

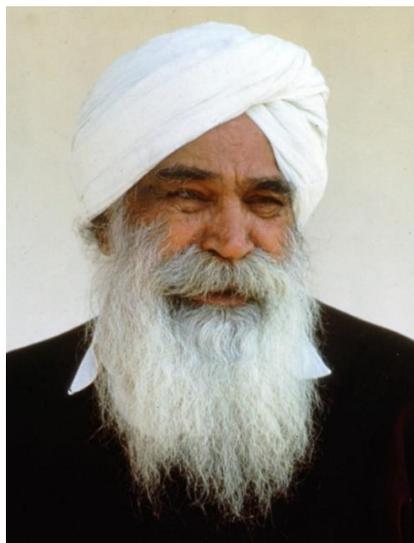
Guru Bhakti
(Devotion to the Master)
&
The Time of Elixir
by
Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj

From *Philosophy of the Masters*

(Gurmat Sidhant)

(Series 2, Chapter 1, pgs. 19 – 74, Devotion)

(Series 1, Chapter 4, The Time Of Elixir)



Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj
1894-1974

He will live in the hearts of His devotees forever!

In 1939 Sant Kirpal Singh began writing *Gurmat Sidhant - Philosophy of the Masters*, a 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. Radha Soami Satsang Beas published the entire work in a five volume series.

From the book jacket:

Some books are to be read and discarded. Others, however, are to be thoroughly digested and assimilated. Such books act as a beacon light for the traveler on the path of his moral, social and spiritual life.

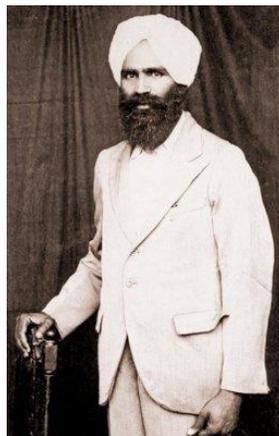
Philosophy of the Masters ranks very high amongst the latter category of books and contains an abundance of material for the guidance of the seekers of Truth. It deals with spiritual discipline, with scientific precision, for ultimate communion with God. This is supported by quotations from Saints and Mystics of all ages and countries.

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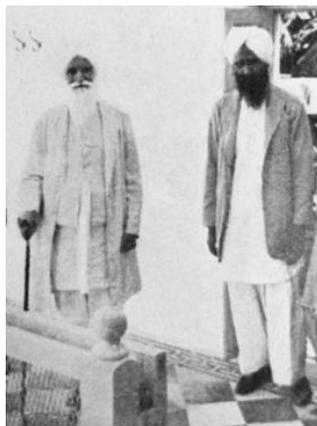
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The Time of Elixir



Sant Kirpal Singh – 1930's



Baba Sawan Singh & Kirpal Singh

Guru Bhakti

Devotion to the Master

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 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.

Soami 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.

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), Dhyān (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 worshipping 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 always 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).

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. 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, Dhyana 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 (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 worshipped 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.

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.

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 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 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 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 (Guru Bhakti) 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, 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 discussions 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.

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:

1. Listening to the Guru's words with rapt attention and fixing these in one's mind.
2. Singing hymns and engaging in spiritual talk.
3. Simran (repetition and remembrance).
4. Physical service.
5. Worship.
6. Prayer (for guidance and grace).
7. Humility.
8. Feeling love and reverence for the Master.
9. Complete surrender.

These nine practices lead to the path of true devotion.

1. 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 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?

2. 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.”*

3. 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.

4. 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.

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

6. 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:

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.

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:

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 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.

Consider the entire world as having issued from the one God, and therefore do not harm or injure anybody'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?

1. 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.

2. 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)

3. 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.

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 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 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)

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 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 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. 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 selfish 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.

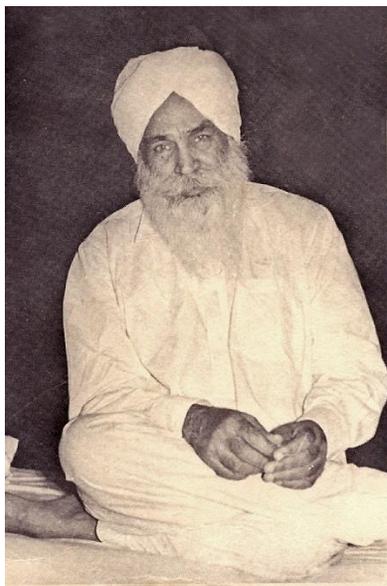
By devotion to the Lord, the entire attention of a devotee is dyed in remembrance of the Lord – sitting, rising, coming, going, sleeping, walking, eating, drinking – all these actions are surrendered to Him. As a result, the devotee is freed from the shackles of the world.

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.



The Time of Elixir

(*Philosophy of the Masters*, Series 1, Chapter 4)

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 therefore 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 undernoted 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.

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.

Kirpalct@yahoo.com

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