attach oneself to Shabd. We can practice Naam through intense love for our Master. And true love which never perishes can be achieved only through a Perfect Master.

Devotion is not possible without a Master. Love for Naam is also not possible. Oh Nanak! I can practice Naam only by the Grace of my Master's love. (Adi Granth)

True love can be produced by loving a perfect Master, because, oh Nanak! this never perishes, and we sing of the glory of the Lord. (Adi Granth)

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Shamas-i-Tabriz says:

The Master felt my pulse when I was already exhausted through religious practices. He said, 'Alas! Whatever austerities and worship you have done are all useless. The aim of the lovers of God is neither to gain learning nor to gather treasures of the intellect, nor to have any connection with gains and losses of the world.' After saying this, He gazed into my eyes, and the gaze of my Master effaced my very being. Then He said, 'Go and drink that wine which is full of the intoxication of bliss and spend the remaining years of your life in that happiness. You should now leave all outward rituals and entanglements.'

Just as God has already put electricity in the clouds and other things, in a latent form, but various actions are needed to produce it in its dynamic form, similarly love is in every soul in a latent form, because God is love and we are a particle of Him.

One way by which love is created is that the Master or God Himself awakens love in a soul and intoxicates the soul with the ecstasy of love. Secondly, by following spiritual practices the hue of love imparts its color to a lover. But both of these ways are possible only through the abundant Grace of the Master, by which alone all obstacles are removed and a desire is produced in the heart of the seeker to go from one spiritual region to the next. Guru Arjan says:

Religious preachers and religions are both unaware of love. The whole world behaves like a fool. People have forgotten God and are heading for hell.

Shamas-i-Tabrez says:

Atheists and all religious preachers, religions and the followers of

the world's many faiths are bereft of this treasure in their heart.

How Love is Produced

Love is produced or awakened in the heart in various ways. The first method is Darshan (to behold the Beloved). The second is to talk to the Beloved personally; and the third is Dhyan (contemplation of the Beloved).

We see someone and create a mental picture in our mind of his sweet manner of talking and his attractive face, and feel happy in that thought night and day. This is the first stage.

Sometimes we listen to the description of someone's beauty and forget ourselves in thinking of that individual. This is the second stage.

When we fill our heart with the purity and noble qualities of someone and think about him day and night. This is the third stage.

But when we are attracted by His handsome form and behold His beauty, and have been pierced by the sharp arrows of love, then that attractive face keeps shining before our mind's eye at all times.

Essentials for Permanent Love

Six principles are essential in the Path of Love:

There should be no selfish motive in our dealings with the Beloved. Do not ask from Him anything except devotion to Him. Love should be selfless. To desire or to ask for comforts, wealth, children, etc., is selfish love.

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Love should be reserved only for the Lord or for the Master. If you are attached to others, your love is naturally scattered and its intensity is decreased. When our love is thus scattered, we cannot meet God nor can love remain alive. You should live in this world without becoming entangled in it. Naam Dev was once asked:

When does your Lord show His face to you?

He replied:

When I am able to detach myself from all relations and friends. He comes only then.

Love should be constant. It must be constantly centered on the Lotus Feet of the Beloved. A lover's mind, intellect and soul should all be dedicated to the Beloved. The mind should think of the Beloved, and He should always be in the lover's thoughts. By means of the intellect one should think about Him, and a longing for His Darshan should constantly rankle within the soul. One should not become engrossed in worldly activities which dissipate the attention fixed in the Lord.

Love for the Lord should neither decrease nor break in its continuity. One should keep oneself engaged in observances and should have associates through whom he will continue at all times to get food for love. The knocks of love should be constantly received, so that the longing for God and the attraction for Him may be always on the increase.

A lover should observe the practice of good conduct. Just as medicine is a remedy for an ailment, but along with it abstinence from undesirable food is also essential, similarly, the remedy for ailments of the soul is love, and

good conduct in life is comparable to abstinence from intake of undesirable food.

What is good conduct? First, one should always speak the truth and should avoid telling lies. To describe anything correctly is to speak the truth. Whatever one has in his mind and whatever one feels should be spoken out. In other words, the heart, the brain and the tongue should all combine into one truth.

What is the basis of all evils?

Action which is done underhandedly.

Action which compels the door to tell lies in defense.

To think evil of others.

If we feel that by doing something evil nobody will find out, and the consequences would be most unpleasant if someone did find out, that is the first root of evil. Actions performed with this mental background are conducive to disbelief in the omnipresence of God. Such a mental state also destroys one's own spirit of right-thinking and creates fear of the world. By such actions, concentration of the mind is lost and restlessness is created.

When a particular action is committed and substantiated with lies, the mental state described above continues. A liar, to substantiate his lie before others always goes on thinking of arguments to support it and spends a lot of time in anxiety to propagate it. To tell a lie requires a very good memory otherwise it is disclosed from one's own words (by contradicting the previous statement).

If we think ill of somebody, we forget the connection of our soul with others. If we realize that God above knows all about our actions and is omnipresent, then all secret

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evil actions will automatically be avoided and we shall tell no lies, and the qualities of the soul will manifest profusely. Kabir says:

There is no austerity like truth and no sin like falsehood. Those in whose hearts truth prevails, also have God residing in their hearts.

To think evil of others is to cut one's connection with his own soul with a sharp axe. Not to think evil of others is to create bonds of friendship with the soul. In this manner our love will be universal and will not antagonize anybody. The temple of our heart will be clean and a worthy seat for the Lord. A Muslim Saint says:

Clean the temple of your heart of all rubbish so that it may be a fit abode for your Beloved.

One with a pure heart is constantly happy. Do not hurt anybody's heart. The human heart is far better than thousands of places of worship. A man-made temple may be a place to worship a deity, but the heart is the place of pilgrimage that leads to God.

If you hurt anybody's heart, then your worship, your fasting, reading of Holy Scriptures or performance of daily duties are of no value before God. Practice non-violence. Do not think ill of others nor cause pain by your anger, back-biting, etc. To see God in everything – whether man or beast – and not to injure anyone, constitutes good conduct. By trespassing the principle of good conduct, we cannot love God nor can we have His Darshan (nor can we behold Him).

Our love for the Beloved, that is, the Master or God, should be reverential and full of humility. In love we forget ourselves. A father loves his child, and if the child

pulls the father's beard, he does not punish the child but livingly and quietly removes the child's hands from the beard. A lover also realizes that a servant is a servant, a Master is a Master, a child is a child, and a father is a father.

A servant will be a servant despite the fact that he may become very dear to his master. We must remember that a devotee is a devotee and that the object of his devotion is the Lord. A lover's love for the Beloved is good only if he does not disregard the Beloved's instructions. He should not argue, but should constantly keep his head bowed in the observance of His commandments. He should be respectful at all times. In other words, he should not transgress the limits of respect.

The maker of a lover is the Beloved, and it is the internal attraction of the Beloved that creates love. It is through His Grace that the love remains alive. Otherwise, it is entirely useless. A lover should always consider his Beloved to be the Emperor of Emperors. If the Beloved yields to the obstinacy of the lover, it is His Grace. The greatness of the Beloved does not suffer thereby. His commands are the orders of an Emperor and the commands of God. You should constantly obey Him. Never utter words of disrespect under the influence of arrogance or the pride of your intellect or strength. Never should an idea of equality or disrespect enter your mind.

If, on the path of spirituality, a seeker transgresses the limits of reverence or respect, he falls in the eyes of the Beloved and will ultimately be degraded into misery and hatred. Everybody loves humility and proper respect; therefore the Beloved of your heart should receive much more of this love and respect.

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God is in the hands of His devotees. This is the magnanimity of the Oneness of His love. The Beloved bestows on the lover the key of all His powers, which can even be exercised by the lover, but the lover always remains within the bounds of his Beloved's Will, except that in rare moments of forgetfulness he may transgress the limits. He always keeps before him the wishes and the commands of his Beloved (the Master). He has no personal desires. A lover remains happy in the Will of his Beloved. It is for this reason that he is dear to the Master.

We should always ask from the Lord and from our Master, with great humility, for the gift of love. Disrespectful people remain devoid of the Grace and Mercy of God.

How Can Love be Maintained?

If you wish to make friends with somebody, you first create a longing for him in your mind. If you wish to love God, you should cultivate a longing for God. Love cannot remain alive without continuous cultivation. We can maintain love by love.

If we wish to be happy in some work, the happiness can be achieved only by doing that work regularly and continuously. Similarly, in order to become a lover we have to persist in our love. In order to get love we have to do something, and if we wish to keep our love for someone alive, we have to follow certain principles. And for this it is necessary to sacrifice time and possession. Love can be maintained by exerting the same amount of effort that we spent in winning it.

Where is Love First Produced?

Love is first produced in the heart of the Beloved. If there is no light, the moth will never burn itself. Love is born in a man through good fortune by the Grace of God, and then only is one able to go into the company of Saints. Guru Ram Das says:

Regarding those who possess the wealth of love, you should understand that He Himself has granted this favor to them out of His Grace. This treasure can be obtained only through a Master. It is exceedingly difficult to serve Him, but that is also the means of achieving all joy. This love is bestowed only on such persons on whom God Himself bestows it with His Grace. The company of Saints is also achieved by previous karmas and good fortune.

Love by a Gurumukh and a Manmukh

To love God is the rare fortune of a Gurumukh. To him the meeting with the Beloved is like the wearing of a garland of all good qualities around his neck. To awaken love within, to have the Darshan of the Lord, to love Scriptures, to produce a pure Light within – all these are the privileges of a Gurumukh. This state cannot be achieved by a Manmukh.

We meet our Beloved and we have achieved happiness. We have also worn around our neck the garland of all good qualities. Oh Nanak, it is only a Gurumukh who can achieve this love for God. Such a person has love inside and has the Darshan of the Lord. He listens to Scriptures and is happy. The pure Light of God appears in such a Gurumukh.

A Manmukh is one who follows the dictates of his mind. He cannot have love for God nor for a Master because, oh Nanak, only with the Grace of a Guru, who is the bestower of pain and pleasure, can one merge into the Lord. (Adi Granth)

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Qualities Awakened Through Love

Destruction of the ego. Another name for love is continuous remembrance. By remembering the Beloved continuously, attachment and love for Him are awakened within and the ego or self is destroyed. The lover then begins to merge into the Beloved to the extent that he becomes His very form. Bulleh Shah says:

I have been crying 'Ranja, Ranja, my beloved' so much that I have become Ranja.

To forget one's self is the fundamental principle of love. All the desires of a lover narrow down to the Will of the Beloved. His whole self is dissolved into the Beloved. When there is no self, then where are the desires? Even God is in search of such true lovers. Our ego is an obstacle between us and God.

So long as thou art, how can thy Beloved be thine? (Bu-ali-Qalandar)

He further states:

When you have emptied yourself by constant remembrance, you will find the path which leads to the Presence of the Lord.

Maulana Rumi says in this direction:

When there is no I in you, then your God will have communion with you. Therefore, you should try to forget yourself.

A lover destroys his ego and thus loosens the ties of worldly attachment. Then the love which is between the lover and the Lord is born and he meets the Lord. Such

love destroys all our selfish desires and makes the soul worthy of flying to the spiritual regions above. It is true that a person who has his body and his bodily energies under control also has control over higher regions.

Love is a certain remedy for all our ailments. That person is really fortunate who, by sacrificing himself, effaces his ego and thus is in intimate communion with God. Without destruction of one's ego, it is not possible to have the Darshan of the Lord. If you wish to purchase Him, sell yourself.

Love only gives, and takes nothing. Love is such a unique quality that whosoever gets it has no other desire left in him. Love makes man selfless and free from all care. In love, there is never any question of taking, because it knows only how to give. We love children and continue giving them things. We never desire anything from them, and they are a source of happiness to us.

The foundation of love is to give. Wherever there is love, there will be only the feeling to give, and the desire to receive anything will never be formed. Love is selfless. It is not selfish. Even in the love of God, the feeling of giving or surrendering ourselves to Him is the first step. In the beginning we may pray to God for the necessities of life, but this state is prior to the development of love for God.

Generally, people worship God with some ulterior motive, and they ask for worldly blessings. They pray that their children may be healthy, and they ask for the joys of heaven. Such people are either lovers of the world or the comforts of heaven. Only a rare few worship God for the sake of God alone. Our aim should be to remember God only out of love for Him. We should not blacken our heart

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by worldly desires, and should ask from Him nothing but love for Him.

To ask from you, o my Lord! anything other than You, is to seek trouble. Give me patience by your Naam, so that all hunger of the mind may disappear.

With the appearance of love, our ego is consumed in the Will of God. Demands automatically cease and we are happy only in accepting the Will of the Beloved. A devotee considers it a sin to demand anything from God.

*When we love somebody, what do we do? We sacrifice everything – our heart, our life, our body, etc. Whatever pleases the one whom we love also pleases us. Have we fallen so low that while trying to love Him we should also demand from Him the fulfilment of our desires? When we do this, have we any right to call ourselves lovers of God? We are not His lovers, but the lovers of His gifts.
(Maulana Rumi)*

Then, how can one meet God? Only he will meet Him who has sacrificed himself for Him, who is constantly and selflessly engaged in Naam - whether sitting, sleeping, awake, walking, etc. Such a man is of God, and God is his.

Those who demand things of the world from Him will get their worldly desires fulfilled, but they will not meet God. He knows all our thoughts, so how can we deceive Him? He knows even the latent desires in our mind, and whatever we ask God for, He gives. The fifth Sikh Guru says:

My kind Lord has permitted me to know that His children will be given whatever they desire. You should therefore become His children and ask only for His Darshan so that His Lotus Feet may reside in your heart.

A Master is the manifestation of God. A lover of a Master does not even demand salvation or Sat Naam. His love is for the sake of love and he gets everything without asking for it.

A wife loves her husband and because of that love he tries to satisfy her needs without her having to ask him. Similarly, a Master, who is the manifestation of God Himself, gives everything to us. He gives us whatever we need, without our asking. Above all, He bestows the highest treasure of love through which peace, concentration, a blissful life and inner awakening are produced. The lover's devotion is for Him alone, and in the eyes of a true devotee both the worlds appear to be nothing.

Love is selfless. True love is free from all desires. Selfishness and love cannot meet. Love decreases in proportion to the degree of increase of selfishness; and love increases as selfishness decreases.

Leaving aside spirituality, it is not good to have a feeling of selfishness even in the ordinary day-to-day life. If we love someone with any selfish aim, then it is not love; rather, we love our own selfish ends. Similarly, those who worship with a desire for wealth, offspring, fame or heaven are not real devotees. That kind of love is more like a trade or a business. True love is only for the love of the Beloved. Sheik Farid says:

Where there is greed there is no love, and if greed is there, that love is false.

Every soul is love in its very essence, but if this love is confined to a certain state and is directed in the form of a desire then the soul energy is stopped. When a person gives up all desires, his soul-currents of love emanate with

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great force. The fullness of life is a state of desirelessness.

A yogi desires salvation, but a lover or a devotee does not want this and is happy only in the pure love of the Lord. The root of all evils, namely selfishness, is the basis of all evil acts by anyone towards another. But a devotee of the Lord is absorbed only in Him, selflessly. It is impossible for any idea of evil to be entertained by such a person.

Love brings fearlessness and courage of a high order. The first sign of true love is that the lover becomes free from fear. A lover is happy only when he sacrifices his heart and his life. When one is pierced with love, how can he be afraid of death? The Master acts as a shield for him, so how can the arrows of death pierce him? Such a lover has no fear of anybody except the Beloved.

Even a delicate woman will be prepared to attack a tiger, if she sees her children in danger. How can one be afraid of anything, if he has dedicated his life to love? Where there is fear, love has not yet affected the heart. The first stage of love is fearlessness. Kabir says:

Oh Kabir! Only those will be able to drink from the still well of love who will be prepared to sacrifice their heads. No one else will be eligible to drink. Oh Kabir! The cup of love is full of flavor, but to drink it is very difficult because the one who distributes this wine demands the sacrifice of your head.

The courage of a lover is also of a high order. People generally get tired when they work, but the hands and the feet of a lover are given a unique strength and activity. He does not remain idle.

His heart assumes the greatness of an ocean. He has no

worries. For him even impossible things become possible. Every difficult thing becomes easy. Guru Arjan says:

If the path of love is beset with oceans, mountains, forests and endless deserts – all these appear to be equal to only one step forward on account of love.

A lover does not worry about obstacles in his path. Farid says:

The home of the Beloved is far off. The road which leads to it is filled with mire on account of rain, but the lover has only the thought of the Beloved in his heart. When he walks on such a road his clothes become wet and he even slips at every step on account of the mud. But he does not care and goes forward somehow. He does not want to break the continuity of his love. Then he cries out, 'Oh God! This rain should be a torrential rain and this blanket of mine should be drenched.' With these words he goes on to meet his Beloved so that his love may not wane.

Love has a force which imparts increased power of endurance to the lover and makes him capable of enduring pain. Lovers who have been madly in love have actually made friends with death. They feel a sense of pleasure in facing troubles, and they may fight all their life against hope but they never waver.

The world of lovers is not easy. Bilwamangal was able to ford a river on a dead body, thinking it to be a log of wood, because he was intoxicated with love. He even climbed the roof of his beloved's house by means of a hanging snake, mistaking it to be a piece of rope. The darkness of the night, the torrential rain and the fearful tempest, all faded away before the whirlwind of Bilwamangal's madness of love. Manu's love was similarly expressed for Laila. Farhad was the lover of Shirin. They danced attendance from door to door; they fell against

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stones and had to climb mountains. They even starved for lack of food, but nothing could deter them from their love, till death overtook them. These are examples of the ventures of physical love.

Love is a force greater than any other. Love is energy, which gives power to life. The Upanishad says:

Those who practice Pranayam crush their enemies into small bits like a clod of earth when struck against a stone.

A lover achieves strength to bear all kinds of troubles and tortures. People of the world are unable to bear slander but a lover becomes indifferent to it. His soul receives such strength that he does not succumb to any ailment. Love is a perfect remedy for all inner ailments.

Love comprises service, sacrifice and true subjugation of mind. A mother moves around the bed of her sick child with such devotion that she has no idea of day or night, but she does not complain about her own inconvenience. A child wets the bed but the mother puts the child on the dry side and herself sleeps on the wet side the whole night. She never entertains a feeling of anger or hatred in her mind for the child. A mother may have been hungry for a number of days; she has a little food which she gives to her child, and herself quietly lies down and suffers from starvation. She never complains. She is patient and thankful.

This is the gift of self-sacrifice and subjugation of the mind, which are the sequence of love. People try to control passion, anger, greed, attachment and pride. That is not an easy job, but through true love they are all completely toned down. We bow before such love.

All things become easy in the presence of love. A person under the influence of love performs the most difficult tasks with comparative ease. Through love, even impossible things become possible. Love knows no burdens. You may have to work very hard. There may be a great burden of responsibilities on your shoulders. But if you clearly understand the law of love, all these difficulties will be performed by love without trouble.

He does much who loves much.

If a person loves a certain type of work, he works at it incessantly because love feels no burden. A lover does not mind burdens and he therefore gladly accomplishes work beyond his capacity. He never complains of his inability to do any work because he considers himself capable of doing every type of work in the atmosphere of his love. Love gives him such energy that he does not consider anything impossible.

A lover pays no heed to public opinion or his own high position. In true love all such feelings vanish. The idea of high or low birth also disappears. One who is in love has no connection with such things.

If you are a lover of the Divine Beauty, you should rise above criticism. One who is fully dyed in the color of love is unconcerned about all public gossip and opinions.

Hafiz says:

We do not care for public opinion, nor praise.

Whosoever has dedicated his honor at the Feet of the Lord will be protected by God Himself. Such devotees are always intoxicated with love and are free from anxiety.

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Kabir says:

A person who wishes to taste love and also wants to maintain his fame or honor should know that these two things cannot stay together; just as two swords cannot be contained in one scabbard. I have not seen such a thing nor have I ever heard of it.

Love brings to the lover the quality of concealing the bad qualities of others. Love hides all evils and bad things. In a lover's eyes the beloved appears to be pure and free from all evils. He sees the spark of his beloved in everybody. Therefore he talks sweetly to the liking of all. His attention never turns towards the faults or defects of anyone in this world. Why should he then criticize or talk ill of anyone? Criticism is the outcome of the absence of love.

Lovers are awakened through love, and love's power remains constant. One whose mind has become alive through love is beyond death, and memory of his name lives forever.

There are many other attributes of love. By obtaining or developing love, many virtues are added.

Love and all things shall be added unto you.

In love there is unique oneness, happiness, comfort and fulfilment. Through love, one is able to benefit his own self and also his family.

When the mind is filled with love, the ego is destroyed; fear, worry and transmigration of the soul are ended; all mental anguish, all pains and ailments are finished. Illusion (Maya), bad acts and evil intellect are also effaced. Desire, restlessness and all the mind's dirt are removed. All longings are fulfilled and devotion is produced. Such a

devotee crosses the ocean of life and attains salvation. He is honored and receives honor in the Presence of the Lord. He achieves the state of Sahaj. Because of the love within himself, God is always his guide. He meets God, and God resides in his heart. The mind becomes satisfied. He goes to his Real Home, and is freed from the cycle of births and deaths.

Love has been described and given a high place in the Sikh Scriptures, and there are numerous verses invoking the spirit of love within. It is suggested that the reader should read them carefully, and by imbibing such love make his life fruitful.

CHAPTER 2. PRAYER OR SUPPLICATION

What is supplication?

Prayer is called in Persian, 'Dua', which means to call. It means calling on the Lord or some other person for help.

A materialist considers this life to be a machine, the parts of which are being run by the blind forces of cause and effect, and he does not admit that there is an Ultimate Being who is directing it. But one who knows the reality, while agreeing that the law of cause and effect is working, further knows that this is being done under the orders and directions of a Supreme Being. He, therefore, while keeping an eye on the causes-and their effects, appeals to the Lord, the Supreme Cause, for help.

The Helplessness of the Materialist

We find that a materialist, while possessing all means and materials, does not reach the ultimate objectives he desires. All his material possessions do not enable him to do so. He then becomes helpless. He perceives no ray of hope in the darkness of his failure. He does not like anything. His life becomes a burden to him. He feels no interest in life and in his despair he may commit suicide. He lives like a corpse devoid of life. As compared with this, a person who knows the reality makes an effort to gain worldly wealth, but knowing that the Lord is the

ultimate Cause of all causes, leaves the fruits to Him and surrenders gladly to His Will and pleasure. The Lord may do whatever is good for him, for it is only the Lord who knows what is good for us. If the result is in accordance with his wishes, he is thankful. If it is to the contrary, he submits to it cheerfully, because he knows that whatever is happening is in accordance with the order and will of the Lord. He asks for the Lord's help at every step, because he knows that there is always something that is beyond the reach of his own efforts. Crying for help in this way is called prayer.

In reality, prayer is the gathering and stilling of the waves of the mind at the inner center. When some desire springs up in the mind or one is worried by some worldly affliction, he thinks in his heart of the power of the Lord and looks to Him for inspiration. The heart of man is the dwelling place of the Lord. The Lord is the great storehouse of power. He is the true and complete ideal. By contemplating on Him a man gains peace within himself and becomes powerful. When he gets this power, he is able to think of ways of getting out of his troubles. The mind gets power to put forth effort. By offering prayers, the mind gets one-pointed. A patience-giving current of thoughts is generated which makes a man alert and active. He develops habits of patience, contentment and forbearance, and acquires courage and strength with which to face difficulties. These are the fruits of prayer.

The wise know that there is great strength in the soul of man. The mind is related to the soul. Therefore, when the waves of the mind are stilled, they come under the influence of the soul and gain strength from it. The soul is conscious and powerful, since it is a particle of the Lord. The Lord permeates it. Man considers himself to be limited and feeble, and it is indeed true that one becomes what he

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thinks himself to be. But the soul is a particle of the Lord, and the Lord is infinite. If the particle thinks of the infinite for some time, it finds itself to be infinite.

You are a particle of the infinite, and if you think of the infinite for some time you will become infinite.

When the soul is connected with the Lord, it receives infinite strength from His Current of Powers. Although you are finite, there is a power within you which is infinite. This is the Lord Himself. On understanding this, one begins to understand the reality of the fact that the soul and the Lord are one. The soul takes the dye of the Lord and becomes one with Him.

The Father and son are dyed in the same hue. (Bhairo M5, 1161-15)

I and my Father are one. (Bible)

Those with true intelligence go inside and pray. They then get benefit from the Merciful Current of the Lord. Those of lesser wisdom worship symbols or go to mosques or temples where there are idols, and pray before them. There are those who know the spiritual regions and go inside and get direct help through the mind, while there are others who go to certain holy places such as rivers and so forth, and pray there. All of them get results according to the one-pointedness of their mind and faith. No such action is without results.

Some deny the existence of God, and do not think it proper to offer prayers. The Lord is invisible and unseeable. He cannot be seen by the senses. But He permeates our soul. He is not separate from us, whether we believe in Him or not. He is the soul of our souls. He sustains

them. He is in truth one – Mahatmas call Him by various names.

We have already said that prayer can be described as the stilling of one's inner feelings at the mind center. In this are included detachment and practice, knowledge and contemplation and worship and recitation.

Prayer is a Universal Feeling

Prayer is a universal feeling, which a person feels when discomforts, trouble, disease, danger or calamity visits him and he wishes to avoid these things; or when he wishes to satisfy some bodily need or obtain spiritual gain; or when he wants strength to face some difficulties because he does not find sufficient power in himself; or when he wants the help of a powerful being. We see every day that we are often obliged to ask some stronger or more capable person to help us.

When a student cannot solve a problem, he seeks the aid of his teacher. Similarly, in the case of illness, we ask a physician to treat us. A subordinate asks his officer to help him. These are examples of a kind of prayer.

When we face any difficulty or an enemy pursues us and we find no refuge, we ask for help from the powerful Lord of the universe or from persons in whom He is manifest. This is called prayer.

It is natural to ask a more powerful or more able person to help us, and it is all the more natural to turn for help to that Supreme Power who is the Lord of all regions and universes and is their Creator, or to one who is one with Him. The fact is that we cannot help praying to Him.

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How prayer should be offered so that it may be acceptable to the Lord and to the Master, is the next point to be considered. All the religions say that supplication to the Lord or to the Master is the way to obtain Grace of every kind. It is only through prayer that spiritual advancement can be achieved. Prayer is the most natural, direct and easy means of connecting individuals with the Creator, and connecting the slave with the Lord. Every seeker needs prayer from the beginning to the end, until he realizes the Lord and merges in Him. Through prayer, all bodily, religious, national and social needs are fulfilled. The ailments of mind and body are eliminated, and prayer ultimately becomes the means of bringing about the union of the soul with the Lord. By the Grace of the Lord, the mind, which is like a crow that eats filth or a crane that eats fish, becomes pure like aswan.

Whether you are a swan, a crow or a crane, only His Mercy is of any avail. If He so wills it, He turns a crow into a swan. (Sri Rag War M1, 91-4)

Do Not Extend Your Hand in Supplication Before Anyone Other Than the Lord and the Master

He is the Creator and Lord of the Universe. All other powers are sustained by Him. He is the Supreme Power of all powers. Whatever you wish to ask, ask it of the Lord. There is no dearth of anything in His Court. Kabir Sahib says,

Nothing is wanting in His court.

Guru Arjan Sahib also says that when his kind Friend pervades everything and is everywhere present, how can His servant be in need of anything?

He whose Friend is present everywhere what can such a person want? (Gauri M5, 186-8)

All the gods and goddesses and lower powers draw their strength from Him. All depend on Him. If you have to ask for anything, pray to Him. Why ask of the servants? Man can be true – the Khalsa (Pure Being) – only when he does not look to anybody else. Guru Gobind Singh Ji says:

One who, with the flame burning brightly, meditates in his mind on the One without thinking of another; one who is filled and adorned with complete love and affection and does not believe in fasting or the grave or the tomb; one who recognizes only One and no other and does not indulge in pilgrimages, charity, kind acts, austerities and self-discipline - when the candle burns clearly inside him, then he is Khalsa or the pure one.

Guru Arjan Sahib says,

All is from the Lord, who is the chief giver and the dispeller of fear. Remember Him and make supplication to Him.

Pray to the giver of joy and the dispeller of fear, to whom He is kind, his deeds bear fruit. (Sri Rag M5, 44)

Praise the One and repeat His Name; remember the One, and keep the One in mind. Sing never-ending praises of the One, with body and mind meditate on the Lord, He is One and One alone. The only Lord pervades everywhere, the One has become many; by praying to the One sin departs; the One Lord pervades the body and the mind; by the Master's Grace Nanak knows that One. (Gauri M5, 289-5)

Guru Ramdas says,

If you have to perform any action, pray to the Lord. He will make it

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successful. The Master is our true friend, relation and helper.

If you wish for success in any action, pray to the Lord. He accomplishes your task for you. The Master is the true witness. He is the dispeller of fear and is kind. He protects his servant. (War Sri Rag M5, 91-5)

Guru Arjan Sahib prays,

O Lord! This body of mine is Yours. I pray humbly and earnestly before You. Everything is due to Your greatness. Otherwise nobody would even know my name.

I pray to You, for the body and mind are Yours. Oh Nanak! It is all His greatness. Otherwise, nobody would know my name. (Asa M5, 383-11)

The strength and refuge of the Saints is the Lord who is their Master. They pray to Him. There is no fixed place for their worship. They tell their joys and sorrows to Him alone.

I am mad. You are my Master and I pray to Thee; I have no other place in which to pray to You; I can tell my joys and sorrows to You alone. (Suhi M4, 735-1)

Always ask of the All-Powerful One. If you ask any other, you will find that he is already full of troubles and cannot give you any help.

To whomsoever you may pray in this world, his hands are full of his own troubles. He who prays to the Transcendent One crosses the ocean of the world. (Gujri M5, 497)

It is beneficial to pray to the All-Powerful One. There is no dearth of anything with Him. To ask of the lower powers or of the gods and goddesses does not lead to

complete success.

They can give us benefits or boons that are within their own sphere, but they cannot save us from death and rebirth. They are all involved in this lower cycle. They cannot give salvation.

Guru Arjan Sahib says that he who prays to the Lord is free from all the three fevers and troubles, gets the wealth of happiness, and is saved from calamity.

He removes the three fevers. He takes away troubles and gives peace. He who prays to the Lord meets with no obstructions. (Todi M5, 714-12)

It is clearly written in the holy Quran that one should call upon the Lord only for help. Crying to the Lord is the true crying. Hazrat Ibrahim told his tribesmen,

Go away. I leave you and all others except Allah to whom you pray. I cry to my Lord. I am confident that I will not be left without help when I cry to Him.

He again said,

Oh followers of the book, turn your faces towards one who is your friend and mine. We should not pray to anyone except the Lord 'Allah Talah', and should regard none other as His equal. (Alamar Ayat 7-8)

We have as yet not seen the Lord, therefore we do not completely rely on Him and have faith in Him. When there is no complete faith, how can one's prayers be heard? But there is the Light of the Lord in the Master.

He appears in the garb of a Holy Man. (Mam M5, 1075- 7).

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The Lord speaks through him; the Lord resides in the heart of a Holy Man. (M 5 263-4)

His words are the words of the Lord, although they come from the throat of Abdullah. (Servant of God)

The words of the Master, although they come from the throat of a human being, are the words of the Lord. To ask of the Guru is to ask of the Lord. He is in every way powerful. If you wish to pray to Him who is able to give life or take it away, call upon Him who is the living God and have confidence and faith in Him. Do not turn to any earthly refuge. Turn your inner attention to Him. No thought of receiving help from anyone else should ever enter the mind. The attention should be directed to Him alone. Your cries for help will reach Him. Kabir Sahib says that if a disciple is on one side of the ocean and the Guru on the other, the disciple should turn his attention to the Master. The Master will then make all his efforts successful. The Master is the King of kings. Everything is within His power. He has the power to do everything. The world of kings bows at His door.

He who is the Overlord of kings and chieftains, He in Whose power is the whole world, He who is the doer of all things, no one is beyond Him, pray to your Master, He will crown your efforts with success. He Whose court is the highest, He Whose name sustains the devotees, He Who pervades and owns all, He Whose glory is present in all minds, He by remembering whom death cannot harm, He by remembering whom dry land becomes green, He by remembering whom the drowning ones swim across, oh Nanak, He has heard my prayers. The Saints will have mercy on me and I will dwell in the Name. (Gauri M5, 182)

He can give all the four boons, that is, dharam (righteousness), wealth, happiness and salvation. He has pow-

er to give all.

He who wants the four cardinal boons, he should serve the Holy Men. He who wants to cast his woes away, he should sing the Name of the Lord in his heart. He who wants glory for himself, he should live with Holy Men and give up his ego. He who is afraid of death and rebirth, he should take shelter with the Saints. (Gauri M5, 266-4)

If you go to the door of the Lord or the Master, go as a beggar. There is no one else before whom one should bow. He is the only one who can listen to the prayer of one who is caught in the whirlpool of Maya. He is the only one who can put healing ointment on the heart that is bleeding from attachment and greed. It is only He who can revive lost hopes. All these qualities exist only in the Lord, or in His other form, the Master. He heals bleeding hearts by sending them the Current of His Inner-Consciousness. Bhai Nand Lai Sahib says:

The Perfect Master heals the heart, the healing is done in the heart.

For this reason a disciple, whether near or far from his Master, should give up all intellectual cleverness, surrender his mind and body to Him, and place all his sufferings before Him.

Whenever the heart is suffering pray to him; give up cleverness, and surrender body and mind. (Gujri War M5, 519-11)

In the holy Quran it is said,

Who else is there who would listen to the prayers of the helpless and afflicted and remove his troubles?

Jesus Christ says in the Epistle of St. John in the Bible:

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Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you. (St. John 14:23)

If you have to pray, pray to the Lord or to His manifested form the Master, who can give you all.

Pray to the Living Presence of the Lord

There can be no doubt that just like asking for help in worldly affairs from one who is powerful, the asking for aid from the Power who is the fountain of all powers and wealth, is a true and effective prayer. But to sigh while praying, considering Him to be separate from us is ignorance. He is a pure and infinite Being, but in His Mercy He dwells within and illumines our soul.

Therefore to pray for help to that Power which is seated in our soul is the key to success. To pray to Him as a Being apart from us is not true prayer, for we are then praying to a Being whose existence we doubt, and there is still a feeling of egotism or separateness. Some doubt still persists as to whether or not we will receive His Grace, and there is not complete faith and confidence.

That Reality permeates our entire being, although we are not conscious of it, and the Current of Divine Power and Light is flowing inside us. When we turn within and merge in that power our soul-force awakens within us. Just as our hidden physical strength is awakened by physical exercise, similarly, in prayer we bring to the surface our inner feelings and emotions and through such prayer the soul awakens and we obtain spiritual benefits.

It sometimes happens that by praying to some power apart from ourselves our wishes are fulfilled due to

self-intoxication induced by our heart-felt desires and feelings. But the illusion about the Lord being separate from us still persists. Our life is then not based on any firm foundation. We are not conscious of the treasure of powers and abilities that lies within us. Our soul is a particle of the Lord. He permeates our soul. By praying to Him and merging in Him one shares in His powers. But he who considers Him to be a separate being cannot enjoy this wonderful pleasure and the full benefits of merging in Him. Those who think that the Lord is on high and directs the affairs of the world from there seldom receive a response to their prayers.

The Lord is with you and within you and not far away from you. The Lord is inside you. He is none other than the spirit of your soul. Pray to Him and praise Him inside, and ask for His help.

Prayer and Effort

Should effort be given up when praying? It should be remembered that until man becomes a conscious co-worker with and under His will, he should not give up effort. It is not the purpose of prayer or grace that you should make no effort, except to go on praying. This can be made clear by an illustration.

A boy is late for school. What would you think of him if he were to sit down and pray, Oh Lord! Let me not be late. It would be proper for the boy that, while praying, he should also rely on his own effort and should walk quickly in order to reduce the delay. In the first instance there would be more and more delay. We should take a lesson from one aspect of this illustration only. While making an effort, also extend the hands in prayer. This is the chief cause of success. A sincere desire for anything

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and a sincere effort for it is true prayer. This is praying in the right way.

All too often we pray with our lips and act otherwise. Such a prayer is not granted. When a man makes a sincere effort for something from his heart, that prayer issues from the very pores of his cells, even though he may not utter a syllable. Whenever necessity arises or a calamity comes, then make an effort with firmness and confidence and pray to the Lord to remove the defects due to imperfections and weakness in you.

It is said in the holy Quran that when Moses and Harun prayed for victory over the infidels and their men, they received the reply,

I have accepted the prayer of both of you. You should now stand firm in your efforts and not follow the example of those who do not know the reality.

The prophet Moses told his people,

Ask for help from the Lord and be firm. Do not lose courage in the face of calamity. Only he loses courage who has no refuge. The Lord and His human form, the Master, is your everlasting refuge. If in spite of effort you fail, take it to be His Will. If one loses while trying, take it to be His Will.

Which Prayer is Granted?

A devotee's prayer never goes in vain. A man's prayer is never wasted. (Belawal M5, 819-11)

Whatever the devotee asks of the Lord is granted. Whatever the devotee desires of the Lord is granted at once. (Asa M5, 403-16)

Whatever you ask of the Lord, He gives; oh Nanak, whatever a

devotee says comes true. (Dhanasri M5, 681-19)

Guru Sahib says that the Lord, the Father, has ordained that whatever a child asks shall be granted.

The Father has ordained that whatever a child asks shall be given to him. (Malar M5, 1266)

In the Sura Momin of the holy Quran it is stated,

Cry to me and your request will be granted.

Again it is said in the Sura Baker,

Oh Prophet: whenever any of my creatures asks you about me, tell him that I am with him; if he cries, I hear him and grant his request.

It is said in the Bible:

What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. (St. Mark 11:24)

It is again stated:

Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. (St. Mathew 7:7,8)

It is seen, however, that people ask for thousands of things and all of their prayers are not granted. Then what is the meaning of the above words? Let us see which kind of prayer is granted, and why every prayer cannot be granted.

The prayer that can redeem sinners and cure physical,

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mental and spiritual disease must be made with full faith in the Lord and the conviction that He is all-powerful. Our feelings which have not found utterance are not hidden from Him. He is cognizant of every feeling and thought. He knows the sufferings of both the good and the evil.

He knows what is within the heart; He knows the sufferings of both the good and the bad. (Pat Chaupai 10)

The dwelling up of a strong desire is in reality the making of a prayer. If we should surrender our desires or acts to the Lord before expressing them, then there would be no obstacle in the way of success.

That prayer is right which is full of yearning and pangs. It should be made with patience and full confidence, and with a loving heart, in all humility and submission.

Oh mind! Stand in awe of the Lord. However low, even the lowest of the low, He calls him to Him. (Devghandhari M5, 529-8)

Prayers should be made according to the directions of the Master and in order to reform one's life. When you pray in this way, you express gratitude for favors received. Gratitude cannot be expressed by mere words that have no connection with our conduct. Since the Master is the Shabd and the Shabd is His form, He is in the Shabd. He who makes the Shabd a part of his life becomes dear and acceptable to the Master. He says,

If you love me, do as I say.

The words of the Master are words of bliss; they are Nectar itself. (Kanara M4, 1311)

Christ said,

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

In order that the prayer may be acceptable, it is necessary that the disciple should be devoted to the Master and His words should dwell in the heart. He can then ask for anything and it will be given to him. Feel happy in remembering the Lord and he will fulfil your desires. Christ says:

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. (St. John 15:7)

Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. (Psalm 37:4)

If you crave forgiveness for your sins, you should first forgive others and then pray. Christ says:

When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. (St. Mark 11:25)

The situation is, therefore, that when we commit any bad act and ask forgiveness of the Lord, He then forgives us; but at the same time He warns us,

Beware, go and do not do it again. Christ, when he forgave a woman for committing adultery, said, Go and sin no more.

A judge may reduce a sentence, but this does not mean that the criminal will become a better man. He may well do the same evil deeds again. But according to the spiritual law by which the Master forgives sin, he also tells the sinner to sin no more, so that he may turn away from sin and may be able to enter higher regions. What good can it

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do a man to cry if he goes on taking poison? It is very necessary for him to stop taking poison. How can prayer be of any help if there is no sincere aversion to doing sinful deeds?

Ceaseless effort to make our life pure and truthful is true prayer. This draws to us the Mercy of the Lord, and His Grace and limitless blessings then fulfil the sincere and pure desires of our heart. By merely asking of the Lord or the Master that we may love Him, we do not, as a matter of fact, begin to love Him. But if we consciously pray for a truthful and pure life and try to elevate our life, we will then be molded as He wills and will begin to realize His presence and to share His love.

To pray effectively, it is necessary that we should conduct our life as desired by the Master, and that we should experience happiness in the remembrance of the Lord. Our prayers should be in harmony with the Will of the Lord and the Master, and we should feel happy in whatever He wills. A peculiarity of human life is the love that knows how to give, but not how to take. But one becomes entitled to all the powers of the Lord by loving Him. He benefits the world through them, but remains aloof from all. We have to love the Lord. It is His Will to give or not to give to us. Our duty is to remain happy in the sphere of His Will. It is, therefore, considered unbelief for the Saints to pray. Maulana Rumi says that Saints rejoice in the Will of the Lord. They consider it unbelief to pray, Oh Lord! Take away this suffering from me.

Intellectual and Logical Difficulties in Prayer

Many would like to know why we should pray when the Lord knows all our needs. A father, for example, takes care of the expenses of his family's food, clothing and edu-

cation without being asked to do so. If we are to be given only after asking, then it seems possible that we might not be given something owing to our lack of knowledge or comprehension. It is also possible that we might ask for something which would be to our disadvantage. We know from experience that we sometimes pray for things and get them, but when they turn out to our disadvantage, we are sorry that we prayed for them. Just as a father knows what is good and essential for his child, similarly, our heavenly Father also knows what we really need and what will be to our advantage. Saints, knowing that the Lord knows our needs, advise us to pray with this in mind.

Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him. (St. Mathew 6:8)

Great is Your glory, for You know our innermost feelings. (Asa 463)

He knows the inner thoughts of all hearts; He knows the sufferings of the good and evil. (Sri Mukh Wak, Patshahi 10)

The Saints have given examples of short prayers for our guidance, and some of these are cited later. The purpose of these prayers is to help us to know our needs and to have them fulfilled. When we receive their fulfilment, we should be thankful. The Saints ask us to pray for the fulfilment of our desires as a child asks its mother with full confidence.

We are children; You are our Father and Master; guide us. (Asa M4, 450)

We are ignorant and simple children; oh Father, instruct us. (Kalyan M4, 1321-4)

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Even if our prayer for the removal of a calamity may not be granted, it always happens that we get added strength to bear it and in this way we better realize our latent capacities. We sometimes think of ways and means by which these calamities and sufferings can be removed.

Internal Difficulties – The Heart’s Ground for Prayer

The Heart’s Ground for Prayer: It is necessary to prepare the heart for praying. This consists of praying in humility and with reverence and devotion. Guru Angad Sahib says, The Lord knows all, and is the cause of all that happens. He has the power to fulfil our desires by Himself. Stand before Him and pray in all humility.

He knows all; He can do everything Himself; oh Nanak! Stand before Him and beg humbly and earnestly. (Maru M2, 1093-3)

Guru Arjan Sahib also enjoins praying with both hands folded.

Pray with folded hands. (Bkairav M5, 1152-6)

The second requirement for praying is that the wavering of the mind should be stilled and that the mind should be focused on some inner center and concentrated there again and again. Until the mind is stilled at some center, both the seekers and the followers of the inner path weep at the antics of the mind. When we withdraw our thoughts from the external world and try to focus them on a center in the invisible world, our pent-up thoughts and fears due to our sins in the past come to the surface of themselves. They should either be eliminated by calm and cool reasoning or removed by praying. The best way to remove these difficulties is to conjure up the form of the

Master inside ourselves and to lose ourselves in contemplation of Him. It is this kind of constant contemplation which opens the way to the Lord and makes us fit for His Mercy.

In inner praying, a seeker sometimes meets with difficulties due to receiving no apparent response to his prayers. He may then begin to feel that there is no truth behind it. Not feeling the presence of the Lord, the seeker feels as if he is praying in a void. Some seekers rely on the fact that though they do not see the Lord, He sees them. But this state does not last for long. On closing the eyes, we see a vast expanse of darkness and see nothing beyond it. We take this silence as a response to our prayers. The senses cannot function in this silence, and the seeker feels in this state of unconsciousness that he has lost the way. He wishes to walk further on the strength of faith, but he falls again and again. It is a very delicate stage and requires the guidance of a Master. In addition, a certain amount of dryness enters our mind. It does not want to pray. If it is forcibly made to pray, the desire to do so fades away. A seeker has to spend a long time in this stage of dryness and darkness, and many a time his efforts prove fruitless and he does not find the abode of the Lord. These illusions of Maya and Kal mislead a seeker. The method of removing them is to be steady in contemplating on the inner image of the Master and in trying to achieve one-pointedness.

Three Methods of Prayer

Prayer is performed in three ways.

One is audible, in which we say prayers with our tongue. Ordinary people repeat certain prescribed passages from religious scriptures or recite prayers composed by

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some Saint. Some think that these are not very beneficial, since they represent the feelings of the Saints, while true prayer is an inner cry from the individual's own heart. Unless our prayer represents the inmost feelings of our heart, we do not derive benefit from it. Reciting other people's prayers is like wearing the clothes of others which do not fit us. The prayers of Saints and Holy Men serve us as a model in as much as similar feelings may arise in our own minds, and in this way the reciting of such prayers helps us.

The second method of praying is mental, in which the tongue does not come into play. In this kind of prayer, concentration is necessary. Before doing so, one feels the presence of the Lord who pervades everywhere, and prays for His help and becomes absorbed in His contemplation. While so absorbed, pray. For this, concentration is necessary. The mind should be withdrawn from everything outside and should be focused on the presence of the Lord or the Master. Then give vent to the feelings of your heart with devotion and gratitude; confess your weaknesses and ask for help. Open your heart to the Lord. For doing this successfully, patience and firm determination are necessary. It cannot be done in a hurry. It is like learning to play a violin or some other instrument, which requires patience and determined practice.

In the beginning the mind does not take to it, but slowly and slowly, with remembrance of the Lord and contemplation of the Guru, the mind becomes still and success is achieved. When a seeker makes a little progress by means of audible and mental prayers, he should wait for a while for His Mercy and Grace.

When this practice is perfected, he will perceive, after praying, the flow of peace and bliss in his soul, and the

mind will become joyful. After tasting this joy, the mind does not wander. These are signs of the descent of the Mercy of the Lord and the Master.

Ordinary people consider this to be all. A seeker, however, should be thankful and should all the more desire for union with the Lord. In such union a seeker rises above the bondage of the body and reaches the presence of the Lord and the Master, from whom all blessings originate. He then sees in operation, the invisible hands which cannot be described. The seeker feels that he is no longer in his body and that he has entered a new kingdom. He floats in spiritual regions and becomes a dweller in them in this very life. He sees the Lord face to face, and enjoys this supreme happiness.

Because of the power of the Lord's attraction the seeker's heart, mind and soul become dyed in the color of the Lord. This can be called mystical prayer, the third method. It has been described by many Saints who have experienced it. This kind of prayer can be found even today. But this kind of prayer can be achieved only through the special Mercy and Grace of the Lord. The effort of the seeker does not count. Such an experience, even for a moment, leads to faith in the Lord and the Master, and produces confidence in spiritual progress and experience. All sins, selfishness and fears vanish. We progress and become the recipients of the inner Grace of the Saints.

Praying Aloud

Does praying aloud affect us? Yes. It makes us serious for a time and elevates the thoughts. But if the matter is considered deeply, we will realize that when we do not know the Reality, praying loudly holds us back from preparing the spiritual ground, and the thought of gaining

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praise from others sometime enters our mind. There is danger of our becoming impostors by praying aloud. Such prayers, which contain no truth and do not come from the heart, are simply meant to please others. Physical sensations produce in us mental or emotional happiness and joy. If we were to make some spiritual progress, then we might gain some higher experience from such emotional happiness. But until we are acquainted with the secret of the soul, we cannot gain it. Human passions cannot influence the Lord. It is not necessary to cry loudly to enable our prayers to reach Him. He is not far off. His unseen ears are everywhere. He knows the secrets of every heart and mind, and He can fulfil every desire. Spiritual wealth cannot be gained by praying aloud. One should offer silent prayers with the tongue of the soul, and should pray that he may always act according to the Will of the Lord.

He dwells in every heart. He sees everything and knows our secret feelings. The Lord hears even the foot-fall of an ant. In the holy Quran it is commanded, In all humility cry silently to the Lord. It is again stated, There is no need to make any noise, for He hears everything.

Guru Gobind Singh Sahib says:

The trumpeting of the elephant reaches Him a moment later, but He hears the cry of an ant even sooner than that. (Akal Astut)

There is no need for a seeker to utter loudly when praying. Even the silent current of his thought reaches the other side. The voice of thought is sufficient.

Praying in Public

In praying before the public we exaggerate our feelings. If we pray for a thing without desiring it in our heart of

hearts, that is, if our head and heart do not wish earnestly for a thing, our prayer is nothing but a public and futile repetition of words. But if our prayers are sincere, and we wish for a thing from our heart, then the Lord, on hearing our prayer, grants it. Can the recital of prayers in public, which have no relation to the feelings of the heart, bear any fruit? Can the words we utter reach that omnipotent Lord more rapidly than our inner feelings? No, never.

Audible prayers become mere formalities. They do not arouse our feelings, nor do we become absorbed in them. The prayers that spring from the heart of someone else cannot by repetition achieve their object unless they come from our hearts also. These prayers cannot be beneficial and cannot change our lives for good. The arrow which is shot without the bow being drawn to the breast cannot hit the target. Similarly, words which are not spoken from the heart do not reach the Lord. He knows our real needs even before we speak.

The Vedas, the holy Quran and other religious Scriptures, all insist on congregational prayers for the good of all. Can such prayers be of any benefit? Yes, certainly. If a number of persons offer prayers for the common good in humility and with sincere hearts, they get the Grace of the Lord and the prayers are never in vain. To wish for the common good is to live within the Will of the Lord. Many benefits come from it. It is a good way of keeping nations and societies awakened. It is customary amongst the Sikhs to offer common prayers. It is specially mentioned in their scriptures.

Nanak, praised be the Name. May all prosper by Thy Will.

The Gurus give examples of such prayers and these will be mentioned later. In Sura-i-al-i-Imran (a verse in the Quran) it is stated:

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Oh our Sustainer, keep us on the right path. Do not let our minds wander. Shower Thy Mercy on us. Surely, no one can exceed You in Grace.

In the same Sura the following prayer occurs:

Oh our Sustainer, forgive us for our lapses; overlook the excesses we have committed. Keep us steady on the right path, and give us victory over the forces of the infidels.

What is the purpose of our offering such prayers? We pray in order to elevate ourselves, or to benefit the hearers, or to put before the Lord the sufferings and needs of all, or to tell the people of our devotion. The prayers of the last kind are useless.

There is a mention of such a specific prayer in Sura-i-Bakar. It says: Oh our Sustainer! If there has been any default or mistake on our part, do not take us to task; forgive us. Oh Lord! Do not place on us the restrictions and limitations which You imposed on those who preceded us. Oh Lord! Do not subject us to a burden we cannot bear. Oh God! Forgive and pardon us. Have mercy on us. You are our Lord and Master. Give us victory and success against the infidels.

Place of Worship

It is not necessary to offer prayer in a religious place. What is necessary is an inner urge only. Sufficient solitude is necessary so that there may be no obstruction or interference. It may be in the home or outside of it. Any place where solitude can be had is suitable. You can use your bedroom for the purpose. There may be religious books or pictures there to remind you of Holy Men whom you

revere. If there is no room available, a particular portion of a room may be used. If this is not available, then any place such as a temple, satsang hall, mosque or church can be used. If this is not available, pray while walking alone, whether on the plains or in the hills, in a jungle or on the bank of a stream. Concentrate in the forehead, on the Lord or the Master, and place your inner feelings before Him. These places have some influence on prayers, but in reality no particular place or temple is required. All this world is the temple of the Lord.

This world is the body of the Lord and He pervades it. (Asa War M2, 463-13)

That place is holy where the Lord is remembered. All this earth is sacred. All places are fit for prayers. Alnusai said, For me the whole earth is a mosque and is sacred. Whenever the time of prayer arrives, my followers can say their prayers wherever they happen to be. The Lord is omnipresent. He created the entire universe, and He is its Lord. He does not dwell in man-made temples.

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands. (The Acts 17:24)

Homes, jungles, waste lands, hills, rivers – wherever you bow to the Lord – is holy.

All is holy where devotion kneels. (O. W. Holmes)

All this creation is of the Lord. He dwells everywhere. It is not necessary, therefore, to turn your head in any particular direction while praying. The main thing is a firm conviction that the Lord is inside you. There should also be the conviction that we are responsible for our own

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actions. In the holy Quran it is said:

Whether East or West, all belongs to the Lord. You may turn your head in any direction and you will face the Lord, for He is present everywhere. (Sura Albakar 14-3)

It is further stated:

There is no great benefit in turning your face in a particular direction. The true holiness lies in one's firm conviction in the Lord and the judgment day. (Albakar 22-2 Quran)

The truly sacred place for praying is this body, within which dwells the Lord.

This body is the temple of God, and the jewel of knowledge is to be found therein. (Parbhathi M3, 1346-4)

The body is the temple of the living God. (Bible)

The heart is the mosque, and the body adorns it.

Go inside and pray to the Lord. It is not necessary to go anywhere else in order to pray. Search the Vedas and the Puranas and you will find that all say that He is residing in the heart.

Oh, where am I to go when bliss is in my own house? My mind does not waver. It has become incapable of moving. Where I go, whether on land or sea, I see the Lord everywhere. The Vedas and Puranas were consulted; one should search Him there only if He is not here (in the heart). (Ramanand Basant, 1165-13)

That Beloved to whom we are to pray is in reality inside us and we are wandering outside in the world. The Nectar of the Lord is in the corner of our heart, while we are remaining thirsty.

The Beloved is in the home, while I search in the world outside. The water is in the pot, and I am wandering in thirst.

When you pray, enter the closet of the body and shut the outer doors. Do not let the attention wander outside. Open your heart to the Lord within. He will listen to the prayer made in this secret spot. Christ said:

But when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee. (St. Mathew 6:6)

This body is the temple in which the soul resides. By closing its doors, evil thoughts are kept away and thoughts of the Lord gain strength. The Lord is within us. We cannot see Him with our outer senses. It is only the Inner Eye that can see Him. The gross eyes cannot see Him.

When the gross eyes are closed, then the inner eye which can see Him, opens. Guru Nanak says those eyes which can see the Lord are different from the outer eyes.

*Oh Nanak! Those eyes are different by which He can be seen.
(Maru War M5, 1110-1)*

The Gurus say that on gathering together the attention from the ten senses, the Lord appears within.

It is spread in the ten senses, in his soul there is Light. (Gauri M5, 236-14)

In order to reach the depth of true prayer, the senses, which lead to the spreading of attention, should be restrained. Close the lips and forget about the body, and unite with the Lord or the Master at the seat of the soul

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within.

In order to pray correctly, it is necessary that we should go inside and shut the outer doors, withdraw our attention from the body, and direct it to the feet of the Beloved. In this sacred place pray to the Master, the incarnation of the Lord. He will appear and will lend a helping hand. Such a prayer will be accepted. To lose oneself in the remembrance of the Lord, with inner purity and sincere feelings, is true prayer. This should not be merely for show or ostentation. It should be with sincere feelings and not mere verbal effusion. If a prayer is made with true inner feelings, then the all-powerful Lord listens and invaluable benefits accrue from His Mercy.

Conditions for Prayers

The first condition for praying is that there should be a Being to whom prayers are offered. One should have full faith in the Lord or in His form, the Master, in whom He is manifested. When there is no faith or belief in His power, there can be no true prayer. We have read about the Lord in books or heard about Him from the Saints. He is manifested in the Saints. He who has seen a Saint has seen the Lord.

He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. (St. John 14:9)

We have our Master to pray to, and a disciple should ask Him for His aid at every step. There should be full faith in His powers, and full love, confidence and humility. The prayer should be pure in thoughts and offered in humility, free from selfishness, filled with love and full of confidence. There should be no doubt or disbelief. Such a prayer made in humility does not go in vain. With a humble mind, surrender all to His Merciful Grace.

I am nothing, nothing is mine, protect me from disgrace; I am Thy servant. (Belawal Sadana, 858)

Such a prayer inspires the soul and lifts it up towards the Lord.

The Necessity of Absorption

While praying, keep yourself in the presence of the Lord and give up all thoughts about the body. If you think on the one hand of the Lord and on the other of the body, your thoughts will be divided. You are then a worshipper both of Kal (the negative power) and Dayal (God). You should go into His presence with the coverings of the mind and body removed. You alone, in your humility, should be there. Then only you and your Lord will be there. To remain always with the Lord is to carry out His orders. A wonderful love for the Lord will then awaken in you.

The relationship between us and the Lord is that of a particle and the whole. When we are fully united with Him, then no thought of the body will remain and egotism will disappear. The conscious Current of the Lord will in this way give us a new life, and all calamities and afflictions will be removed. Under these conditions, when we give up bodily actions in remembrance of God, a new life-giving Current of the Lord enters us, and our material and spiritual deficiencies are removed.

The Necessity of Truth and Contentment

For praying truly and well, it is necessary that our lives should be based on truth. Our conduct should be pure. There should be truth in our heart and mind. We should

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Speak the truth. Truth is related to conduct. Truth and conduct go together. Wherever truth is mentioned there is talk of conduct, for truth comes first and then right conduct.

The common saying is:

Practice truth and right conduct, and become truthful and holy.

It is necessary to preserve the purity of one's life and its influence. If one practices truth, then whatever he says will be true. Nature will help him. It is necessary to have contentment also. As long as there is no contentment, the mind does not give up spreading out, and without one-pointedness there can be no true prayer. Guru Nanak says that if prayer is made with truth and contentment, the Lord will hear it and will call the devotee to sit near Him, and that such a prayer is undoubtedly granted.

The prayer made with truth and contentment is heard, and the devotee is seated near the Lord. (Ramkali M1, 878)

Praying with the Heart

One's prayers should come from the heart. Our heart, head and tongue should agree. Pray in such a manner that your inner feelings are aroused, every pore begins to weep, and all the veins become like the strings of a violin. The feeling of love should pour forth and you should become absorbed in your prayer. Your discrimination should awaken. Consider the Lord to be present and a witness. Present your inner feelings to Him. There should be nothing whatever between you and the Lord. Ask for His help in all humility. There should be no egotism or showiness.

There is no need to stand on high platforms and to cry loudly.

Oh Kabir, the priest cries from the minaret, but the Lord is not deaf. He, whom you are calling, is inside you. (Shalok Kabir Ji, 1374-8)

No Particular Language or Words are Necessary for Prayers

No particular language is necessary for praying. If, while one is praying, he considers himself bound by some formula, the inner flow of love is not continuous. One is thus deprived of full spiritual benefit. Long and learned phrases are not necessary. A prayer should be replete with inner feelings. Although long words and phrases may satisfy our intellect, they lead to one becoming subject to the disease of ostentation. By becoming involved in the structure and recitation of the words, we become far removed from the true feeling of the heart. Our prayers then do not correctly represent the state of our heart and conduct. Our condition becomes that of a grave made of lime and mortar which contains the corpse of an infidel.

It may be observed that we often indulge in hypocritical prayer in which our heart and head are not in agreement. In Tibet, people go about in the streets with a prayer wheel, a machine that repeats prayers for them. When it is turned, the names written on it are turned, and it is considered that the names have been repeated so many times. People even earn money for turning a prayer wheel once or twice. How can such prayer benefit anyone?

Even when our prayers appear to be beautiful and full of feeling, but our inner life is impure, then all our prayers would be false in the sight of the Lord. But if our prayers express our inner feelings and our heart is dyed in humility and love, then our prayers are heard and granted by the

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Lord. It is not wise to deceive ourselves and others, for the reality cannot be kept hidden and will someday become known. To repent, after realizing a mistake, is the first step towards reformation, and the next step is to reform oneself. The temptation to indulge in sense pleasures incites us to commit sins, and we have to pay for them. We reap as we sow.

Maulana Rumi has given a beautiful example of prayer. Moses, one day, met a shepherd who was praying in loving words,

Oh Lord, where are You? I will be Your servant. I will mend Your clothes, and will comb the hair of Your head. Oh Lord, let my life be sacrificed to You. I will sacrifice my wife and children and my home for You. I will supply You with milk. If You are willing, I will serve You. I will kiss Your hands and feet. I will stay on guard at Your gate while You sleep. I will bring milk, ghee, cheese, fried cakes, pots of curd and other good things for You to eat and drink. I will sacrifice all my goats for You, and will ever remain weeping in longing for You.

On hearing this, Moses said,

Fie on you. You are mad. You are no longer a believer, but an infidel. What is all this useless and impure talk? Keep silent. Your impurity has polluted the world and soiled the silken cloth of religion. If you will not stop, the fire of wrath will come and destroy the earth. The Lord, like the sun, does not need these things, for He has no body. Nor does He depend on hands and feet. If your talk is meant for those who have become one with the Lord, then also it is ludicrous. If a believer is called by the name of Fatima he would feel offended, because it is the name of a woman. He would feel annoyed and would beat you. The Lord is free from birth and death, and to pray to Him as though He had hands and feet is to insult Him.

On hearing this the shepherd said,

Oh Moses, you have sealed my lips. I am bewildered and on fire. He tore his clothes and began to weep, and then ran away to the jungle. Moses then heard the voice of the Lord saying, Alas! Why have you separated my seekers from me? I sent you to the world to bring about union, and not separation.

You have come for uniting and not for separating. (Maulana Rumi)

The Lord then continued to speak to Moses, saying:

Everyone remembers Me in accordance with his own language and temperament. Whatever the shepherd offered, I accepted. I am not pleased with you, for I regard the refusal of such offers as reprehensible. My duty is to shower Grace. By telling beads it is not I who become pure, but they who do so. Oh Moses, I do not look at the outside, but at the inner state. I accept whatever men say when they pray, even if it is poorly expressed, when it comes from the heart. The feelings of the heart are the real thing; the words merely express them. I want real longing from the heart. Generate yearning within yourself. Kindle the fire of love which burns away all thoughts and languages. Oh Moses, those who observe rules and regulations are different from evolved and devoted souls. For the lovers, every breath produces yearning.

Nobody levies a tax on ruined villages. It is not necessary to wash the blood of the martyrs. Their blood is purer than purest water. Their faults are better than hundreds of good actions done by others. Do not expect guidance from observers of form. The religion of love is different from other forms of worship. For lovers, the Lord is the only religion and creed. If a ruby does not bear the seal, it does not matter.

When Moses heard these angry words of the Lord, he

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ran to the shepherd and told him, I have brought good news for you. The Lord has accepted your prayers. Your unbelief stands on the same footing as belief. Your belief is the light of life. You may say whatever you like without any fear. The shepherd replied, I am now above these matters. When you scolded me, I took a different turn. But then I crossed the skies in one bound and became a confidant and close friend of the Lord. My condition is now beyond description.

Time for Prayers

Most people think that a certain time is necessary for prayers, and that this must be found when they are not busy with their duties. But to pray properly it is not necessary to spend a long time on reasoned speeches. One should express his inner feelings in simple language while praying. All times are suitable for prayer. Morning, evening and bedtime are particularly beneficial.

The difficulties relating to the time and place for prayer are fewer than the difficulties of praying inwardly. We do not know what we should pray for and how to pray. It is therefore necessary to pray, Lord, teach us to pray. We should take advantage of the examples of the prayers composed by Saints and Holy Men.

When to Pray

It is usually the case that a man calls for the help of the Lord when he is helpless or in poverty. But when he attains affluence, he no longer feels the need of prayer and thinks that his own strength and social forces will suffice for the future. He thus makes a big mistake.

Man should pray under any and all conditions. When

in difficulty he should pray for the solution of his problems, and when there is no solution, for strength to bear them or to keep up his courage. When, as a result of his efforts, he sees prospects of success, he should pray for the Mercy and Grace of the Lord, in order to avoid relying on his own efforts and his egotism.

Unless His Grace and Mercy join with our own efforts, no real success can be achieved. When the heart's desire has been obtained then sacrifice all in thankfulness and gratitude to Him.

The Working of Prayer

To confess our sins in prayer and to think that they are thereby washed away or removed is a mistake. This kind of mistake keeps us away from true spirituality. Our sins will only be forgiven when the Lord or the Master forgives them. Actually, such prayers may become the cause of evil. A man may offer such prayers and then keep on committing sins without hesitation. And all the while he goes on praying under the false impression that his sins will be forgiven as a result of his prayers.

The Master comes to persuade men to give up sin and to unite them with the Lord. Our duty is to act in accordance with His wishes and to give up all evil deeds which are worldly. We may thus save ourselves from sins and by the practice of Naam and remembrance, unite ourselves with the Lord. Love for the Lord and the Master reforms us, and makes us follow the path of the Lord. Man may forgive, but it is the all-pervading power of the Master which ultimately reforms a sinner.

How can we become true, how will the chain of untruth be broken? Oh Nanak, it is written that the Master's Will

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should be obeyed.

To cry to the Lord for forgiveness and to think that we can then commit more sins is a mistake. Diseases are punishments for sins. When there has been a sin, it can only be atoned for by undergoing suitable punishment. The root cause of all sins is identifying oneself with the body. Unless we rise above bodily considerations, thoughts of sensual pleasures and desires to enjoy them do not disappear.

Many a seeker gets into trouble because his search for pleasures leads to disease. The desire for pleasures does not go without submitting to His Will. Till then one wanders. (Maru M1, 1034-16)

To think that His Mercy is dependent on requests made through prayer is a mistake. He does not forgive or punish as a result of whether or not we ask for forgiveness. This is to make prayer an instrument to permit the committing of sins. The Master acts with great circumspection and consideration. On the one hand He forgives sins; and on the other He restrains the disciple from committing them in the future so that he may become clean and pure.

Prayer cannot change the principle of truth, nor can it enable one to understand it. It is through the attraction of inner love and yearning and by obeying the directions of the Master that we are led to the truth. Our prayers to understand the truth need not be said loudly. Such prayers can be made mentally or by living properly and in His Will.

The purpose of prayer is to lead us to act according to the wishes of the Lord. We are weak and feeble. We wish to reach the Lord with the aid of the Mercy and Strength of the Master. Even though we may fall at every step, that

power helps us. It is a law of spirituality that if a disciple takes one step on the path indicated by the Master, the Master takes a hundred steps to meet him. He is the bestower of all benefits. He is beyond praise or comprehension. He is immortal and limitless.

If you take one step to take refuge in the Master, the Master meets you on the way by taking hundreds of steps. If you remember the Master just once, the Master remembers you again and again. Even if your devotion is as small as a fragment of a cowrie shell, the Master showers all benefits on you. The Master is all Merciful, His praise is beyond understanding; I bow again and again to the one and incomprehensible Master. (Bhai Gurdas Ji)

Effects of Prayer on Others

Prayer is a great power. In prayer the current of our contemplation unites with the Lord, and the seeker receives many wonderful benefits as a result. Can others be benefited through our prayers? Since the soul is a particle of the Lord, all souls are interrelated. The Lord pervades all. To wish well to everybody is, therefore, in accordance with His Will. The currents of goodwill that emanate from great souls are for all living beings and benefit them. There is particular mention of this in the Sikh Scriptures. They say that by remembering great souls, the inner feelings are aroused and a connection is made with them. Such a prayer results in spiritual progress, and in the end, one prays for the good of all.

May all prosper according to Thy Will.

After Muslims complete their prayers, they pray for the believers and unbelievers, that is, for Muslims, Hindus and others. Buddhists pray for the welfare of all. Christ said that one should pray for his enemies. Hindus pray for

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the welfare of all living beings, both sentient and insentient. The practitioners of Christian Science cure those who are ill by means of prayers. To wish well to others is in accordance with His Will. Those who are experts in the science of telepathy know that one is affected by the thoughts of others, whether they be near or far. It has also been observed that the prayers of one person sometimes result in another person having some experience, which may be in the form of an inner vision.

Sincere prayer from the heart of the disciple reaches the Master, and remembrance of the disciple by the Master produces peace and bliss in the disciple. This is really a form of telepathy. In this way, we can connect our thoughts with the Master and can also use them for the good of others. To benefit another it is necessary that we first connect our thoughts with the Lord and then contemplate on the form of the other person and pray that he will be connected with the Master also. During such prayer, we have to feel the presence of the Lord and surrender our attention to His merciful and loving will. In this way, we lay the foundation for good to come to others.

Why All Our Prayers Are Not Granted

It is a common experience that all things which one asks for in prayer are not received. The reason for this is that we do not know the Mercy of the Lord, and ask for things that are not for our real good. That Power wants our evolution and progress. When that Power finds that what is asked for would involve the devotee further in the world, He does not grant it. If the Lord does not grant us the things we ask for, in order to save us from sinning, this is for our good.

In the Christian scriptures, it is said:

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

We are entangled in bodily and sensual pleasures. Our vision does not rise above them. If we were to receive all we ask for, we would certainly be involved in more sensual pleasures and our sins would increase.

The question:

When the Lord or Master hears all our prayers and has the power to grant them, why does He not do so?

In this connection it should be understood that man is merely one part in the machine of the universe, and is related to all other parts. Our desires, therefore, affect the whole world. Our vision being limited, we cannot see beyond ourselves and our surroundings. But the Lord or the Master can see the whole of the universe. He knows everything from the beginning to the end. He knows the devotee's genuine needs also. For example, the residents of a city which is being oppressed by unbearable heat may pray for rain, while the farmers are praying for more sunshine to ripen their crops. The human intellect is limited and an individual does not know whether what he is asking for would in the long run be for his good. He simply looks to the immediate circumstances and is unaware of the future. Relying on his limited intelligence, he often prays for something that would harm him. In his haste, he demands many things and then realizes his mistake and is thankful that his prayer was not granted, for otherwise he would have suffered a great loss.

It is said in the holy Quran,

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Just as a man prays for his good, he often asks for things that are harmful.

The fact is that man is very hasty and short-sighted. The Lord or the Master knows our past, present and future. He knows when a thing asked for is not for our good, and therefore does not grant it. It often happens that a seeker asks for something which is not to his real advantage. He presses for it, and a promise may be made, but the thing is not given to him. A child may ask his mother for poison. Owing to his insistence the mother may make a promise, but she will never give the poison to the child, even though she may outwardly consent to do so. It is not for the good of the child, but he does not know owing to his ignorance. The Saints, therefore tell us that we should always pray to the Lord:

Oh Lord! I know nothing. I have been sold into the hands of the mind and Maya. (Ravidas, Jaitsari, 7101)

Nizami says:

Oh my Well-Wisher, lead me to that which is for my good. Show me the path that leads to Your pleasure and to my salvation.

Keep me on that path, Oh my Well-Wisher, that You wish me to lead. That path should lead to Your pleasure and to my salvation. (Nizami)

The Lord and the Master are omniscient and know fully well what is for our good and what would do us harm. It is said in the holy Quran,

Oh Lord, give us in this world that which will help us hereafter also, and save us from the sufferings of hell.

Is it Necessary to Pray to the Lord?

The Lord is not pleased with the words of one's praise. They make no change in the Current of Mercy and Grace which is being showered on us, for He is the embodiment of knowledge, love and mercy. Of course, by praying in humility and faith, we can take more advantage of that Current of Mercy. But he does not stand in need of vocal prayers, for He knows our hidden feelings.

Prayers cannot make any change in the Current of Mercy. It is what it is. But prayers can bring us into harmony with this Current. It is not necessary to beg for our needs. This often becomes an obstruction.

The Lord is love. Is it proper for us to ask Him to be more loving? He knows all. Can we tell Him anything that He does not know already? Can we change His perfection? Is it necessary to pray to Him for more Mercy when He is already giving us more than we deserve? By not voicing our feelings, we come nearer to His Presence and Grace. He is eternal. He is the same in the beginning, the present and the end.

True from the beginning, true through the ages; He is true and shall be true. (Jap Ji, Stanza 1)

The Lord is the embodiment of truth. Truth emanates from Him continually without His being reminded of it. How can man with his limited intellect advise Him? The Current of His Mercy is flowing everywhere. It is taking care of us of itself. It knows what is for our good. It is present everywhere. It perceives our feelings and hears us. Where then is the necessity to pray before Him?

Wherever I look, I see You dwelling there; to whom should I Pray?

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The Lord hears all. (Gauri M5, 205)

It is our duty to be in harmony with Him and thus to derive the utmost benefit. It is very necessary that we should meditate on Him in our heart, so that His reflection may shine within us. The soul is a particle and an image of Him and shares His wonderful qualities. To learn to understand the Lord is a continuous process and to succeed in it, we should surrender all our thoughts, powers and desires at His feet. It is strange that while we say that the Lord is present everywhere and is eternal, we try to tell Him about ourselves. Are we thankful to the Lord for all the gifts and mercies shown to us? If we are sincerely thankful, we become deserving of more Grace even without asking for it.

Guru Arjan Sahib in the fifth canto of the Sukhmani Sahib speaks of the many gifts and blessings we are enjoying and tells us how to express our gratitude for them. He says that it is through His kindness that we enjoy many kinds of food, have many kinds of sweets, live in palaces, reside in comfortable houses, wear good clothes and fine ornaments, sleep on comfortable beds, receive public honors, have healthy bodies, all our faults remain hidden, and we ride elephants and in carriages, possess gardens, houses, estates and wealth.

The Lord has satisfied our desires. We are respected in this world and hereafter. We are beautiful and hear the Shabd with our inner ear. We have influence. All our works are successful, and we are honored at the time of death. For all these and other blessings we should express our gratitude; we should remember that they come from Him and should meditate on Him. We should contemplate on Him and pray to Him. We should always remember Him. We should always praise Him and fix

our attention on Him. We should not be remiss in His remembrance and should never forget Him. He should ever dwell in our hearts.

Where else could we find refuge if we should give up such a bountiful Lord? We should keep in mind the Lord through Whose Grace we eat so many delicious kinds of food. By remembering Him, through Whose Grace we perfume the body with sweet-smelling scents, we will get salvation.

Contemplate with your mind on Him through Whose Grace you reside in comfortable houses. Remember all the twenty-four hours, Him through Whose Grace you live at ease in your home.

Oh Nanak! Remember always Him Who is worthy of your contemplation through Whose Grace you enjoy so many pleasures.

Whom else could you love if you should give up Him through Whose Grace you have fine clothes and beautiful ornaments?

Praise always Him through Whose Grace you sleep on comfortable beds.

Contemplate with your mind on Him through Whose Grace you are kept on the path of duty.

By remembering the Lord you will be honored and will accompany your Lord to His home, oh Nanak.

Love the Lord through Whose Grace you have this healthy body.

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Praise the Lord through Whose Grace your secrets remain hidden and your mind is at rest. Kneel before the Lord and Master through Whose Grace all your defects are kept concealed. Even if you do not receive His Grace, remember the Lord on high with every breath.

Oh Nanak, be a devotee of Him through Whose Grace you were given this rare human body.

Oh mind, do not be remiss in remembering the Lord through Whose Grace you wear fine ornaments.

Oh mind, do not forget the Lord through Whose Grace you ride on horses and elephants. Keep in your mind the Lord through Whose Grace you possess lands and gardens. Remember always, while standing or sitting, the Lord Who has molded your mind. Meditate on the One Unseen, oh Nanak, Who will look after you both here and hereafter. Oh mind, always think of Him through Whose Grace you give generously in charity and donations.

Remember with every breath the Lord through Whose Grace you observe right conduct.

Remember always the Lord of wonderful form through Whose Grace you also have a beautiful form.

Remember day and night the Lord Who has given you this noble body.

Praise the Master, oh Nanak, through Whose Grace your honor is maintained, through Whose Grace the ears hear the Music of the Name. The eyes see the world's wonders, the tongue becomes sweet, one lives happily, the hands move and work, the full fruits of action are obtained, the state of bliss is enjoyed, and one merges in

all-embracing peace. How can such a Lord be given up and another loved? Love for Him awakens with the Grace of the Master.

Do not forget the Lord through Whose Grace you have come into this world.

Oh foolish mind, remember the Lord through Whose Grace you have become great. Oh mind, live in the presence of Him through Whose Grace you have found the truth.

Oh Nanak, remember Him along through Whose Grace all obtain salvation. He Himself makes one remember the Name, the Lord Himself makes one sing His praises.

By His kindness you get Light; by His Mercy the lotus opens.

When He is pleased He dwells in the heart. By His Mercy the intellect becomes pure. Oh Lord, Your Mercy is supreme; one can achieve nothing by one's own efforts alone. Oh Lord, Your devotee serves wherever You wish;

Oh Nanak, one has no choice in the matter. (Gauri M5 Sukhmani 269)

One should not forget the giver of the blessings when one receives blessings. Those who forget Him do not remember death.

The gift is a blessing; the giver is forgotten; the fool does not think of death. (Dhanasri M5, 676)

If, on receiving His bounty, we do not show sincere gratitude but merely express verbal thanks, we deceive

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both ourselves and the Lord. We cannot hide the emptiness of our gratitude from the Lord and the world. One makes himself liable to be punished by such behavior.

Fruits of Prayer

The purpose of prayer is to connect one's inner self with the Lord, and to become absorbed in Him. Prayer is the essence of spirituality; through it we begin to realize Him.

Prayer is the best relaxation and recreation. The soul, mind and body gain blissful rest and happiness, which cannot be obtained by any other means. Even with the minimum of sleep, no harm is caused to the mind or body.

We find that in prayer one's inner stability increases, fearlessness is augmented, and inner purity is obtained. Diseases can also be cured in oneself and in others. At times of need and danger unexpected help is received. These experiences show that it is necessary to pray to the Divine Power. When no human efforts can avail, an appeal to the Lord and the Master brings the needed help.

Where all human efforts fail, there prayer succeeds.

A deep impression is created on the human mind by prayer. Even if one's fate is not changed by prayer, we are certainly changed. Our whole attitude towards meeting a calamity or affliction changes. The power of the mind to strive for salvation is strengthened. When the angle of vision changes, the whole world changes. The earth and the sky take on a different color. A man feels very much perturbed when a calamity comes, but when the angle of vision is changed, he bears the calamity cheerfully.

The highest form of prayer does not consist in the actual act of praying, but in awakening in the Lord. When this state is reached, diseases disappear, sins are destroyed, and death becomes non-existent. True prayer consists in increasing love in the inner self for the Master, and merging in Him. When we are in communion with Him, then by coming in contact with the Lord the inner powers of our soul are awakened. Prayers for selfish gain and for spiritual progress are very different. As compared to spiritual prayer, the other prayer is of no consequence. Reference has already been made to this point.

Stages in the Development of Prayer

After some time the devotee begins to feel more happiness and peace in his inner spiritual progress than in his bodily comforts. The following prayer occurs in the Varhad Arnayak Upanishad: Lead us from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality.

As the gaze of the devotee is turned away from outer things, he begins to feel that all worldly pleasures are unreal. He experiences the Everlasting and Eternal Being, and worldly pleasures appear to be transitory and perishable. He, therefore, thinks it of no value to ask for worldly comforts.

What should I ask for? All is transitory. (Kabir, Dhanasri 692)

All the world is busy eating, drinking and making merry, but a devotee has no liking for or interest in these activities. He attends only to the essential needs of the body, and spends the rest of the time in communion with the Lord. He prays, O Lord! Take me out of the ocean of this world. You are my only refuge.

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Many lives have been spent in eating, drinking and making merry. Take me out of the ocean of the world. Oh Lord, Nanak relies on you. (Gauri M, 261)

In accordance with the teachings of the Gurus, the devotee looks after the body only so that the Lord may dwell in his heart and his tongue may repeat His Name.

May the holy feet of the Lord dwell in my heart, and may my tongue repeat the Name of the Lord; Oh Nanak, remember the Lord who preserves the body. (Bihagara War M5, 554)

He is conscious of his ignorance on this path, and knowing his weaknesses he extends his hands in prayer for help.

Oh Lord, take me across; I am ignorant, and do not know the way. Help me, oh Lord! (Nam Dev, Guru, 873)

As the disciple's inner sight changes, so does his prayer. In the beginning, he is conscious of the body and of bodily needs. He thinks it necessary to pray for them. But as his Inner Eyes are opened, he begins to feel the spiritual needs, and his prayers change. He knows that he has to control the senses and still the mind in order to reach the spiritual regions and the original home of the soul.

This is not an easy task. The impressions of many births are in the mind and his inclinations are based on them. He cannot give up his old ways. He sometimes turns to spiritual seeking, while at other times he is drawn the other way by the needs of the self and the body. He sometimes succeeds, while at other times he succumbs. His heart is not in the world or its wealth, but the mind cannot yet remain fixed in the Lord all the time. He feels that he is full of sins, while at the same time people are calling him

good.

Oh Farid! My clothes are black and my dress is black. I am full of sins, but people call me a Dervesh. (Farid, Salok, 1381)

The devotee gets tired of this unavoidable conflict and wishes to give it up. He gives it up for some time, but the love of the Lord does not let him wander. The waves of hope spring up in him, and he again turns to Him.

He who falls while walking is not to be blamed; Oh Kabir! He who does not move has all the way to go. (Kabir Sahib)

Unless all the ten senses are controlled and the mind is turned inward, there is no Light in the soul.

He who controls the ten senses, in his soul there is Light. (Gauri M, 236)

The diseases of the mind are very dangerous, but they appear very sweet to the devotee. One cannot give them up even though he may be tired of them. A lustful person cannot easily give up lust, even though he knows its bad results. For overcoming these diseases, he needs the help and strength of some powerful personage such as the Master.

Control the mind by the strength of the Master. (Sar Bachan)

To gain victory over the mind, the help of the Master is very necessary. By the strength of the Master, the mind that is entangled in attachment and Maya awakens.

Awaken your sleeping mind by remembering the Master. (Suhi M4, 758)

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Maulana Rumi also says that the mind cannot be controlled without the help of the Master.

Ask For the Lord of the Lord.

For the needed help cry to the Lord or His incarnation, the Master,

Oh Lord! We are cunning, hard-hearted, crafty and lustful. But take us across in spite of all this. You are all-powerful, You can give us refuge. Save us through Your Grace.

Jap (repetition of names), Tap (austerities), rules of discipline, cleanliness and self-discipline cannot rid us of our faults. Oh Lord! We are in utter darkness. Pray take us out of it. Favor us with a kind and merciful glance.

Guru Nanak says:

Cunning, hard-hearted, crafty and lustful am I; Oh Lord! Take me across despite my faults. You are powerful and the giver of refuge. Preserve me by Your Will. Jap, Tap, Name, cleanliness, self-discipline will not rid me of my weaknesses.

Oh Lord! Through Your Grace take Nanak out of this utter darkness. (Kanra M5, 1301-18)

He again prays:

Oh Lord! Save us. We can do nothing by ourselves. The only way to control the mind is to listen to the Melody of the Name. Please give this to us. Oh Lord! Save us.

We can do nothing by ourselves. By Your Grace give us the Name. (Dhanasri M5, 675)

To those who pray to the Lord through the Master and Holy Men

and take refuge in Him, the Light of the Name is revealed. (Gjri M4, 492)

Yogis of the past, learned men, ascetics, yatis (self-disciplined men) and men of letters all became tired of their efforts to find the true way and failed. Nothing they did was of any avail against the mind. None of their efforts succeeded in controlling the mind. The only effective way is the practice of the true Shabd or Name, and this can be had only from a Master.

Control the mind by listening to the Melody. It will not be controlled by any other method. The mind can only be controlled by hearing the Melody; the yogi practices yoga, while the learned increase their knowledge; the ascetics are tired of austerities, and the practice of self-discipline also failed them; the devotees engage in mental contemplation and are deceived; the pandits read the Vedas and enlarge their knowledge, but fail; keenness of intellect does not help, and inaction leads to regret. No other practice can help. Practice listening to the Shabd. When the Shabd is realized the Master is found, and the disciple attends on Him with detachment, when the practice of Surat Shabd is perfected, then only is the mind controlled. (Sar Bachan, 216)

After receiving the wealth of Naam, the wandering of the mind comes to an end. It then does not wish to remain away from the Lord, but wishes to live with Him forever.

Oh mother! I have been given the Lord's Name; my mind has stopped its wavering and is now still. (Basant M9,1186)

In this state the devotee feels that the Lord is always with him. He hands over all his sufferings and worries to Him and is unmoved by either pain or pleasure. He is convinced that the Lord is thousands of times more intelligent, wise, strong and merciful than himself and that He looks after His devotee and is his greatest well-wisher.

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He hands over his worries and his intellect to Him, and remains content with His Will. His intellect becomes keen, and his prayers become perfect. He surrenders everything to the Lord and says, O Lord! You are the refuge of all living beings. You came here for the sake of all. Whatever You will is good for me. This is my only prayer.

Whatever meets with Your approval is right conduct. You are the ever-existing formless One. (Jap Ji, Stanza 4-2)

All living beings depend on You, and You take care of them; whatever You will is good for me. This is the prayer of Nanak. (Belawal M1, 765-13)

Oh Nanak! Praised be the Name. May You bless all.

In the end, after attaining joy in surrendering to the Lord's Will, the seeker gives up praying. He knows that the Lord knows all. He remains happy in the state ordained by the Lord; he loves all actions of the Lord.

Wherever I look, You are there. This is my firm conviction. To whom should I pray, when the Lord hears everything? (Gauri M5, 205-9)

Wherever He dwells, there is heaven. (Majh M5, 106-7)

Your acts are like Nectar to me. Nanak prays for the gift of the Name only. (Asa M5, 394-4)

When the omniscient One knows all, to whom can we pray? When He is present in every heart, to whom should we make our supplication?

The Lord knows all and is omniscient. To whom then should we pray? (Sorath M5, 625-1)

What can the lowly say in prayer, when the Lord is present in all hearts? (Kama M4, 1304-10)

The Saints have attained this state and it seems to them to be infidelity to pray and to doubt His Grace. Saints always remain reconciled to His Will. They are absorbed in Him. The devotee and the Lord become one. The Lord is in control of the devotee, and whatever desire springs up in the heart of the devotee is at once granted by Him. Wherever the devotee may go, the Lord goes, and He helps him at every step, just as a mother helps her little child. Guru Arjan Sahib says:

Whatever is asked is given by the Lord; oh Nanak! Whatever is said by Him proves to be true. (Dhanasri M5, 681-19)

Whatever the work of the devotee may be, the Lord hastens to do it, He always shows Himself to be with the devotee. Whatever he asks from the Lord, the same comes to pass at once. (Asa M5, 403-15)

Kabir Sahib says that his mind became as pure as the water of the Ganges. The Lord followed him, saying,

Kabir, Kabir. He further says that the Lord was always waiting for him to ask for something so that He might give it to him.

Oh Kabir! The mind has become pure like the water of the Ganges. The Lord follows me, saying, 'Kabir, Kabir.' (Kabir, Salok, 1367-8)

The hunger of the devotee is satisfied when he meets the Lord, and he then no longer feels hungry or thirsty. He receives from the Lord the treasure of Naam, and this gives him all the nine powers. He gets whatever his heart desires. His prayers never remain unanswered.

When You are his Father, oh Lord, how can he be hungry? He

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receives the Name and the nine miraculous powers from You, and he gets whatever he desires. (Malar M5, 1266)

His supplications never go in vain. (Bilawal M5, 819-11)

He now knows the reality of prayer. To pray means that one is still not perfect. But when the Lord makes a man perfect, he lacks nothing.

My heart responds to Your Will, since it is perfect. (Ravidas, Dhanasri, 694-6)

What can a devotee ask for when the Lord is always with him? The devotee is absorbed in the form of the Lord. Both become one. Who is to ask and from whom? What a wonderful description of this state has been given by Guru Arjan Dev Sahib:

He is deathless, so I am fearless; He does not desert me, and I am not a prisoner; He is not a pauper, and I am not hungry; He has no cares, and I have no trouble; Him no one can destroy; He is the one who gives life; He is free from bondage, and we are not bound; He does not have to toil, and we are not slaves; He is not attached, and we are not attached; He is bliss, and we are happy in His Will; He is not worried, and we have no cares; He is not stained, and we too are not stained; He is not hungry, and we have no hunger; He is pure, and we are pure because of Him; we are nothing; He is the only one; He is both in front and behind; oh Nanak! The Guru removes all delusion and doubts; I have become one by uniting with Him. (Asa M5, 391-1)

What Should be Asked of the Lord and the Master

The Master is the mouthpiece of God. It is the Master in whom the Lord is manifest. Just as we can go to a sea-beach and bathe, enjoy the splashing of the waves, and

offer flowers and sweets to the sea, similarly, the Master is the beach of the limitless ocean of the consciousness of the Lord. The Master is full of spiritual consciousness, and the Light of the consciousness of the Lord is in Him. He is omniscient and knows all our needs and requirements. If a spiritually hungry devotee sits beside the Master in all humility, is this in any way less than prayer? He knows the heart and mind of everyone.

Ask for the Name From the Master and Saints and Beg of Them for Their Grace

We should pray to the Master to unite us with the Lord, as those in whose heart the Lord dwells sleep peacefully. We should pray,

My Master, I thirst for the sight of the Beloved. I ever remember His feet and hope to see Him in my heart.

In the Saints the Lord Himself is present, having assumed their form.

He assumes the form of the Saint. (Maru M5, 1005-8)

Oh Saints! I have come to You as I have heard that the Lord is kind to His devotees. I have taken shelter with You. Oh Lord Hari! Save the honor of Your slave. I have been separated from You for many ages. Oh Lord! Unite me with You. A great fire is consuming my mind and body. Oh Master! I rely on You. Hear my prayer. This is my only supplication before Your Saints, that they may, in their kindness, make me one with You.

Oh Mother, unite me with the Beloved; all my friends in whose houses dwells the Lord sleep peacefully. (Malar M5, 1267-15)

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I remember Your holy feet, and pine to see You; I pray to the Saints; my heart thirsts to see You. (Malar M5, 1268)

When I prayed to the Saints; the Lord, who is kind to His devotees, appeared; oh Nanak, He hastened to them to save their honor and make them His own. (Todi M4, 712)

I have great hope of seeing the Lord; oh Master, hear the prayer of Nanak. (Maru M4, 896-17)

Oh Saints, Nanak prays to You to make him your own. (Suhi M5, 759-18)

I will ask of the friends who have found Him; I will fall at their feet and learn the path. (TelangM1, 725-4)

Oh Master! We are insects of Maya; have mercy on us and give us the Light of the Name. Oh Master, beloved of the Lord, the Transcendent Being, I pray to You.

We are like insects; we take shelter in You; have mercy and give us the Light of the Name. (Gujri M4, 10-2)

Bhai Gurdas has given a beautiful example of prayer by a disciple. He says, Oh Master! I am a sinner. I am separated from You and am a very low and worthless fellow. I have all the faults. I am in the habit of stealing and committing adultery. I am a gambler. I have an eye on the houses of others. I am a backbiter, an evil-doer and indolent, and am deceiving everyone by my hypocrisy. I am intoxicated with lust and anger and am full of greed, attachment and egotism.

I am unfaithful and ungrateful. Who can save me? Oh Master! I pray to You as a pauper. You always forgive; forgive me also.

I am accursed, a sinner, low and worthless; a thief, an adulterer, a

gambler and one having an eye on the houses of others; a back-biter, evil-doer, indolent, a hypocrite and deceitful to all; one who indulges in lust, anger, drink, greed, attachment and egotism. One who is faithless and ungrateful, and trusted by none. I always pray to the Merciful Master. (War 36, Pauri, 21)

The Master is our caste and honor. We have sold ourselves to Him. Oh Master! Whether good or bad we are now Master and disciples. Have mercy and save our honor. We bow at your feet without any pride. You are the pride of us humble ones. You are all-powerful.

Guru is our caste and honor. We have sold ourselves to Him. Oh Nanak! We are called Master and disciples. Save our honor. (Suhi M4, 731-10)

We pray to the Perfect Master that He may unite us with the Lord who exists in the beginning, the middle and the end.

He who is in the beginning, the middle and the end; for Him my mind yearns. (Gauri M5, 240-10)

When one meets the Lord, true bliss is obtained, and for him the messengers of death cease to exist.

I prayed to the Master and He united me with the Lord; by this union I obtained bliss and the messengers of death died of starvation. (Sri Rag M1, 55-13)

Oh Master! We live by seeing You. Oh Lord, hear my prayer, make me Your slave by giving me the gift of the Name, and take me under Your protection. Oh my Master and true friend! This is my prayer, that You who are all virtue, may never forget me.

Oh Master, I live by seeing You. My destiny is fulfilled. Oh Lord!

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Hear this prayer of mine. Oh provident Lord! Give me Your protection, and make me Your own. Never deprive me, oh Master! of Your protection. Oh My Lord and friend, hear my prayer, let Your feet dwell in my heart. Nanak makes a prayer. Oh All-virtuous One, never forget me. (Suhi M5, 741-18)

Oh dispeller of all fears, my Master! Nothing is hidden from You. You are merciful. Redeem us fools.

Nothing is beyond You, oh dispeller of all fears; Nanak has taken refuge with the merciful Master; redeem the fool. (Belawal M5, 806-6)

All the world is burning in the intense fire of attachment and Maya (delusion). In order to escape from it, it is necessary to take refuge with the Lord. We, therefore, pray to the Master that He in His mercy may save us from this burning fire and show us His compassion.

On seeing the world in flames, we run for the shelter of the Lord. We pray to the Perfect Master for safety in the Name of the Lord. (Vadhans M3, 571-15)

What Should We Ask of the Lord?

When a dutiful wife goes to her all-powerful Lord full of hope, she surrenders her all to Him. Her clothes may be torn, but the Lord is pleased with her attitude. Can she then remain poor? No, never.

Give to Him what is His, and accept the Will of the Lord; he is blessed fourfold; oh Nanak, the Lord is always kind. (Gauri M5, 268-11)

She asks the Lord for Himself above all. When the Lord comes, what else remains?

If a man is absorbed in the Lord, what can he lack? (Gauri M5, 186-8)

A king once went to a foreign country. Before he left, he asked his queens what they would like him to bring for them. One asked for clothes, another for delicious foods, yet another for useful articles, another for articles of beauty, and still others for diamonds and jewels. The youngest queen, who was generally considered a fool but who in reality was the wisest of all, said, Oh Emperor! Come back yourself and keep me at your feet, and I will have everything I could wish for. The king came back and sent the other queens the presents they had requested and then went to the youngest queen with all he had. How fortunate was that queen! The king had the feeling that he should give all he possessed to her because she truly loved him. The queen sat at his feet, and touched the feet of her all-bountiful lord, and enjoyed his loving gaze. The other queens received a few gifts, but she had the love of her lord. Of what use were the gifts without the lord?

She did not wish for either food or water, but sighed in separation; how could she feel at rest? (Gauri M, 244-19)

We, due to our short-sightedness, ask the Lord and the Master for various boons, and these may often increase our sufferings. Instead of asking for boons from the Bountiful Lord, ask for Himself. Then how can there be any lack of anything? To ask for boons is to display a feeling of inferiority and a lack of respect. The queen knows that she is the consort of the king and will have palaces, servants, food, clothing and everything else she may want without asking for them. But if her Lord does not love her, then palaces, silken clothes and every other kind of fine possession would bring her no happiness.

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Burn the expensive articles of adornment; live in the dust, oh Nanak, if He is with you. (Salok M5, 1424-19)

If the lord is with the queen and these other things are also there, then it is pleasing to possess them. But one who is dyed in the color of her lord is glad to live without them, for the love of her lord is all-sufficing. Our primary needs are physical, and all the world is entangled in meeting these needs. The Lord looks after all. Every living being is provided for at birth. His fate is there before the formation of the body. The milk is there in the breast of the mother before a child is born. Our body takes shape according to our fate. All our suffering is due to short-sightedness.

Fate came into being first, and then the body; oh Tulsi, it is strange that the mind is not at rest.

The body and its requirements are perishable. If you look around you carefully, you will find that nothing is eternal.

One is born and dies, and merges in non-existence; all this passes before the eyes of the universe. (Kabir, Gauri, 325-12)

Only the Lord and His Name (God in action) remain forever. All else is perishable. Ask the Lord for Himself and thirst for His sight.

I pray to the unmanifest to manifest Himself; Your servant Nanak is standing at Your door. (Gauri M5, 241-18)

Our original home is the Lord's home-Sach Khand (True Region). We have remained separated from the Lord for a long time. We do not remember for how long we have been wandering, but when we become tired of wan-

dering, we should take refuge with the Lord and pray,

Oh Lord! have mercy on us and unite us with You.

Our actions have led to our separation; have mercy, oh Lord, and unite us with Yourself, we have come to seek refuge with You, oh Lord, after becoming tired of wandering in all the four corners and ten directions of the world. (Majh M5,133-7)

O Lord! We have been separated from You for many ages. You know about all our births. Years have passed without our seeing You. We are now living in the hope of seeing You. I separated from You many births ago, this birth is now dedicated to You; Ravi Dass lives in the hope of seeing You, it is long since he did so. (Ravi Das, Dhanasri, 694-8)

Guru Amar Das Ji prays,

Oh Lord! We are very much deluded in this world. Have mercy and grant us the boon of seeing You.

We are very much deluded, O Benign Lord, have mercy on us; be merciful and grant us the blessing of Your sight. (Dhanasri M3, 666-13)

Guru Arjan Sahib directs us to pray,

Oh Lord! We have been wandering in various bodies in various births and have had many sufferings. We now have a human body owing to Your mercy. Kindly show Yourself to us.

I wandered in various bodies and suffered much; owing to Your kindness I now have a human birth; pray, show Yourself. (Gauri M, 207-11)

Oh Lord! We are standing at Your door. Unite us with Yourself. O

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Savior! Save us, for we are tired of wandering. Oh Lord! You are kind to the devotees. You are the redeemer of sinners.

There is no one besides You. I cry to You for help in all humility and helplessness. Oh Gracious Lord! This universe is a dangerous ocean. Take me across by holding my hand.

Unite me with Yourself; I am lying at Your door; oh Savior, save me, for I am tired of wanderings; oh Lord, redeem me, for You always help Your devotees; no one can help me except Yourself; take my hand, and lead me across the ocean of the universe. (Jaitsri M, 709-12)

All wives are happy when they are united with their lords. How miserable am I. I am full of sins, and the Lord does not pay any attention to me. Oh Lord, when will my turn come? Other brides are living happily. Please, I beg, give me some of Your attention and love.

The other brides are making merry; I am the unfortunate one. I am full of sins, and the Lord pays no attention to me. (Suhi War M3, 790-12)

Nanak, the unfortunate one prays for her turn; all other brides are happy; give me Your love as well. (War Ramkali M3, 959-15)

All my friends have gone to please their Lord; but where can I, the wretched one go? O my friend, I am beautiful but the Lord does not love me. (Vadhans M1, 558-2)

Oh Lord! It would be better to show me the gallows than to remain so indifferent to me. It is agony to live without You. Clasp me to Your breast. Accept my prayer. I am dying with longing for You. Turn Your beautiful face towards me. Why do You torment me by turning away?

Death is preferable to Your indifference; hear me and hold me close. Oh look at me, my Beloved, why torment me by turning away from

me. (Kabir, Asa, 484-8)

I am impatient to see You. My mind is distracted, and I am passing my days in unbearable worry and anxiety. Oh Lord, give me one look of mercy. My life can be happy and fruitful only if I see You. Oh Bewitcher of the mind! Be kind to me. Remove my delusion and appear within me.

I am thirsty for a sight of You, and I am tortured with anxiety; oh Transcendental Lord, have mercy on me. (Asa M5, 431-3)

Life is fruitful if the Lord is seen; oh dearest Beloved, have mercy and remove my delusion. (Sarang M4, 1221-10)

I pray earnestly, O Beloved, I am ready to sacrifice my all for union with You even for a moment. Alas! How should I plead, that I may make You hear? I am tormented with restlessness because of my hunger and thirst to see You. The Lord can be realized by the Word of the Master. Oh Lord, I beg of You to enable me to realize the truth.

I pray most earnestly and I would sacrifice my life; wealth and honor would I forego for even a moment of union. (Belawal M5, 908-12)

What should I ask for or say? I am hungry and thirsty to see You oh Nanak! He can be known by the Word of the Master. (Suhi M1, 7621-9)

Oh Thou Eternal Great One! You are the faultless sustainer. I pray to You. Man lives in ignorance and does not remember the Lord, and in this way, wastes his life. Your creature always forgets. You, however, keep the honor of Your innate nature. Oh Helper of the worthless! How can I recite your virtues? What wisdom can an ignorant slave possess? This life and body are Your gifts. As we have taken refuge with You, You have saved us from the great fire of this world by taking us out of it. We rely and lean in confidence on You, and have given up all other hopes. You are unknowable

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and limitless and unutterable. You cannot be described in words. Oh Lord! I have taken refuge with You, and You can protect me. I surrender my life and body to You. This is all Your kindness; otherwise who would know me? Whatever I have to say, I say to You. To whom else can I pray? Oh Lord! You will not find anyone more helpless than I, and none is more merciful than Yourself. We profess to be Yours, but are so in name only. Make us perfect.

Oh Creator, pray hear my prayer, You are the great Merciful Sustainer. (Tilang M1, 721-4)

I remained ignorant and did not remember the Lord, and so wasted my life. Oh Nanak! He keeps the honor of His innate nature, though we always forget Him. (Sorath M5, 633-16)

Oh Forgiver of the worthless, how can I sing Your virtues? What wisdom can this ignorant slave display? This life and body are Yours. (Suhi M5, 738-2)

You saved us who took refuge with You by taking us out of the great fire. We have reliance and confidence in our hearts in You, and have no other hope. (Suhi M5, 748-7)

He is the great unknowable, limitless Lord. He cannot be described in words. Nanak has taken shelter with the Lord who can protect him. (Jaitsri M5, 704-7)

I pray to Thee, all my body and soul are Yours; Glory be to the Lord; oh Nanak, nobody else knows my name. (Asa M5, 383-11)

Whatever I have to do is according to Your Will; to whom else should I pray. (Bharun M1, 1125-5)

Oh Merciful Lord! You are our protector. There is no one else like You. How can we go anywhere else? I have confidence in Your words; fulfil them, I pray. (Ravidas, Dhanasri, 694-6)

Oh Lord! You are my strength and my pillar of reliance, I therefore

pray to You. I have nowhere else to go and no one else to pray to. All my pleasure and pain are with You. I am foolish and lowly. I am ignorant. I have taken shelter with You. Forgive me.

I am mad; I pray to You, my Master; I have no other place to pray. My pleasure and pain are with You. (Suhi M4, 735-2)

The greatness of the Lord cannot be described; I am foolish, worldly and lowly; oh Lord and Master, forgive Nanak, the ignorant one. He has taken shelter with You. (Suhi M4, 736-6)

We are foolish, unwise and ignorant. Oh Lord! We are without any merit, like the stones. Give us shelter through Your kindness. Oh Lord Hari! Be merciful, make us rise above the world, and grant us salvation through the Shabd. We are sinking in the quicksand of attachment. Oh Lord! Give us Your hand. Oh Merciful Lord! Do not look at our evil habits. How can one wash off the dirt and make himself clean? We human beings are so made.

We are foolish, worldly and ignorant, and take shelter with You, the Unborn One; have compassion and save us, oh Lord; we, like the stones, have no merit. (Belawal M4, 799-6)

Oh Lord! Be merciful and redeem us; help the soul by means of the Shabd. We are sunk in the quagmire of attachment; oh Lord, give us Your hand to hold. (Asa M4, 446)

Have mercy on me, a helpless one, oh Bountiful Lord. Do not judge my merits and demerits. How can clay be washed clean? So is man made. (Ramkali M5, 882-17)

Oh Lord of my life! I am an orphan and have taken shelter with You. Have mercy and compassion on me. In this deep well of attachment and delusion, my reason can do nothing. Pray, give me Your hand and save me. I have committed many sins. We are evil-minded and thieves. We have taken refuge with You. Save our honor, we beg of You.

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Have mercy, Oh Lord. I am an orphan and seek shelter with You; let me hold Thy hand in this dark well. My reason helps me not. (Gauri M5, 208-13)

We have committed many faults and sins. We are evil-doers and thieves, and have committed many thefts. Nanak has taken shelter with You. Oh Lord! Be merciful and save his honor. (Gauri M5, 172-11)

Oh Lord! You are my Creator, unknowable and limitless. Hear my prayer. I am foolish. I am never awake. I am without beauty or reasoning power. I am separated from my home and have come to take shelter with You after a very long time. I have no money and no longer have the attraction of youth. I am an orphan. Protect me.

Oh Protector, unknowable and limitless! hear my prayer; Nanak is foolish and never is he awake; he can see nothing, for the night is dark. (Tukhari M1, 1110-3)

I am without beauty or intellect, and come from a distant foreign land; I have no wealth or youthful attraction. Help the orphan, oh Lord. (Gauri M3, 204-2)

I commit faults every moment. I cannot get free of this world because of my actions. You are the forgiver. Forgive me, and take me across this ocean. I make innumerable mistakes and am a great sinner. Oh Lord! Please forgive me. We have committed as many sins as there are drops of water in the ocean. We are stones, and will be drowned. Have mercy and compassion, and save us from drowning.

We cannot escape from our actions, for we commit faults every moment; oh Forgiver! forgive us and take Nanak across the ocean. (Gauri M5, 261-1)

We commit mistakes which are innumerable; oh Lord! forgive me, I am a great sinner. (Shalok M3, 1416-5)

Like the drops of water in the ocean, there is no count of my sins. Have mercy and compassion, and save me from drowning like a stone. (Gauri M5, 156)

All the world is burning in a deep and mysterious fire. Oh Lord! Have mercy and save it. Use the methods and devices that can save it.

The world is burning; save it through Your mercy, save it by the methods by which it can be saved. (Belawal M3, 853-10)

Oh Lord, You are unfathomable, limitless and beyond measure, and no one is Your equal. I pray that I may never forget You. You are the sustainer and are all-powerful. We pray for this boon, that Your feet may reside in our hearts.

You are unfathomable and limitless, oh most High. None is like you; this is our prayer, oh Lord! that we may not forget You. (Suhi M4, 747-6)

Oh all-powerful provident Lord! I ask one boon of Thee; have mercy on Nanak, and let Thy feet dwell in his heart. (Kalyan M4, 1321-6)

Oh Lord! All thoughts, whether good or bad, are in Thy control. We are merely instruments, and You are the director. Oh Creator! We act as You wish, and we have no say in the matter.

Both good and bad thoughts are in Your control, oh Lord; we are instruments and You are the Director; oh Lord of Nanak! You are the Creator and we play as You wish. (Belawal M4, 800-10)

Oh Lord! How can one serve Thee, and how or why can he be proud of such services! Thy Light is working in us, and we do everything in Thy Light. If Thou should withdraw Thy Light, what could one say or do?

How can anyone serve You or be proud of such service? If You

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withdraw Your Light, how can one discourse on You? (Belawal M3, 797-11)

Ask for the Lord Himself of the Lord. To ask for anything else is to ask for trouble on one's head. Oh Lord! Give us Your Name, so that we may gain peace and our hunger may be removed.

To ask for anything other than Thyself is to ask for trouble on my head. Give me Thy Name, so that peace may enter into my heart and satisfy my hunger. (Ramkali War M, 957-19)

A Muslim Saint has also said that we should ask the Lord for Himself alone and nothing else, since all else is perishable.

From God nothing but God should be asked; all else but Him is perishable. From God ask not for things which are going to perish; from God ask for nothing but Himself. Do not blacken your heart with false thoughts. (Maulana Rumi)

Ask the Master for the Lord

The Lord dwells in the Master. He dwells in Him in the form of the Sound Current. The Master is a God-man. Pray to the Lord, O Savior! You are merciful and compassionate. Be kind and lead us to a Master who will sustain our spirit, and through whom we may find You.

You are merciful and compassionate; hear my prayer with Thy ever-attentive ear; connect my soul to the Master who has realized You, Oh Lord. (Gauri M, 168-17)

Oh Lord! Have mercy, so that I may have faith in the Name and obtain refuge in a Perfect Master.

Oh life-giving Lord! Give me faith in the Name; give Nanak the

refuge of a Master who is a Perfect Adept. (Kanra M4, 1310-16)

Oh Lord! Lead us to a Master by remembering whom we may obtain salvation, by seeing whom we may become happy, and for whom we would gladly die.

Oh Lord! Lead us to a Holy Man, by remembering whom we may obtain salvation. May we feel happy on seeing Him, and may we gladly sacrifice ourselves for Him. (Bhairon M4, 1135-8)

We should pray to the Lord and the Master to give us the opportunity to see them, to seek refuge with them, to get from them the Name, to have their help in escaping from the snares of the sense pleasures, and to aid us in crossing the ocean of the world. They are all-powerful and can grant us anything they wish.

In addition, the devotee should ask them that he may live as they wish him to. We are without virtues, unwise, uninformed and ignorant. We do not know what to do. Oh Lord! Have mercy, make us sing Your praises so that we may live according to Your Will.

Virtueless, unwise, uninformed, ignorant are we, and we know not what to do. Have mercy on Nanak, so that he may sing Your praises. (Suhi M5, 748-17)

In addition to this, we should also pray that we may remember Him and be devoted to Him.

He who remembers the Formless One, his delusion disappears. He who is dyed in Your hue is freed from transmigration. (Gujri War M5, 523-8)

Oh Lord! After wandering for many ages, I have taken refuge with You. Oh Lord! Hear Nanak and give him devotion for You. (Gauri M5, 289-9)

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Also pray to hear the Sound or Shabd, the Lord's Nectar and Name, for they are the principal means of reaching the Lord.

We are Your humble devotees; give us the Nectar of the Name Oh Beloved Master! Unite me to the all-wise Lord. (Maru M4, 997-5)

Forgive the sinner, oh Lord, and unite him to You; You are limitless; no one can discuss Your limits. You are known through the Shabd within the body. (Parbhati M3, 1333-6)

Oh virtuous Lord and Creator! How can I praise you? Hear the prayers of the devotees and give the Nectar of the Name. (Suhi M5, 784-6)

We are beggars at Your door, O bountiful One; be pleased to give the Name which will give us bliss. (Dhanasri M3, 666-10)

Oh Lord! Save us, we pray; we can do nothing of ourselves; have mercy and give us Your Name. (Dhanasri M5, 675-11)

In this Kal Yug (Iron Age) singing the praises of the Shabd is very beneficial.

In Kalyuga sing the Shabd; by this devotion, pride is removed. (Asa M3, 424-1)

By singing the Name, the soul gains strength and pride disappears. One should, therefore, mentally pray for His remembrance and meditate on Him.

I wish to make an effort every morning that I may enjoy the ambrosia of singing the praises of the Lord. Oh Lord, bestow this boon on Nanak. (Gujri M5, 519-8)

Praying that one may dwell at the feet of the Master

and may get the dust of His holy feet (His spiritual love and power) is also enjoined by the Saints.

May I get the company of the Master, and be dyed in love of the Name. Oh Lord, have mercy on Nanak and let Thy feet dwell in his heart. (Bihagara M5, 545-2)

Have compassion, oh Merciful Lord; give to Nanak the company of Saints. (Gauri M3, 194-19)

Oh Lord, accept us as Your slaves. Give us the dust of the feet of the Saints as long as we live. (Kalyan M4, 1326-9)

The Gurus give examples of prayers for removing dangers to the devotees, and prayers for fulfilling their needs are also given. They are referred to here so that the reader can derive benefit by reading them.

Examples of Prayers

Man has a body and a soul. The soul is as valuable in the body as is a beautiful pearl in a shell. Saints recommend prayers of several kinds. There are some who ask the Lord for the necessities of life so that after satisfying these needs they may give devotion to the Lord. The words Give us this day our daily bread occur in the Lord's Prayer.

Saints consider that everything belongs to the Lord and pray for daily necessities so that after satisfying the needs of the body full devotion may be given to the Lord. The needs of the horse of this body should be satisfied first, and the needs of the soul should be looked after thereafter. Kabir Sahib says that hunger interferes with one's prayers. Therefore one should satisfy one's hunger with a crust of bread and then engage in prayer.

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Oh Kabir, hunger interferes with prayer; first take a crust of bread, and then engage in remembrance.

The Master says that it is proper for a devotee to ask for his needs in the beginning. Kabir prayed, Oh Lord! I cannot pray while hungry. I therefore ask for two pounds of flour every day. He also prayed for half-a-pound of pulse, so as to provide for both of his daily meals. He also made a request for a cot, a pillow, a bedding and a quilt, so that he could be free to engage, in devotion. But he did not ask for these out of greed, for he loved the Name Only.

I cannot engage in devotion while hungry, Oh Lord. Please take back your rosary. (Kabir Sorath 656-12)

Pray give me two pounds of flour, and a little butter and salt. I ask for half-a-pound of pulse, so that I may have both of my daily meals. Give a cot, a pillow and also a quilt to cover myself, so that I may be free to remember You. I am not avaricious; I love Your Name alone. (Kabir Sorath 656-15)

Dhanna Bhagat similarly prays, Oh Lord! I adore You. You do all the work of Your devotees. I ask for pulse, flour and butter, so that I may be happy after taking them. I also ask for good clothes and shoes, as well as cereals. I also wish for a milk-giving cow and a buffalo. There should be a good mare to ride, and an obedient and sympathetic wife.

Oh Lord! I adore Thee. You see to it that all the actions of Your devotees are successful. Give pulses, salt and butter, so that I may be happy every day; give good shoes to wear, and seven kinds of cereals; a cow and a buffalo to give milk, and a mare to ride. Dhanna also asks for a good wife. (Dhanna, Dhanasri,695-16)

Saints and Adepts, while knowing fully well that the

Lord knows one's needs, have given us some examples of prayers so that we may act in accordance with them.

The Tenth Guru (Gobind Singh Sahib) prayed for Grace for His family and His disciples. He prayed, Oh Lord! Give us Your hand and protect us. Fulfill our desires, so that our mind may rest at Your feet. Consider us Your own, and look after us. Destroy all our enemies. Save me, Oh Creator. I pray that my family, servants and disciples should be happy. Take my servants and disciples across the ocean of this universe, and destroy our foes.

How should I pray? Protect us by giving us Your hand. Let our desires be fulfilled. May our minds rest at Your feet. Consider us as Your servants and protect us. Drive away all our enemies. Save me by Your own hand. Oh Creator! May my family live happily and also all my servants and disciples. Give salvation to my servants and disciples, and destroy each one of my foes.

Lord's Prayer

Jesus Christ prayed:

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive as our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever.

The followers of Mahatma Buddha do not believe in prayers, but if their religion is examined closely, it will be found that they have also accepted the reality behind prayer. When they sit after bathing and cleaning themselves in the morning and evening, they send out good wishes of the following kind: I wish the good of all the universe. May all living beings, whether below or above,

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whether on the left or the right, prosper. May all living beings in heaven, earth, the nether worlds and hell, have peace and goodwill. They do not ask for anything but simply send out their good wishes for the good and welfare of the entire universe, and the good of all is wished for. Real prayer, consists in wishing for the good of all.

Hindus also pray

There are prayers in the Vedas which ask for physical and daily necessities. One of these is:

Oh Sustainer, Lord of the paths, we have yoked Thee to our chariot through our prayers so that we may attain success and salvation. Bestow upon us that wealth that men yearn for. Grant us the company of the courageous, the philanthropic and the compassionate Giver of food. Oh powerful Deity, throw open the path that we may obtain food, that we may destroy our foes, that we may fulfill our desires. Oh Wise Deity, pierce the hearts of the avaricious with Your armour and make them subject to us. (Rig Veda, Mandal 6, Sukt 53)

In their daily ritual, the Hindus pray as follows:

Brahm (the Lord) who is the eye of the entire universe and the well-wisher of all, and who is pure and free from worldly blemish, is before us. May we see Him (His Light) for a hundred years. May we live for Him a hundred years. may we hear Him (the Shabd) for a hundred years. May we sing His glories and through His Mercy be free a hundred years, and may this state last for over a hundred years.

The Gayatri Mantra is nothing but a prayer. The Muslims pray:

God is one. God is detached from all. He gave birth to none. Of none is He born. He has no equal. Show us the right path.

Similarly, the Jains also pray. In all these prayers we are reminded of the ideal and of our ultimate destination, which is to realize the Lord. In the Vedanta, prayer consists in hearing and meditating and contemplating on the great saying (maha vakyas). Hafiz Sahib prays to his Master in the ecstasy of his devotion:

Oh Master, I am poor while You are the helper of the poor. I have been separated from the Original Home for a very long time. Have pity on my condition and take me back to the Original Home. Your intention was to show the miracle of Thy wonderful beauty; otherwise, in all his glory and wealth, what need had Sultan Mahmud for the tresses of (his slave) Aiyaz?

Oh Master! I am poor, and You are the helper. I have been separated from my Original Home for many ages. Have mercy and take me with You to the Original Home. I am drawn to You because of Your incomparable beauty; without You I am nothing. This is the reason why Sultan Mahmud was so kind to his slave (Aiyaz). Hafiz further says:

I have only the desire to serve at Your door; oh Lord, have mercy on Your slave, and give him a kindly glance.

Shamas-i-Tabrez prays to the Master:

Oh Master, by bestowing the wine of homelessness which leads to the indescribable, You have turned the travelers into wine servers, (transformed them into adepts). Close my fault-finding eyes and give the Inner Eyes which can see the Reality.

He again says:

You are as Mount Caucasus is to the eagle; You are as light is to the moth; open the fountain of life-giving elixir all around me, and

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recreate the old legends. Intoxicate me with the wine of love and put my wandering and faithless mind in Thy service. For a while enter the mosque of my heart. Come and adorn this humble abode.

Oh Lord and Master! Just as Mount Caucasus is the home of the king eagle, You are the resting place of the bird of my soul. Were I a moth, You would be the candle in the flame of which I would sacrifice myself. Oh Merciful One, shower Thy Elixir all round about me, so that the stories about the Pool of Nectar, the Rain or the Water of Life, and the Fountain of Life-giving Water may come true. Give me the intoxication of love, and bridle the unruly intellect in the service of the Lord. My last prayer is that You should appear in the mosque of my body, so that my humble cottage may feel honored and become pure.

Kabir's Prayer

I pray with folded hands, listen to me, oh Merciful Master. Give me peace and the company of Saints; also humility, poverty and knowledge.

Kabir makes this prayer while thinking of your holy feet. Show me the true path of the Saints, oh Master. How can I utter a word of prayer? I am ashamed of myself. I sin before your eyes. How can You love me? I am full of faults and You are faultless; You are virtuous and I am a sinner.

Even if I forget You, pray, forget me not. Oh Lord, forget me not, though You can have thousands of others. You can get many like me; but I cannot get any other like You. How can I forget You? I have nowhere else to go.

My mind cares not for Shiva or Muni Narad. If I forget You by mistake, pray, do not take it to heart. The Master should love the poor. A man errs daily. Oh Kabir, why

have you foolishly made yourself wretched by thinking of your faults?

A man is helpless and dependent, and it is only the Lord who looks to his good. Sins I have committed many within no time at all. And You may pardon me or punish me as You like.

Oh forgive me, pardon me, spare me, oh helper of the poor. I am an undutiful son, but my father is jealous of my honor.

Oh Lord, You are full of virtues and have no faults. When I searched my heart I found there every fault. I have not a single virtue; listen, oh King of Saints, by the Grace of Your Name I will have a place of honor. I am false, while the Lord is true: I am full of sins. I am a born sinner, full of all defects. I am a sinful soul, oh Lord; pray, save me. You, the bountiful remover of sufferings, pray, look after me.

Help me, oh Lord, I am in deep waters. By myself I would be carried away; hold me by the hand. I believe I have no love in my mind, and I do not have a beautiful body. I do not know how I could survive without the Lord. If I meet the Lord in this life, I will tell Him all my troubles while I weep. I will place my head on His feet, and say what I have to say.

You know the inner thoughts of all, and are the support of the universe. If You let go my hand, who would take me across? The ocean of the universe is very deep, unknowable and unfathomable. Oh Merciful Lord, if You have compassion, can I feel its depth?

I am a great sinner, and am very hard of heart. Oh pow-

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erful Master, You alone can take me to my resting place. You are all-powerful, my Lord, pray hold me firmly by the arm. Take me to my destination, and leave me not by the wayside.

Give me the boon of devotion, oh Master and God of gods, I wish for nothing else except Thy daily service. I am drowning in the middle of the stream; hold me and take me across.

Prayer Before the Master in Sar Bachan

O Master, open the door of the heart. The mind has tried and tried and failed; not once has it succeeded. You are all-powerful and lacking nothing, why do You delay?

I am tossed between pain and pleasure; why have I not yet had a chance? Have mercy, O Bountiful One! Take my mind and attention to the skies.

The mind is evil and does not long for You; give me the boon of love. The mind asks for false comforts, and does not know the reality.

It hankers after worldly pleasures, and does not taste the Nectar of the Sound. What should I tell the mind, and how should I persuade it? It does not take to heart the words of the Master.

The mind is strangely made; it does not love and care for the Shabd. How can it escape the cycle of eighty-four? It does not repeat the Name of the Master. I will be buffeted in this world, and will be dragged headlong to the regions of death.

I have borne these sufferings for a long time. The mind

does not heed and has forgotten. You are the moving spirit in all hearts, O Master, why do You not call this sufferer to You?

Except for You I have no other; You alone can take me to the Eternal Abode. Have mercy, O Radha Soami, and take me to the other shore.

I may now commit an unwise action, I am a stranger in a strange land. Set me on the right path in this life, I bow at Your feet every day.

I repeat and feel remorse in my mind, how am I to join my Lord? I live on earth while my Lord is in the skies, without my Beloved I remain depressed.

O Master, hear my prayer, Kal has entangled me in his meshes. I am helpless and wretched and cry to You, O Master, hear my prayer. You are merciful and provide for everyone. I am the only unfortunate one who is full of sufferings.

What can I say about my pains? It is as if I were pierced by the point of an arrow. You, O Master, have now given me hope that I may fly in the sky with the wings of love. By Your mercy I have met my Lord, all pain is gone and my heart is free of troubles.

O Master, hear my prayer, I pray again and again. Remove my evil thoughts. Give me shelter at Your feet.

Take me across the ocean of this universe, my boat is in the middle of the stream. There is no support but You. Make me Your own and support me.

I am cunning and a hypocrite but Yours. You are the

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limitless Bountiful Lord. I am helpless and extremely wretched, pray, free me whenever You please.

I kneel and beg before You, I surrender my mind and body and soul to You, and have now found a great support. I am lowly, uninformed and unskilled.

You have placed the secret of the Sound in the heart. The immoral mind did not find it tasteful. I have been deluded by pleasure and pain. I hanker after worldly honor.

How can I reverse the actions of the mind without help given by You, my Master? O Radha Soami, draw up the mind, I make this earnest plea to You.

I ask a boon of the Master. Pray, let the Shabd manifest itself in my heart. The mind always leads to delusion. Pray, rid my mind of all actions, that the soul may rise and hear the Melody.

Control the mind and make it actionless, so that all actions, good and bad, may cease. That I may hear the Shabd at the proper place, pray, make me mad after the Name, that I may reach the goal of Shabd, that none may cause me injury, that I may die for You.

Pray, do not let me drift with the current of Kal, but give me the honor of the Shabd. The mind is very unruly; I take shelter at the feet of Radha Soami.

O Lord, pray, take me to Your Home for I am idle and deluded. O Merciful One! pray, hold me, I do not know what sins I have committed.

My soul does not yet love the Name; what am I to do? The mind does not remain at rest, O Merciful One, have

compassion on me, I am wretched all the time.

The soul does not rise, and the mind is not calm. I do not get the benefit of Shabd. The path of the Master is said to be high; so I follow it. Why do the Saints not help me?

The path of the Saints will be put to shame if I do not succeed in full. I make this prayer according to my own will, for I am not aware of what Your wish may be.

I cry again and again, hear me, and give me Your own Name. When Radha Soami gives His own Name, a sufferer may take rest.

How am I to be freed from the mind? says the soul to the mind. It has cast the net of pleasures. It has separated me from the Original Home.

I am in the bondage of the ten senses, and they have all deceived me. I am surrounded by the nine desires; I have been cast out of the tenth door.

Now I am attached to the sense pleasures, how can I escape from this snare? I see no one but the Master who can take me out of this jungle.

I tremble because of death; who can free me from this fear? From a human being I have become a beast. I have not loved the Master.

Like a broken branch from a tree, I am lying far from my Original Home. I humbly beg the Master with all earnestness, keep me at Your feet.

Cleanse me of dirt by Your company, so that I may feel separate from the body. I may then unite with the Melody

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of Sunn (spiritual region). I may get the Nectar from the jar.

When the Master unites me with the Shabd, suffering is removed and no fear remains. I am connected to the Sound Current. I may love the Lord. O Radha Soami, make me Your own, I have taken refuge with You.

Prayer of Mira Bai

You redeemed Ajamil, the sinner, You redeemed Sadna, You saved the elephant from drowning, the courtesan rode the air chariot, and You redeemed many other sinners, the wise Saints say this is so.

You redeemed the lowly forest woman and Kubja, this is known to all the world. How can I mention all? They are a legion. Even the Vedas and Purans have failed to accomplish this. Oh Lord! Mira has taken shelter with You; hear this with both Thy ears.

I have suffered greatly in this world, doubt and sorrow have tortured me. Now have compassion on me, remove my suffering and take me across.

All this world is drifting in the current of the eighty-four; oh Merciful Lord of Mira, pray, end the transmigration.

I feel no rest without meeting You, my heart feels it so. I rise high and see the Path, by weeping all through the night.

This world is all illusion, family and relations are all false. I pray with folded hands, oh hear my prayer!

This mind of mine is very unruly, like a wild elephant running amok; the Master has placed His hand on its head, and is trying to persuade it by force.

Mira's Lord is merciful, she has united her heart to His feet. I look at Your Form every moment, on seeing You, I feel happy.

My intellect is robbing me, however hard I try to direct my mind; I try to control the mind, oh Lord, but I am helpless and dying; oh, come soon to me, my Lord,

Each day I hear religious discourses, but still I am afraid of the evil mind. Without fail I always serve the Holy Men, and I busy myself in remembrance and contemplation. Pray, show Thy slave the path of devotion, oh Lord, make Mira Your true devoted slave.

My friends have turned into foes, I am disliked by all. I have no friend but You, my boat is tossing in the sea. I have no rest all day or sleep at night, I stand alone and wither.

My heart is pierced by the arrows of separation, I cannot forget this even for a moment. You redeemed Ahilya who had turned into stone and was lying in the forest. Mira is over-burdened with sorrows. I have met the Perfect Master, Ravi Das. He came from our Original Home in the heavens. When the Master showed me the world within, Light merged into Light.

I am drifting on the ocean of this world, take me out of it, I beg You. There is no friend in this ocean, the only true friend is the Lord. Father, mother and family members, all have their own ends to serve. Oh Lord! Hear the prayer of Mira, be pleased to give her a place at Your feet.

The Philosophy of The Masters

Prayer of Dharam Das

Oh Master, Lord of Lords, give me the boon of devotion; may I never forget to serve the feet of the Master while I live. I do not fast, or go on pilgrimage, or worship in a temple; I am controlling my mind, my speech and my actions.

The eight kinds of Sidhis, the nine kinds of Ridhis (occult powers) or dwelling place in heaven, these I ask not, oh my powerful and bountiful Lord. Articles of comfort, family, wealth and a beautiful wife in my home, these I do not desire even in dream, I swear by You, my Master.

Hear the prayer of Dharam Das, oh powerful Lord; free him from transmigration and make him Your own.

Prayer of Surdas

Oh save me, my Lord; I am sitting unprotected on the branch of a tree. The hunter (KarmDev) has his arrow pointed at me. I want to escape him, but a falcon is hovering over me. I am between two dangers, oh Merciful Lord, who is to save me?

As soon as I remembered You, a serpent stung the hunter and the arrow struck the falcon. How can Surdas praise Your virtues? All glory to You, oh Merciful Lord.

Save my honor, oh Lord; You know all. I have earned no merit. I cannot give up evil deeds even for a moment, what to say of hours; I bear on my head the burden of hypocrisy. To wife, son and wealth am I attached, and I have lost my senses. Redeem Surdas the sinner, my boat is full to the brim.

