Chapters from:

Philosophy of the Masters
(Gurmat Sidhant)

by

Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj

Part 1 of 4

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

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

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

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

Sant Kirpal Singh – 1930’s

Book 1: http://kirpalsingh.org/Booklets/Philosophy_of_the_Masters_1.pdf

Book 2: http://kirpalsingh.org/Booklets/Philosophy_of_the_Masters_2.pdf


http://kirpalsingh.org/Booklets.html
The Time of Elixir
Chapter 1

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.
Remembrance or Repetition
(Simran)
Chapter 2

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

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

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

What is Simran?

In order to understand it properly, one has to pay attention to its true significance. Simran is a Sanskrit word derived from the root ‘Smar’. It has several meanings: to protect, to make a mental picture of one’s deity in the heart, and to contemplate on this form, to remember a certain person or thing to such an extent as to think about it with every breath, to make it a part and parcel of one’s life, and ultimately to awaken into and to live in it. Muslims call it “Zikar”, that is, to remember someone.

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

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

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

“Within our hearts we contemplate the Master, on our tongue is His Holy Name, in our eyes resides His Form, in our ears resounds the Divine Melody. We remain completely engrossed in His remembrance. We become merged in the state of ceaselessly dwelling upon Him. Our mind and intellect – their very fabric – are completely colored with the dye of His constant remembrance. It is such persons who gain honor and glory in the Court of the Lord and thus fulfill the great destiny of human life.”
“A person should pine for his Master as does the rain bird for a drop of rain. He should repeat His Name with every breath and should think of His Form day and night. In short, he should not forget Him even for a second. The truly great in the world are those who have in their hearts naught else save the recollection of the Lord.”

**Method of Withdrawing Within Oneself**

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

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

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

The power of speech of the tongue should be utilized in Simran; the power of the sight of the eyes should be used in contemplating the form of the Master; and the power of hearing of the ears should be spent in listening to the Sound Current. These three practices are absolutely essential. We are now dealing with the first, namely, Simran. The other two, viz., Contemplation (Dhyan) and Shabd or Sound Current will be taken up in subsequent chapters.

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

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

It is also necessary that repetition should be replaced by Repetition, just as a water-stricken crop is revived with water. The Simran of the objects of the world should be replaced by the Simran of God, and thoughts of the world by Contemplation of the Master, who is God incarnate. Thus is imprinted on our subconscious mind the impression of God in the form of our Satguru. Where the waves of the world once dominated the scene, there will now be remembrance of the Lord and Contemplation of the Master. The devotee begins to forget the world and its shadow shapes. The mind loses much of its fickleness and a certain amount of concentration is achieved.
Any left-over rambling tendencies are ended by listening to the Sound Current, which resounds in all human beings. Then only comes complete concentration. This Sound Current is the heritage of all. We do not hear it, because our attention is extroverted. This Divine Melody resounds at the headquarters of the soul in the body and can be heard at the eye focus by going within.

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

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

We cannot see our Lord with the eyes or our intellect. It is only the eye of the soul (nirat) which can perceive God. So long as our mind’s currents are spread out, it is impossible to behold Him. If therefore we control the mind and the sense, we behold within the refulgence of the Lord. When through Simran we complete the course of concentration, we reach the second stage, namely, Contemplation. And through Contemplation we are able to listen to the Sound Current.

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

Rhythmical control of the breath, known as Pranayam, which is performed by some persons for attaining concentration, is an artificial method. The methods taught by the Saints, as described above, are natural and easy. They can be performed by a child, a young or an old person. In practicing these methods no difficulties are encountered. Moreover, they do not adversely affect our health. The Ashtang Yoga practices are difficult, and householders cannot perform them. The Saints’ methods are complete in themselves. By following them, we realize the Truth without fail.

Maulana Rumi says:

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

**Method of Simran**

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

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

“The true rosary is the rosary of the mind. The rosaries of the world are false. If it were possible to have communion with the Lord by rotating outside beads, then the Persian wheel, round whose neck rotate water-holders, should have been the one to realize God.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. There is yet another method of Simran in which the Yogis produce a sound by raising their breath at the navel center. This practice leads to a temporary control of the mind. Therefore, this method is also not without its defects.
Repetition by the tongue is better than that with a rosary, and that in the throat is superior to one by the tongue. Similarly, that in the heart is more beneficial than the one in the throat. The fifth, that in the navel center is attempted by the yogis alone. Simran by means of a rosary or by the tongue is considered to be the lowest form of repetition, that in the throat and with the heart being distinctly superior. However, all types of repetition, when accompanied by one-pointed attention, yield good results. They cleanse the mind and bring some measure of peace. But the soul currents do not collect at the eye center, so there is little gain in spiritual development.

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

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

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

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

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

1. Lasani, that is by tongue. It is also known as Kalma-i-Shariat or Nasoot.
2. Kalbi, which is done through the heart, by putting pressure on the heart by means of breathing. This is also called Kalma-i-Tariakat or Malkoot.
3. Ruhi, repetition by the soul with attention at the Third Eye. This is known as Kalma-i-Marfat or Javroot.
4. Siri, which is obtained by means of inner revelation. This is also known as Kalma-i-Hakikat or Lahoot. In this, the practitioner becomes one with the Simran.
5. Sufi, by which one merges in the Lord. This is also called Hahoot. The practitioner loses his own identity and imbibes that of the Lord. This is the permanent and everlasting stage.

Another Saint says:

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

Maulana Rumi says:

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

The Spiritual Repetition at the eye center is the monopoly of Saints.
In the Hindu Upanishads we find:

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

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

**Purpose of Repetition (Simran)**

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

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

**Place of Simran**

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

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

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

In order to concentrate at this center, we have to carry out one-pointedly the Simran of some name or names of the Lord. Other methods are unnecessary. Guru Arjan says:

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

What are the names which one should repeat, and what is their connection with God?

For Simran there are two kinds of names:
1. Personal or subjective names.
2. Attributive or qualitative names.

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

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

The names that are revealed to us by a True Master carry His power, and this comes to the aid of the disciple, enabling him to transcend both death and the Negative Power. The words of the Master are eternal, and through them we are freed from the cycle of births and deaths. Therefore, whatever Names are bestowed upon us by a Master are conducive to our greatest good. Each Name carries its own influence.

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

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

“This name (Om) is closely connected with God.”

Muin du din Chishti says:

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

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

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

Muin du din Chishti clarifies:

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

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

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

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

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

By practicing this, all the difficulties of the world are removed, the wavering mind is stilled and one achieves concentration of very high order. Some people close their eyes while doing Repetition, and others do so with open eyes. In the first case, there is a possibility of falling asleep; and in the second, there is the danger of the mind running after the objects of the world. The former is a much better method, but one should start the practice after getting over drowsiness. It is also essential that the practice be done regularly as well as punctually, at the appointed time.

Hafiz says:

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

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

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

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

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

Simran and Contemplation bestow showers of the Elixir of Life.

One can practice selfless Simran at any time and in any place. Do not forget even while answering the call of nature. If one feels drowsy during Simran, he should stand up and do the Repetition for about half an hour. Cold water may also be sprinkled on the face. Eat less at night and use light food consisting of milk and fruit. If celibacy can be maintained along with this diet, the practice leads to quicker and better results.
But for a married person, the marital obligations should be performed with restraint and in accordance with certain set principles. The devotee should live up to the Sant Mat principles in all his dealings, his food, sleep, speech, etc., and he should try to perform his daily spiritual exercises in the same place and in the same posture, which should not be changed frequently or at short intervals.

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

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

To do Simran, it is not necessary to give up the world and its tasks. Carry on your duties and still keep your attention fixed in Simran.

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

Simran should be practiced with full attention. Kabir says:

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

Again, Kabir says:

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

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

A hunter plays a drum in the jungle to attract the deer, and they are so much intoxicated by that music that they place their heads against the instrument and are caught by the hunter. The deer knows that it will be caught, but it is so intensely attracted and influenced by the sound of a drum that it becomes powerless to resist and rushes towards it to die. It does not turn back. A snake listens to the sound of a veena and, without caring for the dire consequences, comes and dances to its tune.
Similarly, a devotee, no matter in what circumstances he may be – poor or rich, ill or well, awake or asleep, standing or sitting – should remember Him and become so absorbed in Simran that he becomes utterly oblivious of his body. By doing so the soul ascends to higher spiritual regions.

Kabir Sahib describes the prerequisites for Simran:

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

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

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

**Inner Ascent and Realization Through Simran**

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

Guru Nanak says:

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

Hazrat Ibrahim attests to having seen the meteor. The Vedas likewise mention this brightness.

Maulana Rumi says:

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

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

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

Maulana Rumi says:

“Only that method of Repetition of the Holy Names is correct by which the inner way (for spiritual transport) is opened. Only that Path is correct which leads to the Radiant Form of the Master, the King of Kings. Such a King as does not have to depend upon treasures of gems and diamonds, but who is sovereign within Himself.”
Regarding Simran, the Yog Shastra of Patanjali says: “Simran leads to manifestation of the deity.” Vyas Rishi states: “Gods, sages and seers pay homage to a person who repeats the Holy Names.” Such statements as these show that all that Simran promises is realizable.

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

Tulsi Das mentions the potency of Simran in his Ramchritar:

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

Guru Nanak mentions in Jap Ji:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“The soul is the essence and the Lord is the source. When it remembers the Lord one-pointedly, it becomes the Lord.”
The bhringhi (a kind of wasp) has the capacity of turning another insect into its own kind by giving it attention. Kabir says: “You should also carry out God’s Simran in such a way as to merge in Him and to become Him.” One who by merging in the Light of the Lord has become that Light, no longer remains a mere human being. Whomsoever we contemplate, Him we become.

Once Hazrat Bayazed Bustami became so engrossed in the remembrance of God that he became oblivious to his own separate existence, and when he peered within, he beheld nothing but God. In this state of ecstasy he started saying that he was God. His disciples, who were greatly surprised, asked him later, when they got an opportunity of talking to him: “Oh Master, according to you, God never takes the form of a man, and yet a short while ago you said you were God. Are you not a body?” Hazrat Bustami denied having said so and told them that someone else might have done so. He further said: “If you hear me say such a thing again, punish me according to Muslim law.”

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

When Hazrat Bustami was asked to explain the reason for this, he smilingly said: “One who remembers the Lord becomes Him. He is beyond the reach of a sword or of swordsmen.”

When Tulsi Sahib came to Hathras, he said: “I live without a body, although I am seen in it.” The people tried to catch hold of him but they could not do so.

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

Kabir says:

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

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

**Precepts of Simran**

The Saints tell us that we are all accustomed to repeat certain names. How good it would be if we were to turn our attention to the Name of God! Simran gives pleasure and removes pain. By doing the Simran of the Lord, one merges in Him.
Many people perform their worldly tasks with their hands and feet. Their minds remain free. Employ your hands and feet in work, and your mind in the remembrance of the Lord. If one is to succeed in this practice, he should carry out Simran at all times whether awake or asleep, just as the hands of a clock move ceaselessly.

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

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

Kabir says:

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

The Adi Granth has placed great emphasis on Simran.

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

Likewise have Muslim Saints emphasized its great need:

“The Lord has thus ordained: ‘You remember me and I shall remember you.’”

Hazrat Mohammed says:

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

In the Hadis it is stated:

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

Further, the Hadis says:

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

Farid-ud-Din Attar says:

“In your prayers behold your Beloved. Both within and without live in His remembrance, and remember Him inwardly as well as outwardly. In His worship make no one else a partner, for God is One without a second.”
The real fast consists in withdrawing the senses from sensual pursuits and employing them in His remembrance.

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

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

Time for Simran

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

Hafiz enjoins:

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

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

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

The Practice of Repetition of Names is for Everybody

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

Everybody remembers the Lord for the fulfilment of desires. One does so for a wife, another yearns for a son, and still other asks for wealth. Everyone has a motive behind his Simran. Of course, the objects of desires are achieved, but they do not accompany one when he dies. Even his body remains behind. What else can ever go with one at the time of his departure? Kabir says: “He who carries out self-less Simran is the sublimest of all.” This means that we should beg of God naught else but God.
The Scriptures tell us that all things in this world are transitory. They are truly shadow shapes that vanish in a moment. Therefore, begging for anything other than God Himself is to suffer untold misery. So long as the Simran is done with an ulterior motive, we are asking God for objects of the world, and thus bringing further privations upon ourselves. It is only the self-less Simran that is acceptable to God. A Muslim Saint says: “Do not blacken your heart with useless thoughts. Ask not from God aught else but Him.”

**Fruits of Simran**

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

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

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

When a person is under the sway of lust, anger and attachment, when he is assailed by miserliness and avarice, when he is in the grip of the four vices, namely stealing, drinking, adultery and the persecution of saintly people, when demon-like desires to annihilate others have taken hold of him, when he will not listen to the reading of a holy Scripture – even then, if he thinks of the Lord, he shall gain freedom in the twinkling of an eye.

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

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

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

A person may be healthy of body; he may suffer from no disease nor sorrow; he may be completely forgetful of death; he may be engrossed in sense pleasures day and night; he may own everything he wants; yet if he does not think of the Lord, he goes straight into the jaws of hell.
Simran puts an end to sins, pain and doubts. It removes anger and ego. It takes away cares, all ills, and the three attributes. It rids us of ghosts and goblins. It bestows peace and bliss. By Simran a person is emancipated, and becomes a good example and a spiritual benefactor. He becomes a real philanthropist, has few needs, and becomes a leader of men.

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

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

A person doing Simran remains detached even while he lives among people. The fruits are not obtained by the Simran done the behest of mind, but by the Simran revealed to us by a Perfect Adept.
Sound or Melody
(Dhun)
Chapter 3

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

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

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

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

Yogas are of many kinds: Prana Yoga is the practice of breath control; Hatha Yoga consists of physical postures. Both of these concern the gross or physical body and are of low merit. Those that pertain to mind and intellect concern the astral body. Anand Yoga pertains to the causal body. This is superior to all other Yogas. The path of the Saints is Surat Shabd Yoga, which is the life-breath of all Yogas. No outer practice is involved in it. The Sound Current is heard with the ears of the soul. We gain this exalted state without expenditure of any kind. The Sound is really the manifestation of the Lord. It comes from the highest region and the soul is connected with it.

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

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

The Shabd is really the Music of the Lord, and it is listening to it that is greatly stressed in the Scriptures. It is the method of singing the glory of the Lord. It is the Unstruck Melody. It is One, and yet it manifests itself in all. The entire universe is sustained by it.
Shabd gives rise to Dhun, which can be felt at the eye center. This Sound is permanent (never ceases). Nor can it ever be measured in terms of money. Dhun has both Light and Sound. It is the Unstruck Music that resounds within. What we hear within is its reverberation, by gaining which the mind becomes still. Dhun is born out of Shabd. It has been called the quintessence of the Unstruck Music or Truth. Dhun is all-pervading and resounds as the music of the vina in Sach Khand. The vina sound is exceptionally melodious and enrapturing, and appears as the Unstruck Melody. The true Shabd gives rise to the Sahaj state where resounds the Sar Shabd, by listening to which we merge in the Lord. This is Gur Bani, which manifests as heavenly music. Whoever merges himself in it, partakes of the Elixir that issues forth from it. His mind turns away from worldly pleasures and becomes steeped in joy. He then arrives at the Real Home.

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

Dhun Comprises Knowledge, Contemplation and Meditation

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

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

Whence Do We Get the Dhun?

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

The inner Melody is resounding ceaselessly. It is eternal. But in spite of its ringing day and night in everybody, we remain poor. We are deprived of this treasure. It lies latent in us, but we quit the scene of life without awakening to it. We never care to dig for the treasure. It is only when we meet a Master and follow his instructions that we become aware of it and open the knot of the material and the conscious.
The Dhun is wide-awake within. Together with it there is Light. Those persons who may have acquired powers to perform miracles, although they may sit long in meditation, remain unaware of it. They assert that there is only ‘silence’ within and nothing else. If they were to contact a genuine Adept, they would realize both Light and Sound within and would then be free of doubts, suspicions and dissensions.

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

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

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

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

Who is Eligible for the Dhun?

To obtain Dhun it is essential for one to be the disciple of a Perfect Master. Dhun manifests itself only in the devotee of a Master. It appears only when the course of Contemplation is completed. When the devotee attunes to Dhun, he realizes the inexpressible Truth.

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

Fruits of Dhun

Mind is not amenable to control, even though millions of ordinary methods may be tried. Yogis of the past tried all their techniques and failed; the intellectuals gained nothing from philosophical discussions and critical commentaries; the efforts of anchorites performing penances and austerities proved abortive; the learned use all their knowledge, but with intellect and cleverness alone they failed to subdue the mind. The only remedy for controlling the mind is to listen to the Sound Current. No second way exists.
When the mind listens to the Shabd Dhun, it is completely enraptured by the bliss that Dhun confers. One who has joined his consciousness with Dhun goes beyond the reach of Kal, the Negative Power, and thus ends the ages-long cycle of birth and rebirth. The mind becomes still after hearing the sweet Melody, with the result that one’s ego vanishes and one gains his heart’s desire.

The Shabd Dhun permeates all beings, and by listening to it one becomes a Saint, God’s Name then dwells in the heart and one is attuned to Him. It is through the aid of Dhun that the Soul merges in the Lord.
Everyone has to die someday. Whether man or beast, rich or poor, healthy or diseased, nobody escapes death. All have to pass through its gate. This soul that has taken the physical form has to leave it. Everybody knows that he has to quit this world someday, but he knows not when.

Death is real, but life (in this world) is unreal. The Bible says: Dust thou art, and to dust returns. We have never cared to think about what kind of a journey lies beyond the gates of death. We lament the death of others. But actually, we should be concerned with our own end and should prepare ourselves for our own end and should prepare ourselves for our own life beyond death.

What is death? Do we feel any pain at the time of death? In the Bhagvad Gita there is a statement to the effect that the pain of death is so acute that it is equivalent to being stung simultaneously by a hundred thousand scorpions (the sting of one scorpion is exceedingly painful). And the Koran says: The pain of death may be likened to a thorny shrub passed into the body. In the Sikh Scriptures also there are references to the pain of death.

What kind of country do we have to pass through after death? Whom are we to deal with? We must ponder over these questions. The Scriptures make occasional mention of this subject, but we pay little heed to them, for we always believe them to be either fantasies or fairy tales, or efforts to wean people away from sin, or to induce them to perform good deeds. We have to cross the gates of death. No one can be an exception to this. Saint Paul says: Death is the last enemy to be conquered. We should not shut our eyes to this subject.

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

We are very clever about our worldly affairs and always make appropriate arrangements for their successful prosecution. But with regard to death, which has no time fixed for it and may come at any time – in childhood, in youth, or in old age – we have never given a moment’s thought.

A Master alone knows everything about death. At the time of death, when family and children, our wealth, possessions and body, all leave us, it is the Perfect Master alone who accompanies the disciple. For this reason He is our only true and genuine friend.
The Perfect Master is a true guide in the Astral, Causal and the higher purely spiritual regions. That is why the Scriptures have strongly emphasized the need for us to meet such Masters and to keep constantly dwelling upon them in our mind. In this way alone can we strike at the very root of transmigration and achieve everlasting bliss.

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

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

What Happens at the Time of Death and After?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

One who dives deep in the ocean and rises up into the sky will make the higher regions his abode and will realize the jewel of the Lord (Hari). So long as we yearn for life (in this world) we can never obtain this precious Jewel. It is through the Grace of the Lord that a rare devotee who dies while living can find this Jewel. If you wish to realize God, you must die while living, for it is impossible to attain Him so long as you do not die. So long as you cherish worldly desires, God-Realization will not come to you.
A person who dies while living lives forever. One who looks upon life in this world and death with the same attitude, is also free from death. This dying while living has nothing to do with being cremated or buried. It is a state or condition in which the Master bestows eternal life on his disciples.

Maulana Rumi says:

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

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

Christ says:

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

Maulana Rumi says:

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

Maulana Rumi further says:

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

Kabir says:

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

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

Hafiz also says:

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

Only those persons who die while living can taste the fruits. Therefore, so long as the soul does not leave the body completely during one’s lifetime, births and deaths will continue.
When the soul ascends within, it comes across the galaxy of stars. So long as the soul does not cross this region, it is not able to behold the sun and the moon nor the Radiant Form of the Master. “Oh wise man! So long as the veil of the body does not vanish, the Radiant Form of the Master does not manifest. Therefore, make a real death your own and remove this veil of the body. Oh man living in the Will of God! (Gurmukh) the Master confers this death upon you to enable you to live eternally. So long as you remain alive on this earth, you should be able to leave your body at will and traverse the higher regions.” The spiritual regions are the abode of your soul. If a person dies such a death, his soul need not return to this world any more.

Maulana Rumi says:

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

Swami Ji also affirms:

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

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

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

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

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

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

But such a death, namely, dying while living, can be had only through the Grace of the Master. There is no other way. The lovers of the Lord, by dying while living, ever drink the wine of happiness and bliss. This is the privilege of those to whom the Master Himself offers the ‘Wine’.
Shamas-i-Tabriz says:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tulsi Das also affirms this condition.

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

By Simran and Dhyan the soul collects and enters the Tenth Gate. By listening to the Shabd Dhun it comes out, drawn upwards by the Shabd’s magnetic force. Without these practices it is impossible to leave this “pot of clay.” No other method exists. Guru Arjan says: “*Dying while living can be accomplished only through Guru’s Shabd.*” Only then does one ferry cross this ocean of phenomena. Swami Ji says in Sar Bachan:

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

Dying with the help of Shabd, one attains everlasting life. A devotee of Shabd never dies a second time.
One who dies while living begins to tread the path that is exactly opposite to that of death. He attains the ‘Sunn’ state. He truly drinks nectar and becomes worthy of true devotion. Such a person attains God-Realization and is honored in the Court of the Lord.

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

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

The state of dying while living is the state of separating the conscious from the material. This is a highly evolved state. Such a person knows himself and his mind, and comprehends the mysteries of life. But this state can be achieved only by persons on whom descends the Grace of the Lord through an Adept.
Devotion
(Bhakti)
Chapter 5

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

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

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

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

Lord Krishna clearly states in the Gita:

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

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

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

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

What is Bhakti?

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

Guru Nanak Sahib said that God Himself is devotion. Guru Amar Das stated that devotion to God is love for Him, and this love cannot be achieved by any outward show.
Devotion is a quality by which the soul rises upwards and attains communion with God. Thus God is attracted downwards towards His devotee and comes and dwells within him.

Narad Rishi says:

“Ardent love for the Lord is devotion.”

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

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

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

Everybody wishes to attain the bliss of God-realization.

“Nothing is dearer, oh Nanak! To Him, than Bhakti.” (Adi Granth)

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

Guru Arjan Sahib says:

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

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

Shandlya Rishi says:

“Devotion consists in withdrawing one’s love, ideas and thoughts from worldly objects and in thinking of the Lord alone, and in keeping oneself wholly engrossed in this thought. It leads to lasting communion or contact with the Lord, by withdrawing one’s attention from the objects of the world.”
Shankaracharya also praises the value of devotion. He says:

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

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

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

Mira Bai says:

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

### Difference Between Love and Devotion

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

Lord Krishna says:

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

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

"Oh gopies! You have broken the iron-like strong hoops of worldly attachments and have merged yourselves in me with devotion and love. This state of your mind is beyond any reproach, and I am not capable of repaying a love like yours. Therefore, you should kindly relieve me of that burden."
Krishna once sent a message to the gopīs through Udhava, and while giving the message to Udhava his throat was choked and his eyes were shedding tears of love. He said:

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

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

“There is no room left in our hearts for anything other than our Krishna. That Lord is in every pore of our body. When we walk or talk, when we are awake or asleep, we cannot forget; nor can we be away from the vision of our Lord even for one moment. Udhava, you have given us a very elevating discourse and we are extremely grateful to you; but we are helpless because our minds and bodies are full of devotion to him. An ocean cannot be contained in a pitcher, and our eyes are now restless to see our Lord Krishna.”

They then continued:

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

The gopīs then told Udhava:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shankaracharya says:

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

Guru Nanak at one time was employed in the provision store of a king and was once weighing some grain on a pair of scales. After he had weighed twelve times and was weighing the thirteenth (tera), he called out “tera, tera!” (Besides the figure 13, tera also means yours). He was so absorbed in the love of the Lord that as soon as he said “tera”, his mind’s attention immediately centered on the Lord. As he continued weighing, instead of going to the next number and the succeeding numbers, he constantly cried out, “tera, tera.” “Oh Lord, I am yours. I am yours, and this is all yours.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Bhagwat says:

“Devotion to God creates knowledge. Such knowledge is the true knowledge, which results in attachment to the Lord. Mere superficial knowledge gives nothing, nor does devotion without faith. And knowledge without faith is also considered to be useless.” (Chapter 4, Verses 29, 36, 49)

In the Granth Sahib it is stated:

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

Tulsi Das says:

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

Devotion is Natural

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

1. Hirsi - Those who practice devotion only superficially, simply because they see others who are devoted and try to imitate them.
2. Arat - Restless persons
3. Jigyasu - Seekers
4. Artha Arthi - Selfish persons
5. Gyani - Intellectual persons

1. Hirsi: People of this type have no real desire for devotion, but when they see genuine devotees they imitate them and thus come into the company of Saints. Naturally, it takes a very long time for them to reach the stage of true devotion.

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

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

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

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

The Principles of Devotion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Prerequisites for Devotion

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

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

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

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

Why Should We Be devoted?

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

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

To Whom Should We Be devoted?

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

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

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

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

Lord Ram Chandra says in the Yoga Vashisht:

“By the amassing of wealth all good qualities are destroyed, in the same manner as the heat of the sun dries up the drops of dew on the leaves of the trees.”

A greedy person is extremely selfish because he is not capable of using his wealth for his own needs, and will not dole it out amongst the poor or others. So it is true that wealth is not worthy of our devotion. We were not born for amassing wealth, because wealth is like a shadow that lengthens and shrinks at different times, and when wealth goes, it causes a mental disturbance. Actually, wealth is for the use of man, and man was not born to be its slave.
Our relatives, our family and our community – all are subject to extinction by death. Nobody is free from death, and everybody is going his own way. If all these people are subject to death and separation, why should we attach oneself to them? They all have different temperaments and naturally there are differences of opinion. Consequently, devotion to them cannot be unchanging or always the same.

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

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

Selfish people even go so far as to destroy the happiness of others for the fulfilment of their own desires. Such a person was Nero, the Emperor of Rome, who was fiddling while Rome was burning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This body, mind and life – and even our religion, all bind us to this world. As soon as they are surrendered at the Lotus Feet of the Master, we become detached and shall not be born again. Then nothing remains in the way of the progress of the soul towards God-Realization, and our running about in this world is finished. This is only a small fraction of the benefits resulting from devotion to the Master. Actually, the advantages are so great and so numerous that they are beyond description.

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

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

Swami Ji says:

“If a person tries to follow the practice of listening to Shabd Dhun (Sound Current) without devotion to the Master, he is ignorant, because Shabd will be heard only by the Grace of the Master, and it is the Master alone who will pull the souls upwards.”
A Gurumukh is a person who is a true devotee of his Guru. By being a Gurumukh one is able to open the gateway for the soul to soar towards the higher regions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Love for the Master is sweet and magnetic, and is able to bring happiness to the disciple. On beholding the Guru, there is an indescribable ecstasy which is spontaneous and permeates every pore of the body. Even by having a small taste of this ecstatic state the soul is steeped in the Master’s love.

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

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

The Satguru is beyond description. We poor souls are not worthy of 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, Dhyan 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, ye 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 mihrab 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 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.
4. Physical service.
5. Worship.
6. Prayer (for guidance and grace).

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.”

“Whatsoever 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.
Intense Longing
(Bireh)
Chapter 6

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

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

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

Why is intense longing created? Simply because our soul has not been able to succeed in getting what it actually longs for. Just as the chatrak (rain bird) becomes restless when it does not get the nectar-like rain drops; just as the chakor (moon bird) is disappointed when it is not able to see the full moon; just as a mother becomes restless at the time of separation from her son, or a wife from her husband; just as a fish is in anguish without water – in a similar manner our soul is intensely restless because of its separation from the Lord.

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

In order to meet the Beloved, intense longing comes first, in the same manner as flowers bud and bloom on a fruit tree before it can bear fruit. Where there are no flowers, there can be no fruit. Similarly, where there is no bireh (intense longing), there can be no meeting with the Beloved. In other words, this longing is a pre-requisite for meeting the Lord.

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

“Oh my Master, help me to meet my Hari (God). My mind and body are hungry to meet Him. I cannot live without seeing my Lord, and there is an intense and restless longing in me.”
(Adi Granth)
The history of the lives of all the Saints reveals the intensity of their desire and longing for the Lord. The people of the world eat, drink and are happy with the worldly pleasures, and sleep soundly at night. But a lover weeps and sighs, and is wide awake the whole night long in his longing to meet the Beloved. Such a soul pines to meet the Lord and cries out: “Oh, will it ever be possible for these eyes to see Him!” When separated from Him, ornaments for the body, tasty food or fine clothes have no attraction. Guru Nanak very beautifully draws the picture of the soul in such a state:

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

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

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

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

Again, Guru Nanak says:

“On seeing my condition, a physician was called. He felt my pulse and found nothing. And how could he find anything, because my heart was suffering the agony of separation!” (Adi Granth)

Guru Nanak further writes:

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

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

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

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

Guru Ram Das says:

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

“Without the Lord every cell of my mind and body is in a state of anguish, and there is no sleep in my eyes. I am suffering in mind and body from the pain of separation. The poor doctors cannot diagnose my malady. Like one addicted to intoxicants and drugs, I cannot live without my Beloved even for a single moment. Those who have an intense desire to meet Thee are not interested in anything else.” (Adi Granth)

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

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

Kabir Sahib also described this condition in the same vein. He says:

“No one has been united to his Beloved through mirth. Whoever has attained communion with Him has done so after shedding many tears. If it were possible to meet the Beloved while laughing and in a state of comfort, why should one suffer the anguish of separation? The people of the world are happy. They eat and sleep. Kabir alone is unhappy. He is awake and is crying.”

“O Kabir, keep away from the life of pleasure and attach yourself to crying, for without it how can you find your Beloved!”

Kabir Sahib further describes, as follows, the feelings of pain, anguish and restlessness suffered by a devotee separated from the Lord:

“O my Beloved, please listen to my message. How can a fish live without water, for its very life depends on water!

“The fire of separation is burning my body and my whole being is restless. The soul has left the body and is completely merged in her Lord. The angel of death comes, but does not find the soul and goes away. O Kabir, the lover cries out:

‘O my Lord, listen to my message. Come at once and meet me, otherwise I shall give up my life! Either bring death to my body if it is to be separated from Thee, or give me your Darshan (show Thyself to me). I am unable to bear this pain of separation any longer. My two eyes have become cups, waiting for the Elixir of your Darshan (a sight of Thee).’

Your devotees who yearn for You are detached from this world, and the hope of meeting You is the sustenance of their life. These eyes weep in agony without ceasing in remembrance of You. By this crying there is some little solace, but these eyes are yearning for the sweetness of Your Darshan. We have made a lamp of this body and a wick of this life, in which blood is being burned instead of oil. Oh my Lord, will it ever be possible to see Thee!”
Kabir continues:

“My eyes, like those of a mad man, are searching for you every minute. You do not meet me. I am not happy, and am ever in a state of pain and tension. My body is emaciated. Now I am only a skeleton of bones. It is my misfortune that even now my Lord has not come to me. This separation has eaten up all my bones and my body, and has made me dead while still living. Like a powerful army, this separation has surrounded me. It does not permit me to die nor does it allow me to live, and my life is slowly ebbing away in anguish. I am suffering bireh in the absence of my Lord, and separation is troubling me every minute. Day and night I have no rest, and my breath is gradually growing less and less.”

Sheikh Farid asked a question of a nightingale:

“O nightingale, why are you black?”

Then he himself replied:

“I know the reason why. You have burned yourself in longing for the Lord. That is why you are so black.”

The source of the following quotation is not mentioned:

“This decorating of the body and these pretty clothes are useless as long as we do not meet our Lord. If my Lord were to see me in these beautiful clothes, they would be worth wearing. Otherwise, I should remove them and burn them. I will throw away my bangles, the sign of my union, and will break them into pieces by striking them against my very bed if it is not in my fortune to meet my Beloved, for without that they are useless to me.”

In this intensity of love the soul forgets the entire world. It cannot learn to stop thinking of the Lord even for a single second. The Tenth Guru says:

“The thatched hut of the Lord of my heart is like heaven to me, but without Him even a palace is like a burning oven.”

A soul that is filled with love for the Lord does not, without Him, care for the finest silk or satin, but when she is in communion with Him, she is prepared to sleep even in the dust. In the Sikh Scriptures (the Adi Granth) there is a similar description which says that if a wife be separated from her husband, she would break her very arms as well as the bangles which adorn them. All these adornments are meaningless without the beloved.

A lover always wishes to go to the place of his beloved. Kabir says:

“My mind is being powerfully attracted to the home of my Beloved. This world has no attraction for me. I wish to fly from here and go to the country of my Lord, which is so beautiful. There no one comes and goes (there is no birth and death), and to it even the sun and the moon, water and the air can never reach. O, is there anyone who would carry this, my message of longing, to my Beloved!”
Kabir also says:

“The ailment of bireh (feeling of separation) is chronic and has now gone deep into my bones. It is not possible to get rid of it. It is a pain of love which is even smothering my heart. The feeling of longing caused by separation troubles me at all times, and as a result my entire body is burning. Only one who has caused this pain or who undergoes it can understand this.”

“This longing and its accompanying pain have overpowered me like a serpent and have produced an abscess over my heart, but I do not try to save myself. I tell the serpent of intense longing to devour me in any manner it pleases.”

The whole day is spent in looking towards the path from which my Beloved is to come, and the night is spent in the same manner. Unable to meet the Beloved, I am restless and my heart is troubled. That day will be an auspicious one when my Master will take me by the arm and make me His own. And I shall sit in the shade of His Lotus Feet.

Farid also describes the pain of separation from the Lord in his own poignant language:

“O Farid, because of the fire of separation from the Lord, my body has dwindled to mere bone, that even crows come and peck at me, and I tell them ‘O crows, you may eat my body but not my eyes, which are still longing hopefully to behold my Beloved’ On the day of my birth, when my navel cord was cut by the midwife, it would have been better if she had also cut my throat, because then I would have been saved the pain of this separation.”

Another Saint, Charan Das, says:

“My voice is choked in my throat, the tears are flowing from my eyes, and I am restless in the intense longing for my Beloved, day and night. I am crying: ‘When shall I meet my Lord? My chest is being torn. When will the day come when I will have the opportunity of meeting Him?”

Mira Bai describes this state in the following words:

“I have grown pale like a betel leaf. People think that I am ailing. I even fasted secretly in this separation from You. My father called a doctor who felt my pulse. But the poor doctor cannot diagnose my malady. My trouble is in my heart. O doctor, go back to your home and do not talk about me. I am burning on account of separation. What medicine can you give me! My body has become only bones and my throat is choked with sighs. The ring on my finger can now fit over my wrist, I have grown so emaciated.

“O Papiha (rain bird), please be silent. Do not talk of Piv (Beloved), for if any devotee suffering from bireh (intense longing of separation) for the Beloved were to hear the name of Piv, he would immediately renounce his life.

“I am in one place now, and the next minute in another. I have no rest. I am like a person who has been stabbed, and no one can understand my condition of restlessness. O crow, I am prepared to take out my heart and place it before you. Please take it to the place where my Beloved abides and eat it in His presence and before His eyes. My only attachment is to Naam. I have no other connections. O Mira, I am restless in separation from my Beloved. O God, give me Thy Darshan. My heart is full of the sweet picture of my Lord, and it has become entangled in it. Standing on the roof of my house I am looking at the path along which You will come.
How can I remain alive without my Beloved, because He is the healing herb that can save my life. Mira has sold herself to her Lord and people call her mad.

“One person suffering from separation sits in a palace and is happy making garlands of pearls. But there is another one. A brihan (one suffering from separation), who is making garlands of her tears.

“I have been counting the stars and passing the whole night in wakefulness. When will the time of happiness come, O God! My Lord, meet me and be never separated from me. O Lord, since you have been separated from me, I have been restless. If I listen to hymns in Your praise, my mind becomes restless, for I find solace only in songs of intense longing for You. With my eyes open wide I am looking at the path whence You will be coming and the night has become as long as half a year. To whom should I tell my story of separation? O my friend, to whom should I relate the story of my separation and intense longing? It is cutting through my heart like a saw. When will Mira’s Lord meet her and give her joy by removing her anguish.”

Shah Hussein describes the state of a person suffering from the pangs of separation in the following words:

“Without my Beloved the nights are very long, the flesh is falling away from my body, and all my bones are exposed. This love could not be concealed even if I wished to do so, for the intense longing due to separation is firmly established in me. My Beloved is concealed in the garb of a mendicant, and I have also become a mendicant. The world calls me mad. Hussein, the disciple of the Lord, says: ‘I am attached to Thy Feet.’ ”

Bulleh Shah spent many years of his life in separation from his Master and in intense longing for Him. He describes his condition in the following manner:

“Now I am feeling restless because of intense longing for my Lord. What should I do? I cannot live – I do not die. Please listen to my sighs. There is no rest for me, either day or night. Without my Beloved, my eyes do not close even for a single second. I am in such a state of intense longing. What should I do? Is there anyone who can burn away this state of longing and remove my pain? How can I cross the ocean of life without His Darshan, for I have that longing and do not know what to do. O Bulleh, I am in great distress. Come and help me. How am I to remove this pain? I am in a state of intense longing. What should I do?”

Hafiz also describes this state. He says:

“Oh my friends, I wish that no one should be a victim of such a state of agony as is mine because of intense longing due to separation. If it were possible to take hold of this feeling of intense longing, I would have covered my Lord with it so that He should also know what intense longing is, and His eyes would also shed tears of blood and fire in the pangs of separation. But alas! This is not possible. I am full of pain and the feeling of intense longing is too much for me. Perhaps my mother gave birth to me so that I should suffer this intense longing. Oh my God, in my love for You, I am like a nightingale singing songs of lamentation, which bring tears of blood to my eyes.”

“My pen does not have the ability to describe my condition of intense longing due to separation. The waves rising out of the fathomless ocean of intense longing have swept over the heads of people who were anxious to meet the Lord, but the voyage of their boat of life was finished in this
manner. When fate found that my mind and heart were captured by the love of my Lord, it tied the rope of anguish of intense longing round my neck, by which it is neither possible to live nor to die. O God, by whom were separation and intense longing brought into this world? The face of this separation should be blackened, and the intense longing should be broken.”

“Because of longing in separation, sleep, rest and passions all die out.”

“In my mind the pain of separation is so intense that my tongue would be burned if I wished to talk about it. And if I remain silent, I fear that my bones will be consumed by this fire.”

Buddha sought refuge in the jungles in search of the Truth, and his body became extremely emaciated. Likewise, we may study the life of any other Saint and we will find the same account of intense longing due to separation. Whoever has traveled the path of God-Realization had to cross the river of sighs before he could meet Him. It is indeed true that one has to tread that path through tears. Maulana Rumi says:

“Oh man, if you wish to reach the Home of God, you should go by way of the ocean of tears, for it is only in that way that you will be able to reach Him. Dry prayers, dry counting of beads, dry reading of Scriptures, and dry eyes as well as dry heart – all these are like going along a barren path towards God. But if you had gone through water (tears), you would have reached without any difficulty.”

“What does the rab ab (a kind of violin) say? It tells of the burning of the heart and the tears of the eyes.”

Shamas-i-Tabriz says:

“Those eyes which are weeping for the Darshan (sight) of the Beloved will one day surely behold Him. In love, weeping acts as a ladder. When you make a ladder of your eyes, then you will automatically be speeding towards the sky. The ocean of the Beloved’s Grace reaches from one end to the other, and no place is without it. But this fire of intense longing due to separation is for the purpose of ripening the faith of the followers on this path.”

Maulana Rumi again mentions the need for intense longing in separation in the following words:

“Look at the nurses who feed babies with their milk. They give the infant scarcely any milk unless it cries for it, because the milk in the breasts of the nurse does not flow out unless the child attracts it by its cries. In the same manner, so long as a devotee does not cry while praying to Him, the ocean of the Lord’s Grace does not surge out.”

Maulana Rumi further says:

“Weeping is like the clouds, and longing is like the heat of the sun. Just as the sun’s heat is the cause of bringing rains from the clouds, by which this world remains in existence; similarly, separation, longing for Him and restlessness – all these are like fires which make the currents of grace and mercy of God burst out, as the rain does from the clouds, and pacify the hearts of devotees. Tears in the eyes and pain in the heart are the two pillars between which we pass to go within.”
Weeping over separation and anguish of the heart are two signs of meeting God. When Rabia Basri was asked whether she said her prayers before or after meeting God, she replied, “God comes first, and then I pray to Him.” The people then asked: “How are you aware that He is coming?” Her answer was:

“When through His remembrance and attraction a current of restlessness is awakened in me, the tears flow from my eyes. He thus touches my soul with love and constantly pulls me towards Him. These are the indications of His coming. Then I bow in prayer before Him.”

True prayer is one by which a feeling of ecstasy is created in the soul. Such a counting of just one bead has the effect of thousands of bead countings, because the rosary is being rotated by the longing and anguish of the mind. You need remember Him only once, but it should be with so much real love that every cell of your body speaks out through your tongue, and whatever you think or speak or pray comes from the heart. The body and the mind should be numb. When those who are extremely devoted to the Beloved bow in reverence to Him, that is true prayer. A true heart and a current of intense anguish are the true Scriptures which they study daily. The language of lovers is entirely different form that of other people. They consider it to be a work of thieves to pray and worship merely for show and as a formal duty. Such people are far removed from God and are entangled in physical pleasures. The truth is “A preacher is only anxious about his prayer, but the lover longs for that sight of his Beloved.” God is in every cell of the lover, and when he bows his head before Him in this state it is impossible for him to lift his head, for the Beloved is in every nerve of his body.

“These who have lost themselves in Him are numb in mind and body. Those who have given their love to someone are filled with longing in their mind.”

Through longing caused by separation a devotee washes away his bad thoughts with his hot tears, and remembrance of the Lord takes their place. But this longing can be awakened only by true love and not by crocodile tears.

Such a noble and rewarding longing is awakened only in the hearts of those who have pure and unadulterated love for the physical manifestation of God – namely, the Living Master. A disciple must have true spiritual love for the physical form of his Master. And when he sees the resplendent form of the Master inside by means of the spiritual practice performed with love, he is then attached to that unique form also and to the Shabd (Sound Current, Word) emanating from it. He would never wish to be separated from this. By separation from the physical form of the Master, longing is produced to meet Him inside. And when a devotee does not see the form inside, the absence of the form produces a great restlessness and anguish in the mind.

“I have fixed my love and longing on meeting Hari (God). I shall be happy only when I meet my friend and Lord Hari.” (Adi Granth)

“Last night, throughout the night, I could not sleep with my Beloved (He did not come to me), and every part of my body is aching. If this is my condition after His absence for one night, what is the state of those who never meet Him, and how do they pass their nights?”

(Sheikh Farid – Adi Granth)

Just as the heat of the sun helps in ripening sweet fruit, and the heat of the fire in the hearth enables one to prepare delicious food, in the same way the heat of longing plays a vital role in helping the devotee on the path of spiritual attainment. It is actually a touchstone or test of love,
and at the same time it purifies the devotee’s love and devotion, as a goldsmith purifies a piece of gold by putting it in the fire. Hafiz Says:

“You should shed tears of pearls from your moist eyes. Perhaps He, in the form of a swan, may be caught by you when this swan is tempted to come to you to eat these pearls.”

Maulana Rumi says:

“I wish that I had wept so much in my longing to meet the Lord that the tears from my eyes had swelled into a river, and every tear drop had turned into a spiritual pearl. Then I would have placed all those pearls before the altar of my Beloved.”

He also says:

“Man’s work in this world is nothing but to cry in intense longing due to separation from the Lord. Look at the infant. It cries as soon as it is born. It comes into the world crying. Therefore, just as a light burns throughout the night, in the same manner you should shed tears after midnight in longing for the Lord, and continue weeping and asking for His Light. Just as the wick of a lamp is trimmed, similarly you should trim the wick of your head (ego) so that the Light in you increases. In other words, as soon as you learn to sigh while you are weeping, there will be a flood of Light inside. God values the tears of His lovers as He does the blood of His martyrs.”

Separation is extremely helpful in kindling the fire of restlessness and thereby obtaining the fruit of spirituality.

“If the body burns like an oven the bones are ignited like wood, and the feet are blistered from walking, still a true devotee will not remain away from the Lord, even if he may have to continue his journey by walking on his head.” (Farid)

A lover of the Lord, who is separated from Him, does not feel close to anyone or anything else. Even his life seems to be a burden to him and he feels as if he is dying. Guru Angad Sahib says:

“If we love someone, we should die before he dies, because it is a sin to live after the death of one’s beloved.”

When Khwaja Mohammed came to the tomb of his Master, Hazrat Zarzari Zarbaksh, he fell lifeless upon the tomb overcome by sorrow and intense anguish because of separation from him. But before he died he recited the following couplet:

“It is better to die than to live without one’s Beloved. It is a thousand times better to make a sacrifice of one’s self if deprived of the presence of the Beloved.”

The pain of separation is like the poison of a cobra. Once it enters anyone’s heart, it is not possible to get rid of it by any means, unless one meets the Master. There is no other method.

“It is true that life is impossible for one who has intense longing because of separation from Ram (God). If he does live, he wastes his life like a mad man in this world.” (Kabir)
If the Lord is not reached, then everything – food, clothing and all other comforts in this world are useless. Guru Arjun says:

“Without the Lord, everything is useless, just as silken dresses should be thrown into the fire by a bride after the death of her husband.

“But if one is in communion with the Lord, he is praiseworthy in all conditions of life; just as a bride would be happy and would look beautiful even if she were lying in the dust.”

The fact is that without having an intense longing for the Lord, this physical body is useless. If the object of our coming into this world is not achieved, what is the use of the body? Guru Angad Sahib says:

“A head which does not bow in reverence to the Lord should be cut into pieces. The body which has not entertained a desire to meet the Lord should be burned.”

Farid says:

“We all call, ‘Bireh, Bireh’ (intense longing due to separation); but Bireh is the king of all emotions. O Farid, a person who is without intense longing is like a graveyard.”

Another lover of God says:

“The head which does not bow at the feet of the Lord should be broken (is useless).”

Intense longing has a very deep influence because of its powerful current of energy. Once it is established, no other impressions can enter the mind. Such a devotee completely forgets his body and his clothes, because he is being pulled by the magnet of the remembrance of his Lord, and his mind is completely absorbed in contemplation of the Lord. If we are being pulled towards something or somebody all the time, we will ultimately merge into that form.

There are innumerable people in the world who are longing for worldly objects, but in this longing they are interested only in material things. It is most difficult for people of this kind to follow the path of Sant Mat. There is no worldly method by which one can find release from this world. All longings are worthless with the exception of an intense longing for the Lord. All others lead to distraction.

Yet most of the people in the world are engrossed in the desire for material gains. They do not listen to discourses on the subjects of Spirituality and meeting the Lord, nor do they have any desire to meet Him, because their eyes are closed and they cannot see anything in its true perspective.

Majnun was fully absorbed in the remembrance of his beloved Laila. His religion, his belief, was nothing but Laila. He would follow wherever she had walked and would bow his head over her footprints. Somebody once told Majnun that God wanted to meet him. He replied: “If He wishes to meet me, let Him come in the form of Laila.” Guru Ram Das Says:

“All longing is useless so long as the longing for the Lord is not awakened.”
The mind is so much engrossed in worldly pursuits that it is not prepared to listen to anything else.

The longing, of a physical nature, that existed between Manu and Laila very rarely turns into a spiritual longing; but if it does, the people to whom this happens are indeed blessed. Actually, true and real longing is established only when we have a longing for the Lord or His embodiment, the Master. It is therefore essential that we find a Master who practices and preaches Naam, because without this it is impossible to achieve the highest goal of Spirituality. If we find such a Master, we should sacrifice everything at his feet.

Longing does not necessarily create only pain and sorrow. It is a unique intoxication of the mind, because one is not willing under any circumstances to banish it, even at the cost of innumerable hardships. We offer our hearty congratulations to anyone who has established within himself the feeling of intense longing for the Lord because such a one is a leader of souls in the Court of the Lord.

What are the signs of Bireh (intense longing)? Kabir says:

“One who is in such a state becomes extremely emaciated, even beyond recognition, and daily he grows pale, like the betel leaf.”

Charan Das says:

“The face is pale, the body is emaciated, the eyes are sad, and the sigh which is breathed out is full of grief. He sighs deeply with every breath.”

Maulana Rum says:

“If you do not know me, then ask those who are crying because of separation. You should ask my pale face and my dry lips, then you would know my real condition.”

Shamas Tabriz told Maulana Rum:

“O my son, there are nine signs which distinguish the lovers of God:
1. They heave cold sighs.
2. The face is pale. The devotee wishes to have communion with the Lord but it is not in his power. Every time he thinks of the Lord he cries out and the tear drops from his eyes are hardly able to extinguish the burning fire in his heart.
3. The eyes are always wet.
4. He eats sparingly.
5. He sleeps little.
6. Deep sleep does not come to him.
7. He sighs continually.
8. He is restless (impatient to behold the Lord).
9. He moans continually.”

“When the fire of separation kindles in the heart and the smoke from it is not visible, only he who has experienced it, or who has kindled it, knows it is there. Only one who has been wounded knows the pain. No one else does. This fire burns within, not outside, and it produces water in the form of tears which try to extinguish the fire.” (Kabir)
The remedy for one who is in this state of suffering lies in the hands of the Beloved. He alone can remove it by granting His Darshan (by meeting him). Dadu says:

“To whom shall I disclose my pain and by whom shall I send my message? Even my hair has become tangled by the constant movement of my head while searching for the path whence my Beloved may come. I cannot meet Him and I am not happy. How can one live in such a state? The remedy lies in Him who has given me this pain. I am prepared to sacrifice the world and everything else for a single second’s sight of my Lord. I am also prepared to cut my mind and my body into small pieces, and would sacrifice both heaven and hell for Him.”

In the same connection Khusro states:

“O ignorant doctor! Please leave my bedside for there is no remedy for separation except His Darshan.”

The longing due to separation from the Lord has a unique sweetness. Those who are blindly following the dictates of the mind and are fully entrenched in the worldly luxuries of “eat, drink and be merry” cannot experience that sweet taste, just as a blind person cannot appreciate the fall of tears in weeping. Intense longing and crying for the Lord always turn into happiness. They are really blessed who are so fortunate as to be gifted with this condition. In the Sikh Scriptures we find references to the various fruits of longing due to separation. Kabir says:

“In the state of longing and its pain, the things of the world appear bitter. Only the Name of the Lord is sweet.”

“When this longing is produced in a person, he becomes eligible to merge in the Truth.”

Longing produces love and veneration for the Beloved. God is love. Therefore, the devotee comes nearer to the Lord in proportion to the degree of his longing. He also realizes in greater degree the value of his Beloved, so much so that the pure and noble form of the Beloved is always fixed in his mind. Sheikh Farid says:

“O crow, do not eat my body with your beak. Fly away from here because in this body resides my beloved Lord, and you have no right to eat such flesh.”

Kabir says:

“In my longing for the Lord, all the flesh of my body is emaciated. But so long as I remember Him, this body will not be lost.”
Truth
Chapter 7

The Sikh Gurus talk of Truth at many places in their writings. Ordinary people believe that it means that they should speak the truth which is an element of Sato Gun (good attributes) and is essential for spiritual progress. But the study of the Sikh Scriptures shows that the word “Truth” has been used in them to denote Sat Purush (The True One – the True God).

“O Nanak, consider the True One to be the Truth.” (M 1 Sri Rag 15-18)

“True is the Creator, True is the Cause, True is the Lord, True is the Master’s support, for Truth brings enlightenment.” (M 5 Sri Rag 52-8)

Just as the Immortal Lord is beyond the limits of time, similarly “Truth” has neither a beginning nor an end. It is expressly stated in the Jap Ji Sahib that

“True in the beginning, True through the ages. He is True. He shall ever be True.” (Jap Ji 1-3)

Truth is therefore the name of the True Lord, the Creator Himself. The qualities attributed to Truth are the same as those attributed to God. The Sikh Gurus have also used the word Naam or Divine Melody for Truth.

“For him who loves the Truth, true is the Word and the Melody. The Name of God dwells in his heart. He gives up anger and egotism.” (M 3 Sri Rag 33-17)

“In them is the treasure of the Name. Through It are they known. They worship the Name and contemplate on the Name, which is the Eternal Truth.” (M 1 Sri Rag 17-7)

“Truth exists both inside and outside and is eternal. Truth rings throughout the four ages. It proclaims nothing but Truth.” (M 3 Sri Rag 35-9)

“They merge into the source from which they spring. The Truth pervades everywhere.”
(M 1 Sri Rag 20-4)

“The Truth has penetrated my core, and is seen in everything outside also.”
(M 5 Ram Kali Var 966-8)

Truth is free from caste, creed or color. It can neither be written nor spoken.

“Beyond color, sign and value are You. Have mercy on Nanak, O Lord, and bless him with the Name.” (M 5 Sri Rag 44-17)

“Truth is wine without sugar. But it contains the True Name.” (M 1 Sri Rag 15-19)

Truth is beyond the three worlds.

“Beyond the three worlds, Nanak found Truth the sweet Nectar.” (M 1 Maru 1042-15)
Truth, Hari (the Lord) and Sat Guru (the True Master) are one.

“I own no one except You my Lord. The True Master is the Truth, and the Lord is purest of the pure. He can be attained through the Word.”  (M 3 Sri Rag 27-4)

This truth is all-pervading and sustains all.

“The One Truth pervades and sustains all.”  (M 3 Vadhans 559-18)

“All is Truth. Truth pervades all. But this is known to a rare devotee alone.”  (M 3 Suh 754-2)

The Truth is obtained when one meets a true Master and follows His directions. It can dwell within us only through the grace of the Master.

“Without the Master all is darkness; but without the Word we realize it not. The Master’s Word illumines the way; and one merges in the Truth.”  (M 1 Sri Rag 55-15)

“Through the Master’s Word, is banished all egoism. And the Truth abides in the heart.”  (M 3 Vadhans 560-16)

“The Lord is merciful, He Himself makes us realize Him. Through Guru’s Word does He dwell in our hearts, and we are attuned to the Truth.”  (M 3 Sri Rag 37-10)

“Those who serve the True Lord attain the glory of Truth. Through the Master’s grace He dwells in our hearts, and rids us of all ego.”  (M 3 Sri Rag 30-6)

In what kind of soil of the heart does the Truth grow? The Sikh Scriptures have this to say:

“The wise and truly great farmer forgets not to till the soil before he sows the seed of the Name.”  (M 1 Sri Rag 19-1)

“Truth is known when one is attuned to Truth. Such a one is both kind-hearted and is charitably disposed.”  (M 1 Asa Var 468-11)

This Truth manifests Itself only in the higher regions which are devoid of Maya.

“Truth is known when the soul dwells at the Holy Place.”  (M 1 Asa Var 468-12)

The Truth can be had only when one becomes a true devotee of a Master.

“Through the Master does one gather Truth, self-discipline, the quintessence of knowledge. Through the Master is one attuned to the Truth.”  (M 3 Vadhans 559-19)

The Sikh Gurus say that those who realize the Truth are true. They reflect and contemplate on Truth.

“Those who know the Truth are ever true. They daily contemplate on the Truth. O Nanak, in whose hearts dwells the True Name, they suffer no pangs of separation.”  (M 3 Suh 769-10)
“Those who meditate on the Truth alone are True. They reflect on the Guru’s Word. They still their ego and purify their hearts.” (M 3 Suhir Var 788-5)

“Those who realize the Truth are alone True. Bereft of ego they merge in the Name.” (M 1 Basant 1174-15)

The Sikh Gurus have mentioned numerous benefits that accrue from contemplating on Truth. One becomes happy and fearless.

“Those who know the Truth are happy through all the four ages.” (M 3 Sri Rag 55-2)

“Realize the Truth and you banish fear.” (M 1 Sri Rag 18-5)

Through the practice of Truth the Lord dwells in the heart and detachment is achieved.

“Those who realize the Truth merge completely in the Truth. Through the Master’s Word their mind is stilled and they meet the Lord face to face.” (M 3 Sri Rag 37-4)

“When one meditates on the Truth one’s mind is illumined. Then, one remains detached in the midst of Maya.” (M 1 Dhanasri 661-12)

Ultimately with the help of Truth one crosses the ocean of worldly existence.

“He who loves the Truth transcends both birth and death. Separated he cannot be from Truth which pervades all.” (M 5 Sri Rag 46-17)

This Truth can only be realized when the Lord so wills it. A true Master, who is one with the Truth, is a prerequisite for attaining the Truth. But such a Master is met with only be good fortune. On realizing the Truth, one is rid of lust, anger, attachment, greed and egotism and becomes fearless. He is freed from the snares of the Negative Power (Kal) and crosses the ocean of worldly existence and is honored at the door of the Lord. Blessed are those who have realized the Lord through the Truth, by meeting a True Master.

“I am a sacrifice to the Master who blessed me with the True Name.” (M 5 Sri Rag 52-2)

“Those who did not carry the Truth with them were beguiled on the way. Nanak, blessed are they who meeting a Master, realize the Lord.” (M 5 Gauri 319-5)

The Lord of Death (Dharam Rai)

The Lord of Death, or Dharam Rai, who is also called Yamraj or Kal Purush, administers the three worlds of Pinda, Anda, and Brahmanda, that is, the gross, subtle and causal regions. He does this under the orders of Sat Purush, the True Lord. All the three worlds are destroyed at the time of dissolution. Heaven and hell, which are in the subtle region are also liable to destruction and are under the jurisdiction of Dharam Rai. Dharam Rai was created by the Supreme Lord; he administers the three lower regions under His orders. He dispenses justice impartially.

“Dharam Rai is created by the Supreme Lord. He does not come near a devotee of the Lord.” (M 4 Bihagra Var 555-9)
In compliance with the orders of the Lord, Dharam Rai asks all living beings after their death to render an account of their good and bad deeds and he then deals with them accordingly. Hells are meant for the sinners and heavens for those who have performed meritorious deeds. When one’s stay in these regions is over, one has once again to tread the eternal wheel of birth and death. He is named Dharam Rai because he dispenses justice according to law (Dharma). For this work, he is assisted by Yama (angels of death) and for this reason he is also known as the Lord of Yamas or Yam Raj. All the universe that is under him is destroyed in the course of time. He is, therefore, the Lord of Time or Death called (Kal Purush or Kal). The Kal Purush sends his agents or incarnations to the earth in every age in order to keep the universe going.

Three forces or gods, namely, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh or Shiva work under him. The force that creates is called Brahma; that which sustains is called Vishnu; and that which destroys is called Mahesh or Shiva. He has through Maya created these three forces which create, sustain and destroy. They work under his orders, but cannot, however, see their father Kal.

“The one Mother Divine brought forth three deities. One creates, one sustains, and one destroys. He rules as He likes according to His Will. He sees all. He is not seen by anyone. This is the wonder of wonders. Hail to Him, the Primal Being, the pure Light. The one without beginning, without end and ever the same.” (Jap Ji 7-1)

In the chapter on Kal (the Negative Power) in the present treatise, it has been clearly stated that the True Being (Sat Purush), under whose orders Dharam Rai or Kal works, is imperishable and indestructible. He is, therefore, called Akal Purush (the Timeless Being). Above him is Anami Purush (Nameless Being), who is beyond both Kal and Akal. He is in actuality the Supreme Lord. He is invisible, unfathomable, limitless and everlasting. He is mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib (the holy book of the Sikhs) as Khasam (Lord), Nirala (Detached Being) and Soami (Lord).

Kal or Dharam Rai administers as he is directed to by the far higher True Being (Sat Purush) and he is not the creator of the soul. He can neither create nor destroy a soul. It is only the body that belongs to him. He assigns a body according to individual karmas and takes it back after the allotted span is over. He has no control over the soul, because souls are the children of the True Being and are immortal.

Thus we should adore the true Akal Purush and it is through adoration of Him that imperishable life and everlasting bliss can be obtained. Kal does not wish that anyone should go out of his domain, because the life and gaiety of this creation is due to the souls that are in it. He accordingly misleads the souls in a variety of ways by means of the mind and the Maya. For this reason the True Being or True Lord sends his incarnations, the Saints and the Masters, from time to time to emancipate those who are in the clutches of delusion. Without taking refuge in such Saints one is not freed from the bondage of death.

“Except through a Master no one can transcend death or time. If he is involved with others, he merely wastes his time.” (M 3 Shalok 1414-16)

Saints point out the path of emancipation by prescribing the practice of the Word or Holy Spirit (Shabd) or the Name of God. Sat Purush (True Being) is Shabd. He can be attained only by means of the Shabd, and therein lies the salvation of man. It is impossible to escape from the cycle of birth and death through physical deeds such as repetitions, austerities, holy baths, pilgrimages and the like. All these actions are within the sphere of the Lord of Death. But if,
through the grace of a True Master, one practices contemplation on God’s Name, one clears one’s account of karmas and escapes both hell and heaven and also the wheel of transmigration. Those who by great good fortune obtain the company of Saints are served by the Lord of Death.

“If you keep the company of the Saints, the Lord of Death will serve you.”  (M 5 Gauri 271-18)

The Lord of Death punishes sinners but does not come near the devotees of the Lord. He who is dear to the Lord is dear to all.

“He who is dear to the Lord is dear to all. Others but come and go in vain.”  (M4 bihagara Var 555-9)

“Those who are beloved of the Lord are not called to account by Dharam Rai.”  (M 4 Nat 980-19)

By adoring the Name of the Lord both the mind and its vanity are vanquished and there remains nothing to account for.

“By repeating the Lord’s Name, one is rid of all sins, and one’s account with Dharam Rai is ended.”  (M 4 Prabhati 1348-13)

The devotees of the Lord are freed from the fear of the Lord of Death of whom everybody else is very much afraid.

The Characteristics and Functions of the Lord of Death

1. He is a servant of the True Lord (Sat Purush) and dispenses justice according to His law. After death he asks all beings to account for their actions and he punishes the sinners.

2. He is all-powerful and the creator of the three worlds (physical, astral and causal).

3. He is the Negative Power (Kal) and ensnares living beings in Maya or illusion.

4. Dharam Rai is not satisfied with recitals and penances, worship and sacrifices, pilgrimages and charities and the like.

5. There is no release from Dharam Rai without taking shelter with the Master. An egotistic and proud person remains always in the bondage of Maya.

6. If one does not possess the wealth of the Name he has to face the Lord of Death who demands the account of his deeds.

The Negative Power (Kal)

The Supreme Lord is self-existent and self-sustaining. He is the Cause of all. He is neither real nor non-real. He is beyond them both. He cannot be reached by mind or speech. That which was and is, is neither darkness nor light. There was motion in Him, which we can describe as a wave. By this wave both the True Lord (Sat Purush) and the Negative Power (Kal Purush) were born. From the Negative Power the creation originated. He has two powers, namely, Time and Space. These provide the warp and woof of the creation. Space helps in spreading the creation, and time is ever bringing about changes.
The cycle of the "eighty-four" is under the Negative Power. All the lower regions such as Brahm Lok (the region of Brahma), Rudra Lok (the Region of Shankar), Inder Lok (the Region of Indra), Shiv Puri (the Region of Shiva) and Vishnu Puri (the Region of Vishnu) which people try to reach after death by doing meritorious deeds and giving alms and charities and so forth, are under the governance of Kal. These regions are not everlasting or imperishable, but are destroyed after an allotted period.

"The world of Indra will doubtless end; the region of Brahma will perish, the region of Shiva will suffer death; all that is within the sway of the three-headed Maya will pass away."

(Gauri M5, 237-8)

"Maya overwhelms the spheres of Indra, Shiva and Brahma. But it dares not cast its eye on those who keep the company of Saints, it ever washes their feet."

(Gujri M5, 500-5)

"All gods and goddesses are under the control of Kal. All gods and goddesses are lured by Maya. Without devotion to the Master not one escapes death."

(Gauri M1, 1227-4)

While living within the sphere of Kal we have to still the mind and with the power of the Lord’s Name obtained from the Master, we have to rise above Kal’s domain, to the regions where both Kal and Maya become powerless and ineffective.

"Time and Timeless both are perplexed when the Master stills the mind."

(M1 Suhì 764-15)

"O fool, what can Kal do to them who have stilled their mind?"

(M 1 Ram Kali 908-1)

The Negative Power and the True Lord have their own spheres of work. Kal creates nether-worlds and upper worlds, sustains them, and then destroys them. Kal comprises the past, present and future. The Four Ages or Yugas are its revolutions; and years, months, days, hours and seconds are its divisions.

There is a story in the Mahabharata in which a Yaksha (elemental spirit) puts several questions to the great Seer Yudhishtira. One of them was, "What is that which is worth knowing?" Yudhistira replied, "Kal is cooking all human beings in the huge pan of attachment (to his worlds and their objects) with the fire of the sun, and is stirring them with the ladle of the months and the seasons."

Everything perishes after its allotted time is over. Therefore, the Sikh Scriptures have described Kal as Jam Kal or “death at the appointed time.” The entire world is under the control of this Negative Power. It is completely in its bondage.

"All the world is subject to Kal."

(M 3 Gauri 162-12)

The main work of the Negative Power is to allow no one to escape from its domain. He has, as if by magic and deceit, obtained control over all living beings. We have forgotten our original home and we are now destined to wander from door to door. Shamas-i-Tabriz says:

"To wander is our fate. We have forgotten our home. He is old and deceitful. He imprisoned us by fraud and magic."
There is another power above Kal which is described as Akal by the Sikh Gurus. Akal connotes Eternity, and this power possesses the qualities of the “eternal now” and unchangeable permanence. Time has nothing to do with it. He is beyond Time and Space. Because this power has no connection with Kal (Time), it is beyond the count of seconds, minutes, days, years and ages. They all merge in His eternal existence. We can conceive of all the three tenses in the existence of Akal. A Muslim Faqir (holy man) has said:

“When He (Kal) was not, I was.”

Kabir Sahib says in ‘Anurag Sagar’ that the power of Kal originated from Sat Purush (the True Being) and spread downwards from Sach Khand (the True Region). Kal, however, is not allowed to go to Sach Khand. This means that Kal cannot penetrate into the sphere of Akal. Akal is real. Kal is merely His reflection. The reflection is sustained by the original. Just as the moon receives light from the sun and is illuminated by it, similarly Kal is sustained by Akal. Kal is an activated shadow of Akal. The world is sustained by him.

The Vedas and other Hindu Scriptures consider this 'Shadow Being' (Chhaya Purush) to be the all-in-all and the highest power. But he is described by the Saints as Kal Purush or the Negative Power. Kal is highly praised in the Vedas. In the nineteenth chapter of the Atharva Veda there are two verses in praise of Kal. These are called the Kal verses, or verses concerning the Negative Power.

“Kal has created the Universe; in Kal does the sun rise; all creatures live in Kal.”
(Sukt 53, Mantra 6)

“Kal has created the bodies of all living beings. And has then imprisoned them in his dominions.” (Sukt 54, Mantra 4)

Saints believe that the Lord or Master or Creator has limitless consciousness. He is the Positive Power. He is an unfathomable ocean of love and bliss. He has many powers or agents who look after the creation and its maintenance. These are described as Beings or Purushas. The Supreme Lord is accordingly called the Supreme Being or Param Purusha. Amongst these powers is the Negative Power, or Kal Purush, who is the creator of the universe.

The duration of his universe is limited, after which it must suffer dissolution. Therefore, he is called the Lord of Time or Kal Purush. He is the sustainer of all the worlds of three attributes. There are numberless universes. Each universe is looked after by a ruler appointed by the Supreme Being. Each ruler has three forces or gods – Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the sustainer and Mahesh (Shiva), the destroyer. These create, sustain and destroy a universe. All these rulers are parts of Kal Purush, who is himself sustained by the Timeless Lord (Akal Purush). All this lower creation is within the power of Kal.

Both Kal and Akal were created by the Supreme Lord. The work of creation and its evolution has been handed over to them.

“Kal and Akal were created by the Lord to annihilate this world of form. Oh Kabir, only those in the end are emancipated, who have the treasure of the Lord’s Name in their hearts.”
(Kabir, Maru 1104-7)
The Saints have also described the Supreme Lord as the most Merciful.

“He is the sustainer of the world. Most beneficent, wise and merciful is He.”
(Gauri M5, Chhand 249-7)

The same names have also appeared in the writings of many other Saints. These Beings (Purushas) have been described as:

(i) Mahadayal, Dayal and Kal.
(ii) Kal, Mahakal, Satya Purush, Swami and Anami.
(iii) Dharam Rai, Ram Rai and Hari Rai.

Similarly, in the writings of many seers and sages, there is mention of Kal and Dayal (the Merciful One) or Akal (the Timeless One). Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru said in one of His hymns: “Salutation to Akal, Destroyer of death, Destroyer of Maha Kal and the Destroyer of the Lord of Time.”

Muslim Saints have mentioned Shaitan and Rehman, namely, Satan and the Merciful Lord. Shaitan is the same as Kal and is, they say, the Negative Power, within whose sphere fall all the three worlds and regions. The other, the Merciful One, is the Positive Power. It is the source of all power and the Negative Power works according to His directions. Kal cannot interfere with Akal. Both of them have been created by the Supreme Power which has been called variously by great Saints as Khasam (Lord), Maha Dayal (Most Beneficent One) and Swami (Master). The distinction between Kal and Dayal (the Negative Power and the Merciful One) is very abstruse and merits careful study. The Saints hint at it and their writings should be studied.

The transient world is all the creation of Kal. But to one taking refuge in the Lord, Kal can do no harm. The eternal Sound or Melody is the manifestation of the Positive Power. By practicing it one transcends the limits of Kal. Wherever there is the Melody of the Shabd or the Sound Current, Kal cannot interfere and he keeps away from there.

“The dragon of death cannot be slain save through the Guru’s Word. Then it comes not near. On hearing the Word it runs afar, lest the carefree Lord kills it.” (Maru M3, 1054-15)

The Master is Himself Shabd-Incarnate or ‘the Word made flesh’. By giving devotion to Him, a person can escape from the clutches of Kal. Dharam Rai (Kal) then serves him.

“Dharam Rai serves those who keep the company of the Saints.” (Gauri M5, 271-17)

At the last moment of life, the Lord of Death or Kal does not come to take away the disciple of the True Master. The Master Himself comes and takes the soul with Him. Kal does not come near a devotee.

Those who have not met a Satguru are in the power of Kal. One cannot escape from the clutches of Kal except by serving a True Master.

“All gods and goddesses are lured by Maya. Without devotion to the Master none escapes death.” (Gauri M1, 227-4)
Kal demands from everybody an account of all actions and in accordance with them he metes out punishments or rewards. Recitals, penances, continence, reading, writing and the three gunas (qualities) are all within his sphere. The only way to transcend them is the practice of Shabd-Dhun, or the Divine Melody and taking shelter with the True Master. But it is only the highly fortunate few who take shelter with the Master and thus escape the clutches of Kal.
The Lord’s Will (Bhana)

Chapter 8

What is the Will of the Lord, or His Bhana?

Bhana means that which is liked by the heart or which is pleasing or gives pleasure. In Punjabi they generally say, "I like it and am pleased with it. It suits me and is very good." The Sikh Gurus have mentioned the word ‘Bhana’ many times in their writings.

“They served according to the wishes of the Lord. They acted according to His Will. They who did so succeeded. They remained very happy. That is happiness which He likes. That is greatness which He approves. What He likes He considers to be true. He dwells in His Will."

Do such deeds as please the Lord. Perform the actions with which He is pleased. Whatever is liked by the Lord should be desired by us also. Therefore, "surrender to His Will" means that we should be happy in His Will. The Muslim Saints describe it as "submission to His Will". Such a person always says, "Oh Lord, whatever you like is good". A Persian Saint has said:

“The work that did not succeed according to our desire, it was good that it did not succeed."

Whatever one does should be done to please the Lord, so that we may become dear to Him. The key to obtaining His pleasure lies in acting according to His Will.

“I bow my head before the wishes of the Beloved.”

We should consider what we should do when we wish to please someone. The main thing would be to obey him implicitly. We should not transgress his directions even by a hair-breadth. Look at the animals. A dog that understands the command of its master and does not even remotely transgress it, is liked and patted by its master. An obedient son gives great satisfaction and pleasure to his parents. An obedient wife is loved by her husband. An obedient servant is pleasing to his master. The law-abiding and good citizens are a source of delight to their government. Wherever you may look, you will find this same principle in action. That is, if you wish to please anyone, carry out his commands. Be content with what he wills. This is the way to remain happy and in his will.

All deeds and duties should be performed with a view to pleasing the Lord. Guru Nanak, in the first stanza of the Jap Ji Sahib, has considered the various methods customarily used to realize the Lord. He says that the Lord is not within the reach of the intellect or reason. He cannot be realized by practicing austerities, by keeping fasts, by observing silence and so on. He is not to be found by wisdom or cunning. How are we, then, to proceed in order to gain access to His door and to see Him after tearing away the curtain of Maya? Guru Nanak says that the Lord cannot be realized by any other method except that of obeying and following His Will.

“He cannot be conceived however hard we may think. He cannot be reached by observing silence however long. Nor can contentment be bought by all the wealth of the world. Of a myriad clevernesses, not one works. How can we be true? How can the curtain of falsehood be rent asunder? By following the Divine Will. It is so written in our fate, O Nanak.” (Jap Ji 1-5)
Divine dispensation, divine law and divine Will are three different aspects of the same reality, namely, Bhana or the Lord’s Will. The Lord’s dispensation is the result of the Lord’s Will and so are happiness and pleasure. It is through this that His Law operates. The divine law is the materialized form of divine dispensation. It is the Shabd, Name or Word.

“O Nanak, the Lord’s Name is the Law. It is explained by the Master.” (M 1 Sri Rag 72-2)

“He is blessed who knows the Law. The true Shabd is His distinguishing sign.” (M 4 Asa 386-2)

'Raza' means to comply with the law without murmur or complaint and joyfully. Raza, in Arabic, means happiness, joy or will. The pleasure of the lawgiver is the prime consideration. We should abide by the law happily and cheerfully. There is complete lack of self and egotism in it. One has to become the very embodiment of the Divine Will.

Rabia Basri once met two holy men. She asked them to tell her something about Raza. One holy man said, “Whatever pain and suffering one receives from the Lord, one should bear them.” Rabia Basri said, “There is egotism in the idea.” The other holy man said, “Whatever sufferings come from the Lord, they should be accepted cheerfully.” Rabia said, “This also smacks of egotism.” Rabia then added, “One should lose the faculty of distinction between the pleasure and pain that comes from the Lord and regard both of them as His gifts.”

Those who act in accordance with the Divine Law or Will are conscious co-workers with it and act according to its provisions. This does not mean that one should sit idle and do nothing. He alone is a doer who performs actions.

The problem of the relationship between fate and self-effort is very knotty. There is a Persian saying:

“Man proposes; God disposes.”

A man conceives thousands of plans and puts some of them into effect, but fate sits by his side and laughs at him. Effort is the outcome of man's will. Fate, however, is the outcome of the Will of the Lord. What can the will of man do against the Will of the Lord? It has no chance whatever.

“However hard one may try, it is to no purpose. That only happens, which is ordained by the Lord.”

We come together or separate according to our fate karmas and His Will. Whatever He wills, happens. No one can interfere with His supreme Will.

“Some attain to union with Him; others depart in separation. All that is His Will shall happen; who else can do anything?” (Sri Rag M1, 18-8)

Both the fools and the wise are all tied with the same rope. Human effort is of no avail against His Will. His law is working in all and no one else is the doer. Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru in the line of Guru Nanak, says:

“No one is foolish, no one is wise. Whatever happens, it is Your Will.” (Majh M5, 98-16)

“Whatsoever You will, happens. There is no other who can do a thing.” (M 5 Gauri 154-1)
“Everything happened as willed by Him; no one else did anything. By His Will is the world deluded, and lying asleep it does not awaken.” (M 5 Gauri 207-11)

Guru Nanak has also said:

“All happens according to Your Will. The mind drags one into the mire in the end.”

(N 1 Asa 356-11)

Namdev, a fourteenth century Indian Saint, says to the same effect:

“Nothing will come out of what I do. What the Lord wills that alone is what comes to pass.”

(Namdev, Bhairon, 1165-15)

Shamas-i-Tabriz says that man thinks up many plans but is not aware of his fate. But only that happens which is ordained by God.

“You try to act, but do not know your fate. Nothing avails against one's ordained fate.”

Hafiz says, “You should live happily according to His Will, since we have not been given any say in this matter.”

Sheikh Saadi has also said:

“The arrow of fate cannot be avoided, submit to it cheerfully.”

Since there is no escape from the arrow of fate, a man can do nothing but submit to his ordained fate. It is our everyday experience that howsoever much we may try, success or failure is not within our hands. Of course, it is our duty to make an effort. Lord Krishna gave the same advice to his disciple Arjun, to do his duty but to leave its fruit to the Lord, since he had no control over the fruit of his actions.

An old story says that one day an Arab said to Prophet Mohammed, “Oh Prophet of God! The Lord is constantly watching over us. What if I do not tie the legs of my camel in the night and thus leave my camel's wanderings to Him, relying on His Will? Would it do any harm?”

Maulana Rumi has described the reply given by the Prophet in the following words:

“In a loud voice the Prophet said: ‘Tie the legs of the camel. And then rely on God.’”

The Prophet said authoritatively that it was the man's duty to tie the legs of his camel. Perform your duty. Then remain content with the Will of God and leave the result to Him. Try your best and leave the rest to God.

Man is free to a certain extent. He is bound beyond that. We can make this clear by an illustration. A boy is flying a kite. His father has given him a hundred or two hundred yards of string. Hiding himself he has kept the rest of the string with himself. The boy is free to fly the kite to the extent of the string that is with him, and no more. Similarly, we should try to act as best we can according to our strength and then leave the rest to the Lord. We should make use of our effort and intelligence to the extent that we can and then bow before the Will of God, accepting It as sweet and welcome. Guru Granth Sahib says:
“Live by making an earnest effort. Thus earn and abide in happiness. Contemplating the Lord, meet Him and dispel all care and anxiety.” (Gujri Var M5, 522-15)

“March forward and look not behind.” (M 5 Maru Var 1096-13)

“O Kabir, do today what you would do tomorrow. Do just now what you would do today.” (Kabir ji Shalok 1371-16)

“O my wandering mind! A stranger are you. How would you meet the Lord?” (M 4 Gauri 234-4)

The Lord's Will and man's free will are mentioned many times in the writings of the Gurus. If by the Lord's Will, it is meant that everything that happens is bound to happen and that man's efforts are of no avail whatever, then what was the use of the Gurus incarnating themselves again and again, giving out their teachings, taking pains to hold spiritual discourses and putting out scriptural writings? The Gurus say that it is necessary for us to make our own efforts, but these should be in accordance with the Will of the Lord.

The question arises as to how are we to know His Will? The Gurus say:

“The virtues loved by the Lord, are taught to us by the Master. Submit to the Master's Will, and then you will be blessed. I worship the Master.” (Tilang M4, 725-12)

The divine virtues that are dear to the Lord are known and achieved through the Master. The True Master is indistinguishable from the Lord, and the Will of the Lord is dear to Him.

“He alone is a devotee of the Master who is content with the Lord's Will. Within him ring unstruck Melodies of bliss and the Lord Himself embraces him.” (Ramkali, Rag 923-10)

The Master is the Lord's Will personified or made flesh. It is by following the will of the Master that the Will of the Lord is known. But this can be known from a Perfect Master only.

“O Lord, keep me ever in Your Will and bless me with the glory of Your Name. It is through the Perfect Master that Your Will is known and one merges in equipoise.” (M 3 Prabhati 1333-8)

Mention of these things is made in many religious Scriptures. Ponder over them while sitting in the company of a realized soul. The most important thing is to take refuge with a Perfect Master and then follow without hesitation the path that He enjoins. His utterances are those of God Himself and His orders are God’s orders.

“O Lalu, as I receive the word of the Lord, so do I utter.” (M 1 Tilang 722-15)

When by following the directions of a Perfect Master, one understands it, he becomes the administrator of His will. Whatever he does, he does on behalf of the Lord. The Lord works through him. His will becomes one with the Lord's Will.

Man's will and intellect, being finite, are weak, deficient and incomplete. If we make them one with the eternal Will and the perfect wisdom of the Lord they will also become infinite. Since the law of harmony is in tune with His Will, the echo of the Divine Melody is felt within man. The deficient will of man then awakens in the perfect Will of the Lord and takes its form. He
begins to truly understand and follow His Will. He is no longer obliged to grope in the dark. He sees everything in a clear-cut manner. He is rid of all delusions.

“*I have tasted of His Will. I am rid of all my doubts.*” (M 1 Sri Rag 72-7)

He begins to see and understand the writings that tell of His Will. He becomes familiar with all the three aspects of time. Such persons generally keep silent, but sometimes in their delight they say something about the matter.

We may be rich or poor, healthy or diseased, happy or unhappy. All these states are boons from Him, a result of our own karmas. Accept them cheerfully. Be happy with His Will. Try to act as you are directed by the Master, and thus free yourself from the shackles of karmas and death, through the Name of the Lord. His Will is His greatest gift. Nothing excels it. It is only if He wills it that we obey Him. We can meet a Master if it is so willed by Him. We can attune ourselves to Truth and then share the bliss, only if He wills it. But only those for whom it is ordained can obtain it.

“*I obey as He wills. I get bliss as He wills. He wills and I meet a Master. He wills and I contemplate on Truth. No boon is greater than His Will. Verily this is the truth. I take refuge with the Creator.*” (Maru M3, 1093-14)

“When He wills a thing it happens. One gets a Master and one gets the Name of God.” (Maru M3, 1064-1)

The entire universe has been created by His Will. He alone, whom He wills it, loves His Will.

“He by His own Will created all the universe. He, whom He wills, loves His Will.” (Maru M3, 1064-2)

Pain and pleasure, honor and glory, birth and death, the union of the soul with the body, coming together and separation, habitation in hell or heaven, recitals and penances, wandering in different species, knowledge and devotion, and crossing the ocean of the universe, all are happening according to His Will.

“When You are with me, oh Lord, I attain everything. When You abide within me, I am at peace. When You dwell within me, I am blessed. By Your Will You make me a king; by Your Will a beggar. By Your Will flow rivers in the desert; by Your Will bloom flowers in the sky. By Your Will we cross the sea of life; by Your Will are we drowned midstream. By Your Will we love the Lord, and are dyed in His hue. By Your Will He appears dreadful, and we keep coming and going.” (Sahi M3, 762-15)

He is the greatest of all. All are under His discipline, and He rules all. All act according to His Will.

“Great is the glory of the unfathomable Lord. Through Guru's Word I see His vision. An enraptured and inner peace descends upon me. He is the Over-Lord and His Will rules over all. The Lord has yoked all to His Will. Nanak, the Lord does as He wills.” (Sarang Var M4, 2151-12)
That alone is true knowledge and contemplation, which is pleasing to Him. That alone is true worship and recital, which pleases Him.

“\textit{That alone is true contemplation, which is approved by Him. That alone is recital which is pleasing to Him. To abide in His Will is perfect knowledge.}” (Majh M5, 100-8)

“\textit{Only when the True Lord wills it, can we worship Him with His Will enshrined in our hearts. It is a true devotee alone who knows what worship is living utterly in His Will. Oh Saints, he who accepts God's Will is in bliss. In the end it is His Name alone that keeps one company.}” (Ramkali M3, 910-7)

He who is dear to the Lord and submits to His Will is successful.

“\textit{Blessed is he who is dear to You, may I be a sacrifice unto Your Will.}” (Dhanasri M5, 676-12)

“\textit{Blessed are they who obey the Lord's Will. The Guru's Shabd guides them, and they reach the abode of the Lord.}” (Bhairon M3, 1129-18)

May we be a sacrifice to the one who is loved by the Lord.

“\textit{He who meets the Master knows the Lord. I am a sacrifice to Him who submits to the Lord's Will.}” (Ramkali Var M5, 958-14)

When one is loved by the Lord, the Lord Himself forgives him and unites him to Himself.

“\textit{I am a sacrifice to Him who forgives and unites me with Himself. Says Nanak, in His Will the Lord merges me in Himself.}” (M 1 Malar Var 1291-12)

Those who love the Will of the Lord become perfect.

“\textit{Whatever is ordained, no one can efface. Nanak, they become perfect, who love the Will of the Lord.}” (Malar M3, 1276-14)

He who submits himself to the Will of the Lord merges in Him. This is the highest praise of the Will.

“\textit{He who accepts Your Will unites with You. He who is pleased with Your Will merges in You. Glorious is submission to God's Will, but rare is the one who submits to it.}” (Maru M3, 1063-19)

\textbf{Who Loves the Will of the Lord and Accepts It?}

The true devotee or Gurmukh (he who loves the Guru) loves the Will of the Lord.

“\textit{The true devotee loves Your Will; he easily obtains truth and bliss. Many try to understand the Will but it is the Lord who makes one surrender to His Will.}” (Maru M3, 1063-18)
Only those to whom He is kind and who love Him accept His Will.

“When You will it in Your mercy, they accept Your Will. Devotion is what pleases You. You are the sustainer of the world.” (Suhi M5, 747-2)

“He, whom He wills, loves His Will.” (Maru M3, 1064-2)

He who merely talks and does not understand His Law is not an adept and is of no value. He who accepts His Will is a devotee.

“He who merely talks, knows not the Will of the Lord. He who submits to the Lord's Will is the devotee of God. Without it one is false.” (Ramkali Var M3, 950-14)

She who is liked by the Lord is the ever-happy bride. All embellishments and mannerisms become her. She is the most beautiful of all, and she ever remains happy.

“She is truly embellished, she is incomparably beautiful, she alone is the ever-happy bride, who is approved by the Lord.” (Asa M5, 400-13)

“The clouds are thick and low, it raineth incessantly. Sayeth Nanak: Bride that walketh in the Will of the Spouse, reveleth ever in joy.” (Malar Var M1, 1280-16)

He Who Accepts the Will of the Lord is a True Devotee

“He is a true devotee, who accepts Your Will. I am a sacrifice unto Him.” (Malar M5, 1271-3)

What Are the Signs of Union with the Lord?

The sign of being united with the Lord is that one recognizes His Law. He is always in the same state; he is always satisfied and he is always in blissful enjoyment of His Will.

“This is the sign of union with the Lord; the mind recognizes the one true Divine Law. He lives according to the Will of the Lord. He always enjoys contentment and satisfaction.” (Majh M5, 106-17)

The Will of the Master or Guru

We cannot see the Lord and are, therefore, not fit to understand His Will. But the Guru is the manifested form of the Lord. It is necessary, therefore, to act in accordance with His Will, since He accepts the Will of the Lord and is His incarnation.

“I loved the Will of the Lord; the Master made me do so. The Lord blessed me.” (Ramkali, Sad 923-9)

His Will is the Will of the Lord. We can see the Master and we can also enquire from Him regarding the True Path. Whoever follows the Will of the Master is the recipient of the Lord's Grace.

“He is kind to those who accept the Will of the Master. The Lord knows the secret of their hearts; they act as He Will.” (Tukhari M4, 1115-6)
He who accepts the Master's Will accepts the Will of the Lord as well. He easily obtains the fruits that accrue by living in accordance with the Will of the Lord. There is nectar in the Will of the Lord. The Guru's Will is permeating the Lord's Will. There is, therefore, nectar in the Will of the Master also. When the Lord so wills it, the devotee, by contemplating on the Naam, can drink that nectar. He can then attain the Truth.

“How may I see You? How may I praise You? Through the Master's Grace I praise You through the Word. In Your Will rains the nectar and in Your Will do we drink it.” (Majh M3, 119-2)

To the disciple who sacrifices himself for the Master or who enshrines His Will in his mind, the Master Himself bestows His Grace.

“How can one serve such a Master? Surrender body and soul to Him. He who submits himself to His Will, the Master is kind to him.” (Gujri M3, 490-7)

To act according to the Will of the Master is the duty of the disciple.

“The disciples accept the Will of the Master; the Perfect Master then takes them across. Oh Lord, give us the dust of their feet, that we sinners may also obtain release.”

(Shalok M4, 1424-6)

He who acts in accordance with the Will of the Master is a true disciple, friend, relation and servant.

“That disciple is a true friend, a true kinsman, who acts according to the Will of the Master. He who follows his own will is separated from the Lord and suffers sorrow.” (Sorath M3, 601-19)

“Oh Nanak, he alone is the Lord's servant who offers his head to God, and accepts the Master's Will, and cherishes the Word in his heart.” (Sarang Var M1, 1247-15)

He who serves the Master and merges his Light in his Master's Light is acceptable at the door of the Lord. He who enshrines the Will of the Lord in his inner consciousness, is like the Lord Himself. He assumes His form. There is no doubt about it.

“They who serve the true Master are approved of by God. They merge their Light in the Flame. He alone is the servant of God who submits to His Will.” (Malar M1, 1287-7)

Those who walk in the Will of the Lord are very fortunate. They easily board the ship of the Name.

“The Master is the boatman; the Lord's Name is the boat. How can one get into the boat? By submitting to the Master's Will, one finds himself ferried across. Blessed indeed is he whom the Master unites with the Lord.” (Sri Rag M4, 40-18)

Maulana Rumi in the Diwan (collected writings) of Shamas-i-Tabriz, has made a pointed reference concerning the disciple and the Will of his Master. He says, “I asked my Master, Oh my dear Lord! How long do you intend to keep me entangled in this world and make me miserable?” The Master replied, “I will take you where I like; I will keep you where I like. You should remain silent and obey.”
“Oh Lord! How long will it be that You keep me entangled in the world? He said, ‘Silence! You will go where I will.’”

He says in the end, “Oh Master! Whatever You Will that alone I know. Whatever You make me see, that alone I see. If You keep me like this, I will so remain. If You keep me in some other condition, I will live like that.” In this reply of the disciple there is a complete absence of egotism and complete resignation to His Will.

“Except what You wish me to know, what do I know? Except what You show me, what can I see? I will live like this, if You wish it. If You keep me in some other state, I will live like that.”

Does the Master leave the seeker alone in this struggle? No, never. He gives support from within, and slaps from outside, so that the disciple may be purged of all impurities. The pot is thus completely made ready to contain the immortal and everlasting treasure.

The Lord has created us. He loves us. He may make us rich or poor, well or ill, happy or unhappy. We should be happy in whatever way He keeps us. They are all His bestowals. A carpenter saws a log into planks of different shapes and sizes and uses them at different places in making a box, some at the bottom, others on the sides, and still others on the top to serve as a lid. Each serves its own purpose. All are chips off the same block. Similarly, we should live happily in accordance with the Will of the Lord in whatever state He keeps us, and make efforts as enjoined by the Master and thus gain freedom from the bondage of death through the power of the Name of the Lord.

“My mind is the yard-stick, my tongue the scissors, and I measure and measure and cut off the bonds of death.” (Namdev, Asa 485-13)

The Saints and holy men offer this advice that whatever the Lord does, accept it as good.

“All that the Lord does, with that I am pleased. This is the wisdom I have received from the Saints.” (Kanara M5, 1299-16)

Guru Arjan says:

“Place me on a throne, I will be Your slave. Make me a grass cutter, I will not complain. You alone are my Creator Lord, unparalleled and infinite.” (Surang M5, 1211-14)

“If You give me happiness, I praise You. If You give me sufferings, I contemplate on You. If You give me hunger, I am content. In pain, I feel pleasure. If You keep me close to You, I dwell upon You. If You beat and drive me out, I call on You. If people praise me, it is Your Glory. If they slander me, I do not leave You.” (Suhi M4, 757-11)

“If the Master takes me to task, I accept it gladly. If He forgives me, it is His greatness.” (Suhi M4, 958-6)

“If You make me a king, it increases not my glory. If You make me a beggar, there is nothing that I lose.” (Namdev, Gujri 525-2)
Who Submits to the Will of the Satguru?

Only those who are so fated become Gurmukhs (devotees) of the Guru, become attuned to the melody of the Name, and accept the Will of the Master.

“A devotee contemplates on the Name with love. He becomes attuned to the Name. If it is so ordained, he accepts the Will of the Master.” (Suhi M3, 757-1)

Those who love the Will of the Lord through the Grace of the Master become pure-minded. But this boon is received by him alone to whom the Master Himself grants it.

“They accept His Will; they become pure. Oh Nanak, they receive it. He gives it to them out of love.” (Ramkali M3, 918-2)

Those who submit to the Will of the Master are rid of their sufferings. They become happy forever and their glory increases day by day.

“He who submits to the Will of the Master is freed from all sufferings.” (Sri Rag M4, 89-9)

“He who acts according to the Will of the Master is freed from all poverty and misery.” (Kanara Var M4, 1313-19)

“The instruction that the Master imparts, that the seekers hear. They who submit to the Master's Will, their glory increases four-fold. Mysterious is the way of true seekers, they not merely hear but are intoxicated by what they hear.” (Gauri Var M4, 314-9)

The egocentric man is entangled in the net of the mind and intellect. He is engrossed in cunning and cleverness and wanders about in doubt. He does not accept the Lord's Will. He comes and goes. He goes through the cycle of transmigration again and again and suffers greatly. He never dwells in his original Home in Sach Khand, the True Region. Other unhappy results of not submitting to His Will are given as follows:

“The blind and egocentric man plays clever. He accepts not the Will of the Lord and thereby suffers great pain. He is lost in doubt; he comes and goes; he does not find the True Home.” (Maru M3, 1064-2)

In this Iron Age, Kali Yuga, egotism is very powerful. No one is ready to believe another. Those who have met a Master and accept His Will sing the praises of the Lord and are always satisfied. In this age, those are indeed blessed who live according to the Master's Will.

“He who accepts the Will of the Master, he lovingly sings the praises of the Lord. Those are blessed in the Iron Age, who live within the Will of the Master.” (M 3Shalok 1414-1)

When one repeats the Names given by the Master, he begins to live within His Will, and all his doubts and fears are removed. He begins to say from his heart, “I accept what You wish. That is good, which is acceptable to You. Oh Father! Thy Will be done. Whatever You do tastes sweet. Oh Lord! Give us the boon of Your Name.”

“I serve the Master and sing the Lord's Name. Oh You destroyer of doubt and fear, I submit to Your Will.” (Suhi M1, 752-17)
“Whatever You do tastes sweet. Nanak asks of the Lord the treasures of the Naam.” (Asa M5, 364-3)

The Divine Law (Hukam)

The Divine Law originates from the Will of the Lord. Both are the same thing, but they are different in aspect. At first, one likes a thing. It is then necessary to find the means by which to obtain it. That means is the Shabd, the Sound Current or the Holy Spirit. The element of control or regulation in this process is called Law, and it is universal.

From the Will of the Lord there originated the Lord's Law, as the Name (Shabd). This became the Creator of all the universe. In this way, the Law is the connecting link between the Lord's Will and the putting of the Lord's Will into creative action.

“All are born and act according to Your Law. Your Law ordains, and Kal governs us. Your Law ordains and we attune ourselves to You. What You will, happens. We have no say in it.” (Sri Rag M1, 55-17)

All the universe was created by Divine Law and He, as the Creator, is running the universe according to His Law.

“The Ruler rules in an orderly manner.” (Jap Ji, 2-3)

The Scriptures describe Him as a witness of all that goes on in the universe, but Saints describe Him as the Supreme Lord and the Creator. The Lord is not perishable. His Law also is true and imperishable.

“All are born and act according to Your Law. Your Law ordains, and Kal governs us. Your Law ordains and we attune ourselves to You. What You will, happens. We have no say in it.” (Sri Rag M1, 55-17)

Guru Nanak says that everything emanates from the Divine Law. Everything takes place according to this Law, and according to it the administration of this universe has been placed under the control of the Negative Power or Kal. It is only by knowing the Divine Law that one can travel beyond the sphere of Kal. The Lord can do whatever He likes. We human beings have no control over the acts of the Lord.

“The Law creates or destroys millions in a moment. It binds all and releases them from bondage.” (Malar Var M1, 1289-3)

To bind all and then to release them from bondage is the work of Law. All must obey the Law. The entire process of coming and going is carried out within His Law.

“The Law creates or destroys millions in a moment. It binds all and releases them from bondage.” (Malar Var M1, 1289-3)
“Coming and going is carried out according to His Law; it is governed by it in every detail.”
(Gauri M1, 151-11)

“His Law determines birth and death; this Law bestows sufferings and enjoyments.”
(Suhi M5, 760-14)

“To worship others is unreal like a dream; His Will determines the laws of death and birth.”
(Asa Var M1, 472-18)

Days and nights, dates and days, seasons and months, earth and skies, air, water and fire, all the habitations, worlds, universes and conscious regions are created by the Law. No one can say how vast is the Law or what is its extent. People exhaust themselves by singing its praises and pondering over its meaning and operation.

“All the nights, all the days, all the dates, all the seasons, all the months, all the earth, all the matter, all the seas, all the winds, all the fires, all the underworlds, all the towns, all the lands, all the regions, all the forms - no one can measure the Law, no one can describe its purpose. Many have tried to describe it; many have tried to state its qualities. They simply tired themselves out.”
(Sarang Var M1, 1241-15)

He whom He loves alone submits to the Law.

“He builds and He destroys and merges all in Himself in His Will. That alone happens which is the Lord's Will.”
(Asa M1, 414-10)

What is the Law? To know this is very difficult. We cannot described it in any way. In the second stanza of the Jap Ji it is said that “The Law cannot be described.” It is not a subject for exposition. It can only be experienced by the inner self. But what is happening in accordance with His Law and what can be thought about it has been described in the second stanza of the Jap Ji.

“According to His Law He manifests. The Law cannot be described. According to Law living beings appear. According to Law they grow. According to Law they are high or low. According to Law they get pleasure or pain. According to Law one gets salvation. According to Law another always wanders. All are subject to Law. None can transgress it. He who understands the Law, oh Nanak, is no more guilty of egotism.”
(Jap Ji, 1-6)

All the universe of form, whether gross, subtle or causal, has been created by His Law which is indescribable. It is the Shabd or the Name, and it is a manifestation of the Lord.

“Oh Nanak! The Name is the Lord. It is explained by the Master.”
(Sri Rag M1, 72-2)

“Blessed is he who understands the Law. The True Shabd is its insignia.”
(Asa M5, 386-2)

We can describe nature to a certain extent but can say nothing about its Creator. The natural scientists have discovered many of the laws of nature, but they are nowhere near the end. How can they, then, say anything about its Creator? The laws of nature are not by themselves the Law, but they are governed by the Law. The Law is their basic cause, and it is related to the Lord.
The Law is the Creator. Nature is His creation. Even if we know the creation, how can we through it, know the Creator? Guru Granth Sahib says that all living creatures were created by His Law. All the sentient and insentient universe was created by His Law. Man gains glory by means of His Law. Exaltations and degradations occur according to His Law. All this is in the hands of the Law Giver. Our pains and pleasures are also arranged for according to His Law. It is according to His Law that many a man is pardoned, while others are sent back into various bodies. The result is that both conscious beings and unconscious matter are governed by the Law, and nothing is outside of it. When all is within His Law, there should be no place left for pride and pride should vanish.

He who understands His Law is freed from his feeling of egotism. The Lord is the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of all. There are, to be sure, forces of nature, but there must be some Capable One driving them all. The seed has, no doubt, the power to grow, but there is always the one who sows, the one who waters, the one who tends the field, and the one who gathers the harvest. It is He who has given seed the power to grow, and the earth and water the power to nourish it. Pain and pleasure, life in higher or lower species, and bestowals from the Lord are all the result of our karmas. It is, however, the Lord who is the law-giver, and the law is written according to our karmas.

“Yes He enforces the Law. He enforces it according to our deeds, oh Nanak! He is true. His court and courtiers are also true.” (Sarang Var 1M4, 241-4)

“Yes He whose power upholds the Universe, and establishes everything of its own kind, whose beneficence blesses everyone His Will becomes our deeds.” (Asa M1, 493-15)

“Oh Nanak, He writes the fate of everything, He writes as He sees.” (Asa Var M1, 466-15)

In all the regions there is the same Law, and universes are created and destroyed in accordance with it.

“One Law prevails in all the regions of the universe. Everything is created in accordance with it.” (Gauri M1, 233-7)

His Law is Absolute. It cannot be obliterated.

“Yes Hear the One. Sing of the One. He is in the heavens. He is in the underworlds. His Law cannot be evaded. Whatever is written is binding.” (Maru Var M1, 1091-6)

In a battlefield the commander orders the army to advance, and sometimes, to save it from danger, orders it to retreat. He gives orders as the situation demands. But an ordinary soldier does not understand his orders. Those who obey, escape the danger.

We cannot know the intentions of any man. How, then, can we understand the Law of the Lord? A man resolves to go west but circumstances compel him to go east, on a journey about which he had never even dreamed. Created works are destroyed in a moment. Deserted lands become populated. All our cleverness proves of no avail. The Law of the Lord prevails everywhere.

“One intends to go west, but the Lord takes him east. The Lord can undo what is established in a moment. He then does as He wills. Cleverness is of no avail. Whatever the Lord deems right comes to pass.” (Gauri M5, 496-9)
We think of various plans, but only that happens which is to happen. Everyone wants his own good but what happens is often not even dreamed of.

“We think of various plans; but that happens which is ordained. We all seek the good of ourselves; but that happens which is not in our thoughts.” (Bilawal M4, 800-8)

What is that power which overrules our unwearied efforts and endeavors? That power is the Divine Law. The Muslim Saints call it Mushiat-I-Ezdi, God's Direction. Our intellect or even astrology, has no say in it, since it emanates from a center quite beyond their reach. Who can know it? His Law supersedes all laws. It is verily the command of the Lord. It is the Cause behind all causes and the Power behind all other powers.

“Of all the adepts You are the greatest; of all the actions Yours are the most fruitful. Of all the orders Yours is the supreme One; of all the commands Yours is the Highest.” (Gujri M5, 507-18)

Our intellect is limited. It cannot understand the Divine Law. His Law has tremendous powers. We have to humbly submit to it. We can never go against it. Before the Will and Law of the Lord we cannot but surrender. It is useless to struggle against the unfathomable ocean of this world.

“Submit to the Will of the Lord; there is no other way. It is of no avail to struggle against it, to cross this abysmal ocean.”

From the river of Divine Law there flowed innumerable streams of life.

“By one Word the whole universe came into being and myriads of rivers (of life) came gushing forth.” (Jap Ji, 3-17)

If anyone thwarts His Law through self-pride or conceit, he is uprooted by its onward rush and is completely annihilated. Those who always bow before the Law and accept it willingly, understand the power of Its flow and remain happy in following It.

“Shed your ego, O Godman, and be at peace knowing His Will. Accept with pleasure all that the Lord does and dwell upon Him in joy and sorrow.” (Gauri M5, 209-14)

So long as we do not understand His Law, we remain unhappy.

“Unless we understand His Law, we remain unhappy.” (Asa M5, 400-17)

Obedience to His Law leads to eternal happiness. Those who cling to the axle of the mill of His Law are not ground between Time and Space – the two stones of the mill, and they thus escape being ground to bits. Guru Nanak says that the entire universe is being crushed between these two stones and nothing escapes this crushing. But it is a wonderful fact that those who take refuge at His door escape unscathed:

“Between the two mill-stones the grain is ground. Only they escape, who clinging to the mill's axle.

(Var Majh M1, 142-19)
It is not only difficult to know the Divine Law but it is also difficult to describe or expound it. Guru Nanak, in the third stanza of the Jap Ji, says:

“Who can sing of His power? No one can do it. Who can sing of His bounties? No one knows His signs. Who can sing of His attributes? Who can sing of His greatness and His deeds? Who can sing of His inconceivable knowledge? Who can sing of His molding bodies out of dust? Who can sing of His taking away life? Who can sing of His restoring life? Who can sing of Him who appears far? Who can sing of Him who is ever near? Who can sing of Him who has no end? Millions of men give different descriptions of Him the recipient tires of receiving, the Bountiful One gives. In every age one lives on His bounty. The ordainer has laid down the Law. Oh Nanak, the carefree One is happy.” (Jap Ji, 1-11)

Those who claim to expound His Law do not do so correctly. Some talk of His power, but do not have the power to describe it. Others describe His bounties and gifts while still others sing about His attributes. However, who is there who can possibly sing truly of His virtues and bounties? Who can sing of His knowledge and His wisdom? It is difficult even to imagine these things. He molds bodies out of dust and reduces them again to dust. He takes life away and then restores it. He is so far away and yet is so near. He is omnipresent. Who can describe such a powerful Lord? Man is weak, unwise and imperfect. How can he describe the High, the Wise and the perfect One? Even if he does so, then it is, as has been said:

“You are the King, oh Lord! If I call You King of kings is it any praise for You?”
(Bilawal M1, 795-4)

He is and has been described in millions of different ways. There is no end to it. This subject remains ever fresh.

“Philosophers have been arguing about the 'why and how' of God for centuries. But true knowledge of God is still where it was.”

The bountiful Lord grants countless boons but the recipients get tired of receiving them. Man has been receiving them for ages, and yet there is no end to them. He is the Eternal Truth. He exists forever. His Law is perfect. His commands are immediately carried out.

“By one Word the whole universe came into being and myriads of rivers (of life) came gushing forth.” (Jap Ji, 3-17)

The great ordainer is running the universe according to His own Divine Law. Even while doing all this, He is carefree. He is detached and unconcerned.

All the universe is being run in accordance with the Divine Law, the knowledge of which we gain from the Master. Through Him we become acquainted with the known and the unknown principles of His Law and become happy forever.

“After meeting the Master I realized His law. Since then I abide in bliss.”
(Asa M5, 400-17)

The Law of the Lord together with His Name pervade everywhere. Why do we then not see Him? We learn from the happy brides, realized souls, that the curtain of egoism stands between us and the Lord. Unless we annihilate this ego, we cannot know His Law.
“Ask the brides who have eradicated their ego, they love not the Lord’s command who love their own selves.” (Vadhans M3, 568-4)

Who Can Understand that Law?

Guru Amar Das says that He who created this world knows the Divine Law, Hukam. The Creator Himself correctly understands the Law.

“He who created the world knows the Law. He Himself observes and knows it.” (Majh M3, 118-9)

Can His Law be understood by anybody other than Himself? If so, how? Only he to whom the Lord is kind and bestows His Grace, can understand It.

“The Law is known to those alone to whom He is kind. By observing It the happy bride obtains the Lord’s love and bliss.” (Gujri Var M3, 510-15)

“Oh Nanak! He is kind. He is friendly to those who observe the Law.” (Gujri M5, 523-18)

One can observe the Law only when the Lord wills it.

“He with whom the Lord is pleased, observes the Law; and by so doing he is ferried across.”
(Kabir, Gauri 337-4)

“When the Lord is pleased one merges in His Will. And accepting it, one is at peace. He always repeats the Lord’s Name and easily contemplates on Him.” (Dhanasri M4, 690-18)

The result of observing and recognizing the Law is to become attuned to the Shabd and the Name.

“They who observe the Law, in them does the Shabd dwell.” (Sri Rag M1, 72-6)

“To those who are beloved of the Lord, merit and demerit are the same. It is by submitting to the Lord’s Will that one is in bliss reflecting on the Master’s Word.” (Maru Var M3, 1092-15)

It is only according to the Eternal Law that one is exalted as a Satguru, True Master.

“The True Guru was blest with glory by the True Guru. Knowing this to be the approved Will of God. He tested his sons, nephews, sons-in-law, his kindred, but the ego of everyone was humbled by Him.” (Bilawal M4, 853-15)

The Law is manifest in the Master. Unless one meets a True Master, he can neither obtain the True Name nor can he know the Law.

“You will see the Lord’s vision, and even the hot wind will not touch you. I do not say it myself, I say that which is the command of my Lord.” (Suhi M5, 763-6)

To be able to know the Law is the result of the kindness of the Master. It all depends on His Will.
“When one observes the Law one knows Him. But this can only be had through the Master’s kindness.” (Malar Var M1, 1289-7)

“All trade, all farming is in accordance with the Law. Through submission to the Law is all glory. Through the Master’s Word is the Law revealed, through the Law is our union with the Lord.” (Vadhans M3, 569-2)

The Law is known only when one meets the manifest Master or True Master. Then the Law abides in the heart. There is no other method of learning how to know it.

“When I met the Master I learned the Law; it now dwells in my mind. Whatever you wish is true. Truth pervades all.” (Gujri M3, 491-19)

“One gathers the wisdom of the three worlds, when he learns the Law from the True Master.” (Asa M1, 414-8)

It is only a sincere devotee or Gurmukh to whom the Lord is kind, who can understand the Law.

“All is created according to Law; by Law it is destroyed. The fool is blind and ignorant. Rare is one to whom is revealed the Law in His pleasure and mercy.” (Bihagana M3, 556-13)

“True is Your Law, through the Master it is known. He who loses himself knows the Truth.” (Majh Var M1, 144-7)

Fruitful is the coming into this world of a devotee who is accepted at the door of the Lord. By understanding the Law he attains real bliss.

“Fruitful is the human birth of a true devotee, for he who understands the Law is blessed.” (Gujri Var M5, 523-16)

By practicing the Name given by the Master, the feeling of egotism is banished, and a devotee begins to understand the working of the Divine Law. He bows to it and sees it at work in all. He constantly observes it and ultimately merges in the Lord.

To observe the Law is the most noble of all actions. Such a person meets no obstruction on the way to Sach Khand.

“He who observes the Law enters His court. Having the password of Truth, he is not held up.” (Asa M1, 355-13)

Various benefits of living according to the Law are mentioned in the writings of the Gurus. Doubts and worries are removed. One becomes pure and gains salvation. Shabd or Naam or Truth is realized and egotism is destroyed. Death and birth cease. Eternal bliss is obtained and the real abode is attained. One merges in the Lord. The disadvantages flowing from not living within the Law are also mentioned by the Gurus.
Shabd is a Sanskrit word. Unlike other words, its original root is not known. It means sound, letter, voice, name, conscience, word, clarity, declaration, expression, speech etc. That which can be spoken or that which can reveal secrets, is called Shabd. However, the Gurus and the highest Masters have used it in a very deep and abstruse sense.

The Shabd is the Supreme Being and Sustainer of All

Before the creation, the Shabd was unmanifested and nameless. It then existed in itself. In that state it was called indescribable, nameless, invisible, unfathomable, unutterable and inexpressible. When it became manifest it became known as Naam (Name of God) or Shabd.

“When Shabd was unmanifested it had no name. When Shabd manifested, it became the Name or Naam.” (Sar Bachan)

Prior to its becoming manifest, there was no sun or moon or sky. The Shabd was formless. The Shabd, however, is consciousness. All are under its control. Nothing can manifest without its help. The Shabd is the life, the essence, the root and the quintessence of every created thing. It does not depend on anyone for manifestation. On the other hand, all that is manifest or unmanifest is sustained by it. It sustains Ishwar, Brahm (names for the ruler of the second spiritual region) and Par Brah (the ruler of the third spiritual region). Whatever exists in this creation is Shabd. It is the cause of all creation and dissolution.

“Through the Word is the Creation and Dissolution. Through the Word is the Evolution of Creation again.” (Majh M3, 11 7-8)

The beginning and end of all things is Shabd. All gross matter, the sky and so forth, subtle matter, sound, form, taste and scent are all Shabd. Whatever exists is Shabd. Whatever is manifested from Shabd cannot be anything but Shabd. Shabd is our creator. Shabd is our sustainer. We are of Shabd and Shabd is ours. The Gurus say that Shabd is the Supreme Lord. All are within His control. He is the all-powerful Cause and the Creator.

“He is the wife; He is the husband; He is the Cause of all.” (Basant M1, 1190-10)

“You are the Supreme Being. The great One without a second. You yourself as Shabd pervade everything. Whatever You wish comes to pass.” (Asa M4, 448-11)

What is the Shabd?

The Shabd, Sound Current, Word or Holy Spirit is not a subject matter for speech or writing. In order to make it understood, we can only say this much, namely that it is the quintessence of the Lord and that it sustains millions of universes and regions. It is the soul-current of consciousness. It is the Celestial Melody. It is the life-current which originates from the Lord and pervades everything. The Lord creates and sustains the entire universe through this great Current of Power. It gives life to the whole of the creation and can take every living being back to his
Original Home or the Lord. The currents of the Lord pervade everywhere, like radio-waves. His Divine Music fills all space. Unless our radios are correctly tuned to it we cannot hear this music. As we grow more and more subtle, we begin to hear clearly its melodies. Shabd is a string which connects everyone and everything with the Lord.

The Shabd is the basis of all true religions, for religion means “that which connects us with the Lord.” All the forces of nature are sustained by the Shabd. The life force is also its manifestation, even though it is working in the regions of Maya. Like electricity, Shabd, whether manifest or unmanifest, pervades everywhere. It is all-powerful and is the Creator of all.

Guru Nanak describes it as Hukam (Command or Law) in the Jap Ji. He says that it cannot be adequately expressed or explained. However, he describes in the second stanza of Jap Ji whatever is happening within its compass:

“All things are manifestations of His Will; but His Will is beyond description. By His Will is matter quickened into life; by His Will is greatness obtained; by His Will some are born high and others low. By His Will are men’s joys and sorrows ordained; by His Will the pious obtain Salvation; by His Will the impious wander in endless transmigration. All exist under His Will, and nothing stands outside. One attuned with His Will, oh Nanak, is wholly freed from ego.”
(Jap Ji, Stanza II)

Shabd is of two kinds: manifest, and inner. The manifest Shabd is called Varnatmik and the inner Shabd is called Dhunatmik. Knowing the Varnatmak Shabd, it is possible to know to a certain extent the Dhunatmak Shabd.

On hearing words of love every pore of our being is thrilled with delight. On hearing words that speak of detachment and self-effacement, we begin to entertain feelings of detachment and surrender. On hearing harsh words, we become angry. Sweet words produce happiness and bitter words, pain. Words of sympathy give hope and unsympathetic words depress. All these powers are inherent in Shabd:

“Shabd killed them and they died, kings lost their kingdoms because of Shabd. Those who always remembered Shabd, succeeded in their mission. Shabd is the cause of happiness; Shabd is the cause of pain; Shabd is the cause of hope; Shabd is the cause of despair.” (Kabir)

The greatness of Shabd is unfathomable and limitless. If this is true of the manifest Shabd, it can well be imagined how powerful the inner Shabd is. On listening to the melody of a violin, one gets peace. It attracts our attention and makes us become absorbed in it. When a gross outer sound can produce such a condition, how powerful would the inner Shabd be?

Shabd is the Creator

In the Scriptures of all religions, Shabd is recognized as the Creator of the universe. According to the Vedas, fourteen regions were created by it. In the Quran it is said that fourteen regions came into being by the power of the Kalma. In the Gospel of St. John in the Bible, it is said that the world was created by the Word or Logos. St. John says, “In the beginning was the Word… and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things … were made by Him.” Guru Nanak says that all the creation is being sustained by Shabd and that it is the Creator of the entire universe. The earth and sky are made by Shabd, which pervades them and sustains the entire universe:
"The Word is the life of sky and earth. From its refulgence all take birth, and all creation sings. Oh Nanak, in all souls that be this heavenly power rings." (Janam M1, Sakhi P 19)

"He creates Himself and knows Himself. He separates the earth and the skies. He spreads the canopy of the heavens. He upholds the skies without pillars. He makes the Shabd His insignia. He creates the sun and moon and illumines them by His own light." (Malar Var M1, 1279-6)

Not only the creation, but dissolution also is in Him. He also recreates the world, following a dissolution.

"Creation and dissolution are from the Shabd. Recreation is also from the Shabd." (Majh M3, 117-8)

The Hindu Scriptures say that the Shabd is the attribute of ether, or the very life breath of it. It follows therefore, that it is even more subtle and more pervasive than ether. If we think seriously, we find the Shabd even where Nature and Soul unite, because in union there is motion and sound. However, the Shabd extends beyond this and includes something more.

The Lord Himself has been described as the Shabd in form:

"Your Shabd pervades everywhere. Whatever You wish, comes to pass." (Asa M4, 448-10)

The founders of all religions regard the Lord as Shabd-incarnate. The oldest accepted religion of the world – the Vedic religion – also sings its praises. It is said in the Sam Veda:

"The Shabd is Brahm. Silence is Brahm. The Primal Sound is Brahm."

Muslim Saints also consider the Shabd to be the Creator of the universe. Shamas-i-Tabriz says that all the universe was created out of Shabd and that Light came out of it.

"The universe was manifested out of the Divine Sound; from It came into being the Light."

Hazrat Abdur Razzak Kasi says, "The Primal Name is the source of all names. It sustains all things. It is a river, and all living beings are its waves. Only he who belongs to our fold or is a perfect adept can grasp the meaning of this great truth."

"The Primal Name is the source of all things. The Name is a river and creatures are its waves. He who knows this belongs to our brotherhood." (Abdur Razzak Kas)

The Shabd Cannot Be Spoken or Written

The inner Shabd is super-conscious and infinite. It can neither be heard by the outer ears nor spoken, nor can it be written. It is the unwritten law and the unspoken language. It is beyond speech or writing and is in an unmanifest language. It is independent, but everything is sustained by It. It pervades everything. It can be experienced only by the soul. The consciousness or soul merges into the super-consciousness, Shabd. The Gurus in the Line of Guru Nanak describe It as the true Word or Shabd which is imperishable.

"Through the True Word one realizes the truth. Through the True Word one sings the praises of the Lord." (Prabhati M1, 1342-8)
The Gurbani says that one should give up all cleverness, and should devote oneself to the True Word and merge in It.

“He who contemplates on the feet of the Master gives up all cleverness. He meditates on the True Word.” (Sri Rag M5, 51-2)

“Oh friend, sing the praises of the Lord. Always love the True Word.” (Basant M5, 1192-14)

“It cannot be comprehended by the gross senses. It is seen without eyes and heard without ears.” (Majh Var M1, 139-2)

It is to be seen without the outer eyes and is to be heard without the outer ears. Writing about the Shabd Maulana Rumi says:

“He may be a Turk, a Kurd, a Parsi or an Arab, but he experiences that Sound without ears or lips.”

The Rishis in the Upanishades have described It as Pranav – that which can be heard by the soul. In other words, it is one that does not need the tongue or the lips or the palate to sing it. It is singing by itself.

Kabir Sahib says that the Shabd is formless, that It cannot be uttered by the tongue, and that It can be realized only by the inner self.

“Everyone talks about the Shabd, but it is formless. It cannot be spoken. The soul alone can realize It.”

Hazrat Bahu in describing the Shabd also says that the tongue is powerless to speak of the Kalma (Word) which is the same thing. It cannot express It.

“One recites the word orally, he does not do it with the heart. When it is recited with the heart, the tongue cannot express it.”

He again says that the Master has taught us a lesson which is learned without being taught, and which is heard without closing the ears.

“My Master and Guide has taught me the lesson that is being heard without being recited. Without closing the ears, It is heard without any effort.”

Maulana Rumi describes it beautifully saying: “Oh Lord, lead me to the region where your Word is ringing without words, by itself. Oh God, show me that region where the letterless Word is resounding.”
All Religions Teach the Practice of the Shabd

There is mention of the Shabd in all the religious Scriptures. The Hindus describe this Divine Sound as Shabd (Audible God) and as Ashabd (Silent God), or Nad, sound which created the entire universe. The ancient Rishis or sages sang its praises. They called the practice of its melody Shruti, which means that which was heard or is heard. This practice was taught by the Master to his disciple and was then passed on from heart to heart. The Rishis whose teachings are recorded in the Chhandogya and Mundak Upanishads called it 'Udgit' (the song of the Heavenly Regions) or Pranav (OM). This means that Udgit is not a song heard by the senses, but is the Celestial Song heard with the ears of the soul in singing which the tongue, lips and palate are not used.

In the sixth chapter of the Maitri Upanishad, it is mentioned that for contemplation there are two Brahms, one Shabd Brah (Audible God) and the second, Ashabd Brah (Silent God). Ashabd Brah becomes manifest by contemplating on the Shabd Brah.

It is again said, “Close the ears with your thumbs and hear the seven kinds of sounds within you. Beyond these sounds the seeker merges in the Silent Brahm or the Unmanifested Brahm. Those who have tasted this honey have passed beyond the differences of castes and creeds.”

In the Hindu Scripture named 'Yogsandhya', it is said that a Yogi should close his ears with his thumbs and should hear the eternal melody, concentrating his mind on it until he permanently gains the state of Turyapad (the Second Region). This Shabd is of ten kinds. After passing through and beyond it, the Yogis merge in the Unmanifest Sound.

Mention is made of the emanation of Nad or the Divine Sound from the void of Brahm in the sixth verse of the seventeenth chapter and the third verse of the nineteenth chapter of the Chhandogya Upanishad. It is mentioned therein that Rishi Angras revealed this secret to Krishna, the son of Devki.

Guru Amar Das says in the Adi Granth that Prahlad was redeemed through the Shabd.

“He looks after His devotees throughout the ages, Prahlad the devotee knew no prayer or oblation, and, yet he was united with the Lord through Shabd.” (Bhairon M3, 1133-14)

“In spite of his being in the power of others, a seeker is attached to this yoga because of practice during his previous birth, and he crosses the Shabd Brahm.” (Gita 6: 44)

“A Yogi with a truly pure mind, by means of practice through various births, gains perfection and a high state.” (Gita 6:45)

In verse 31 of the Nad Bindu Upanishad, it is written.

“He should sit in Sidhasan and do the Vaishanavi Yoga Practice. He should then hear the Sound from the right side.”
A detailed account of how Shabd should be heard is also given in the Yogsandhya.

There is an inimitable song of praise for the Shabd in the Rig Veda, in the Vakambarni Sukt and in the 30th Sukt of the Atharva Veda. In the Hanso Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, it is said that Nad or the Divine Sound is experienced by a person who does millions of repetitions. Ten kinds of sounds are mentioned, and it is said that nine of these should be given up and the tenth, which is akin to the thundering of the clouds, should be practiced because Par Brahm, the Ruler of the Third Region, is realized through it.

In the Hatha Yoga Pradeepka the Anhat Shabd or Unstruck Music is highly praised in a large number of verses.

In the Vedas, the Divine Sound is called Nad (inner Music) or Akashvani (sound from the sky). In Buddhist Scriptures it is referred to as sonorous Light.

The ancient Greek philosophers also mention this Shabd. Socrates states that he heard within him a sound which took him to indescribable spiritual regions. Plato also mentions it. Pythagoras called it the "Music of the Spheres." It is called Logos (the Word) in Greek.

The Sound which emanates from the silence is called the Word. All things manifested from It. In the Chinese Scriptures, it is called "Tao", meaning the Way or the Word. The Prophet Zoroaster of Ancient Persia while mentioning six spiritual powers referred to one other power called Sharosha. This word comes from the Sanskrit root "Sh" which means the power of the Lord which can be heard. It is like the word 'Shabd' which is used by the Saints of India.

In the Zend Avesta, the book of Zoroaster, there is a prayer which says: “Oh Mazda (Lord)! Send Sharosha to him whom you love.”

Kabir, all the ten Gurus from Guru Nanak onwards, Dadu Sahib, Jagjiwan Sahib, Tulsi Sahib, Darya Sahib, Baba Lal Das, Paltu Sahib and many other Indian Saints or True Masters have taught the practice of listening to the Shabd. The Christian Bible calls it the Word. It says:

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.” (St. John 1:1)

“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the Word of our God shall stand for ever.”
(St. Luke 8:11)

Madame Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, described the Divine Sound as the Voice of the Silence. In the Masonic Order this Logos is described as the Lost Word, which is sought after by every Masonic Master. But it can be had only from the Saints or True Masters of the Word.

It is mentioned in the Holy Quran that God said, “Be, and it was.” In other words, the Shabd appeared and the whole of the Universe came into being. The Persian Sufis have called it Wadan, the Divine Sound. They say:

“If he had not thought of manifesting; there would have been no Sound or world.”
In other words, if the unmanifest had not desired to manifest Himself, there would have been no creative Sound or Power and the world would not have come into being.

The Sufi Saint, Hazrat Inayat Khan, who had access to the spiritual regions, describes the Sound as the Divine Music. He says everything manifested from It and is Its manifestation. In the writings of the Indian Saints it is also clear that all universes and regions were created by the Shabd. The Udgit or Celestial Song is resounding in all. Hazrat Sahib clearly called it “Sot-e-Sarmadi”, or the Voice of God.

Muslim Saints have called the inner Music – Kalma-e-Ilahi, Voice of God, and Nada-e-Asmani, Celestial Sound. Its practice is known as ‘Sultan-ul-Azkar, King of Repetitions, Sot-e-Sarmadi, Voice of God, Sot-e-Nasira, Voice of the Lord, Kalma-e-Ilahi, Voice of God, Ism-e-Azam, Greatest Name, Kalma-e-Majid, Holy Word, and Kalma-e-Haq, Voice of Truth, or that which is heard within. Its practice has been known to a number of sects of the Persian Sufis. There are many references in this context in the writings of Muslim Saints.

“\textit{Oh brave one, bring down the skies to your feet. Listen to the Voice of Silence from the skies.}” \hspace{1em} (Maulana Rumi)

“The world is filled with the Divine Sound, open the portals of your ears; listen to the Eternal Sound; It is beyond the reach of dissolution.” \hspace{1em} (Niaz Shah)

“The Sound is coming from the Divine Home. Why are you entangled in the snares of the world?” \hspace{1em} (Hafiz)

“Take the cotton of doubt out of your ears, so that you may hear the Celestial Sound. This is a Divine Message. What is the Divine Message except hearing the Heavenly Sound within.” \hspace{1em} (Maulana Rumi)

“The Prophet said about the Voice of God, It comes to my ears as do the ordinary sounds. But God has placed a seal on your ears, you hear not the Voice of God.”

It is said of Prophet Mohammed that he heard the Eternal Sound, Awaz-i-Mustaqim, or Anhad Shabd for fifteen years.

“When Mohammed reached the age of 40 years, the signs of his having received the revelation began to appear. According to tradition, he used to hear the Celestial Sound for fifteen years before he received the revelation. He often had divine dreams, and he saw different lights seven years before the revelation. Two years before, he went to the cave at Hara and practiced there for a month.” \hspace{1em} (Iktabas-ul-Anwar by Hazrat Maulvi Sheikh Mohamed Akram Sabri P. 106)

It is again stated on page 106 of the same book that the Prophet practiced listening to the Sound for six years and that Abdul Qadir Jilani practiced listening to the Sound for twelve years in the cave at Hara.

According to tradition, Hazrat Shah Mir Lahori said that it had been stated by Abdul Qadir Jilani that the Prophet spent six years in the cave of Hara in listening to the Sound and that he had himself spent twelve years in that sacred cave doing the same thing.
The Sikh Gurus other Saints, clearly mention the Shabd (Sound). Guru Nanak Sahib says:

“Your ears hear not, your mind is devoid of wisdom, and you know not Shabd nor poise. The egotistical man loses the merit of human birth; and knows naught without the Master.”

(Bhairon M1, 1126-4)

Guru Amar Das has stated:

“They who know not the Shabd are blind and deaf. Oh! Why did they come into the world? They taste not the divine essence, and thus waste their lives. They are cast into the womb again and again.”

(Sorath M3, 601-7)

“Cherish the Guru’s Shabd, oh ignorant one, for redemption and wisdom both come from it.”

(Bihagra Var M4, 550-4)

“There is no company except that of the Master. Without Shabd no one can cross the ocean.”

(Maru M3, 1068-14)

It is clear from the above references that Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others knew of the Shabd, or Divine Sound, although they did not describe it in detail. Hindu sages and others have given some description of the Eternal Sound pervading in 'Anda' (Astral Region) and Brahmand (the Causal Region). The Saints of all religions, however, have described the Sound or Shabd of higher regions also.

The Principle of the Divine Sound

What is this Sound or Melody? What is its nature? Some say that when two things strike against each other, sound is created. Others say that where there is motion, there is sound. Of course, sound is generated by collision and by motion, but the melody referred to by Saints is superior. This melody sustains the universe and is the distinguishing mark of spirituality.

Saints say that the entire universe was created by means of Sound. Muslims say that the word 'Kun' brought the whole world into being. Christians also maintain that the world was created by the Word. This Sound or Melody is conscious. It is the very essence of consciousness. The melody is knowledge and is also the medium for the manifestation of real knowledge.

“Know knowledge and contemplation to be the Melody which is indescribable.”

(Sri Rag M1, 59-8)

This Sound or Melody pervades all. It is even inside stones and wood, as these are made up of atoms and motion is inherent in them. Because of this motion everything constantly undergoes change. The motion itself is the cause of change. In reality, everything is changing. This world changes every hour, every minute and every second.

“Every moment, every hour and every day this world changes its condition.”

Whether we know it or not, a stone continues to change. There is motion in it. Sound is a necessary corollary of motion and, therefore, a stone is not free from the Sound. Both the bodies that we see and those we do not see are in motion. There is, therefore, Sound in all, and the Sound is the essence of all. Whether full or empty, all are full of His Divine Melody. Look at the drum and see how sound emanates from it.
"The Divine Sound fills both the full and the empty. Look at the drum and see how its skin cries out."

This Melody pervades all and is the life and sustenance of all. This current of consciousness is very subtle. It requires equally subtle ears to hear it. A Sufi Saint has very appropriately said:

"Wire is dead, wood is dead, and skin is dead, whence comes this Sound of the Friend (God)?"

In fact, the Shabd or Divine Sound is the Creator of the Universe. All this manifestation is created by this Sound.

"If He had not thought of manifesting, there would have been no Sound or world."

The Beloved is always speaking to you. Alas! You do not listen to Him.”

"My Beloved is always addressing you. Alas! You listen not to the words of the Ancient One."

(Niaz Shah)

The Prophet says, "The Voice of God is resounding in my ears as do ordinary sounds. But God has sealed your ears, so that you may not hear it."

"The Prophet said about the Voice of God, It comes to my ears like a voice. But God has placed a seal on your ears so you hear not His Voice."

This Sound, described as the Voice of God, or the Beloved, or the Friend, is resounding everywhere in the world. Hafiz Sahib says:

"All the seven regions are resounding with this Sound. But fools do not hear It, for the Sound is subtle."

This Sound is resounding in the seven regions but the unwise cannot understand It. This Sound is pure and independent. It is not sustained by anything else. Here in this material region, Maya and mind predominate and the Sound is intermixed with them. The Sound can be realized in the forehead in the Sushmana, the Royal Vein, under the direction of a Guru. The practice of hearing the heavenly Sound is necessary to gain knowledge of the soul. One should listen to the Divine Sound, which is called by the Muslims Saints, Sout-e-Sarmadi, Eternal Sound or Naghma-e-Yazdani, Song of God, and thus reach the region where the never-ending Sound of the Beloved is resounding, having descended from the higher regions. Maulana Rumi says:

"Seek the Sound that never ceases. Seek the Sun that never sets."

Worldly people do not know of this Sound. When one goes within after receiving instructions from a Master, who is adept in the practice of the Sound, one hears hundreds of sounds, while those sitting near him hear nothing.

"He hears within him hundreds of sounds; those sitting near him do not hear any.”

(Maulana Rumi)
These melodies are not imaginary. Those who have practiced the path of the Sound Current, in any age, have described the Melody in similar terms. Even today the ignorant children and new seekers who keep the company of Saints, hear It and bear witness to its existence as an experienced fact.

There is mention of the melodies of the Shabd in the Upanishads. In the beginning of the practice there are loud sounds. They go on increasing and are heard in a subtle form. The sounds in the beginning are those of the sea, thunder clouds, drums, running-water brooks, the bell or the conch-shell horn. (Nad Bindu Upanishad of Rig Veda – P. 33-34)

In the book called Bhakti-Sagar, Saint Charandas has mentioned ten different kinds of sounds, such as the chirping of sparrows and the cricket, the tinkling of small bells, the ringing of big bells, the conch shell, the bagpipe, the cymbals, the reed, the small drum, the flute and the roaring of lions.

In the Hathyog Pradeepika, there is also mention of ten similar sounds such as those of the humming of bees, anklet bells, the conch shell, the bell, the cymbals, the flute, the kettle drum, the small drum, the reed and the roaring of lions.

On page ninety-eight of the Sar Bachan, also there is mention of ten sounds heard in Sahasdal Kanwal (the Thousand-Petalled Lotus):

“The sounds of conch shells and bells come aloud. The wonderful music of the vina and the reed resounds. The sounds of cymbals, drums and kingri are heard. The sounds of drums and tambourine rattle. The nectar rains in thousands of showers; the skies revolve like a wheel.”

Madam Blavatsky writes in "The Voice of the Silence" as under:

“The first (sound) is like the nightingale's sweet voice, chanting a song of parting to its mate. The second comes as the sound of the silver cymbals of the Dhyanis awaking the twinkling stars. The next is as the plaintive melodies of the ocean spirit imprisoned in its shell. And this is followed by the chant of the Vina. The fifth like the sound of the bamboo flute, shrills in their ears. It changes into a trumpet blast. The last vibrates like the dull rumbling of thunder clouds.”

Amir Khusro has also mentioned these sounds, describing them as follows:

“The first is the humming of bees, the second is the ringing of bells, the third is the sound of the conch shell. The fourth that of a big bell. The fifth is the sound of the bell (tall), the sixth is the sound of the flute. The seventh is the sound of the kettle drum, the eighth the sound of the small drum. The ninth is the sound of the clarinet, the tenth is the sound of the roaring of a lion.”

The ceaseless music is of ten kinds,

“The Yogi becomes engrossed in them, and the mind and senses fall away. When the ceaseless music begins to ring, the thieves from the body slink away. The Grace of the Master is upon him. Khusro has merged in the Divine Music.”

These are the sounds at the preliminary stages. The real sounds are those of the bell and conch shell, which are related to the higher regions.
There is Divine Music and Melody in the Shabd:

“The melody of bliss and balance comes from the true inner Sound. The mind is attuned to the truth, and the devotee enshrines in his mind the unfathomable invisible Naam.”
(Sarang M3, 1234-8)

Why do we not hear this Sound?

This Sound is resounding all the time. Why then do we not hear it? The reason is that waves are constantly arising in our minds and we are full of selfhood and pride. We cannot, therefore enjoy the Sound nor do we love the Name of God.

“The mind is entrapped in a whirlpool, the ego is greatly inflated. Such a one is not attuned to the Shabd. Nor does he cherish the Lord’s Name.” (Sarang Var M3, 1247-14)

Maulana Rumi also says that your ears cannot hear the Divine Melody because sins have deadened and defiled the sensitivity of your ears.

“You do not hear the melodies with your ears. The sensitivity of your ears has been defiled by the sins.” (Maulana Rumi)

This inner Melody is the Name of the Lord. It is the form of the Lord which pervades the Universe.

“The Guru’s Word or the Lord’s Name is the panacea for all ills.” (Basant M1, 1189-7)

This melody is also called the Bani (Voice of God) which has existed throughout all the four ages.

“Truth rings throughout the four ages, and Truth is what it proclaims.” (Sri Rag M2, 35-9)

The Voice is present everywhere and has been described as Shabd or Nam. It is very sweet and loving.

“Through the Word, the Name tastes sweet. This is how the Word is known age after age.”
(Sorath M2, 602-13)

Alas! Man remains always in the bondage of the body and its entanglements. Being trapped in gross matter, he does not hear the most subtle Sound of the Lord.

“Alas! You remain imprisoned in the body and do not listen to the sacred Divine Music. It is always calling the soul to return to its True Home. A Sound is coming from the Eternal Abode to call you back.” (Tulsi Sahib)

This Sound is not within the reach of the physical ears, but everyone has the faculty of hearing it within. For this it is necessary to open the inner ears and this can be done by following the directions of the Master.
Those who have not gone within and who are still engrossed in the worldly sciences are ignorant of this Divine Melody. The physical sciences may not be able to prove it, but whatever has been stated above is a fact and can be actually experienced by practice behind the eyes by a seeker by going within the laboratory of the Saints.

**How Can We Hear This Sound?**

If our ears cease to hear the outer sounds and our eyes cease to see the outer sights, then we can hear the call of the Lord. When in this way our thoughts cease to wander out, we begin to hear the inner Melodies and to relish the celestial joy. And then the secrets of the Lord begin to be revealed to us.

**Which is the Place Where the Shabd is Heard?**

There are ten doors of the body, nine are outer and one is inner.

"The fort of the body has nine doors. The tenth is kept secret. The secret door will not open. Only the Shabd of the Master can open it. " (Ramkali Var M3, 954-13)

So long as the soul wanders in the outer nine doors, it is being robbed of its birth-right. It is not able to see the precious inner treasure. There is, however, the tenth door, where the Heavenly Music is heard.

"Oh damsel fair, you searched in all the nine doors, but did not find the precious treasure. Oh Kabir! The nine doors hold it not; it is in the tenth door." (Kabir, Gauri 339-13)

Guru Ram Das also says that one should turn the attention of the soul away from the nine doors and, after controlling the senses and the wandering mind, should take the soul to the tenth door from which a path leads upwards to the Original Home. The Unstruck Music is resounding there day and night, but this can only be heard by following Gurumat, the Master's directions.

"He who closes the nine doors and stills his wandering mind, enters through the tenth door his Original Home. Hears he day and night the Unstruck Music through the Guru's instructions. "
(Majh M3, 124-13)

Guru Nanak lucidly explains that this Shabd transcends Ida, Pingla and Sushmana (inner places concentrated on by yogis) and can be heard only through the Grace of the Master.

"He knows Ida, Pingla and Sushmana. He sees for himself the unseeable. Oh Nanak! The True Master takes one beyond them, He merges him in the Sound." (Ramkali M1, 944-18)

So far as mind, Maya and matter are concerned, the Shabd works in coordination with them. Beyond them it is both subtle and pure.
The Sound is Independent of the Ten Vital Forces (Pranas)

The Sidhas (Yogis) asked Guru Nanak:

“Where is the home of the Shabd, through which is one ferried across the sea of existence? The air is said to be of ten kinds which one of these sustains it?” (Ramkali M1, 944-9)

Guru Nanak replied:

“The Shabd is inside us. It is invisible; wherever I look, I find It. The air issues from the void. The Shabd is not sustained by anything.” (Ramkali M1, 944-12)

The Shabd is within us. It is invisible. Wherever I look, I see It. The air comes from the void, but the Shabd is not sustained by anything. Unless we turn inwards and rise beyond Sushmana (the Royal Vein), we cannot hear It. We can contact the Shabd only in the human body.

“By purifying the mind one crosses this world. This is done by reflecting on the quintessence of the self. They who serve the Master enjoy peace, and Shabd pervades their inner being.” (Ramkali M1, 908-2)

“If one searches the township of the body through the Shabd, one gains the nine treasures of Naam.” (Ramkali M2, 910-1)

The human body is like a radio receiving-set for listening to the Shabd. When we tune in a radio set, we begin to hear a sound. Similarly, when the Master (Satguru) tunes us inside, we become fit to hear the Divine Music. Then, by regulating this set, we hear various kinds of sound.

Sound and Light

Two things namely, Sound and Light serve as guides in the World. These are also called Kalam, (Sound) and Noor (Light). These are the two paths by following which one progresses on the path of spirituality. Both are fruitful. They are related to the practice of listening to the inner Sound and seeing the inner Light. Each has its own place. There is Light inside us and it contains Sound within it. True devotion springs from contact with this Light and Sound:

“When the mind was attuned to the Shabd, it became detached and dispassionate. There appeared Light within and from It emanated the Heavenly Sound which made me a devotee of the True Lord.” (Sorath M1, 634-12)

The Sound and the Light, in reality, are one. Vibrations up to a certain extent produce sound; but if their frequency is increased several-fold, they change into Light. This Sound is the real and basic life-force which sustains the entire universe. This is the Light that lights our dark homes or bodies. It is, however, imperceptible to the physical eyes.

“That thing is beyond the domain of perception.” (Gauri M5, 205-3)

“Without the Sound there is darkness inside. One perceives not the Reality. One is not rid of coming and going.” (Majh M3, 124-13)
It lights not only us, but the whole world.

“The world is dark without the Shabd. The entire world is lighted by it.” (Sarang Var M4, 1250-4)

This Light is within all of us. Christ also mentions that this Light lights all. It does so without any distinction, be one a Hindu, a Muslim or a Christian.

“In Him was life, and the life was the Light of man. And the Light shineth in darkness—that was the True Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

St. Augustine has also described the appearance of this Light within him thus:

“I entered even into my inward self, Thou being my guide, and able I was; for Thou wert become my helper. And I entered and beheld with the eye of my soul (such as it was), above the same eye of my soul above my mind, the Light Unchangeable. Not this ordinary light which all flesh may look upon, nor as it were a greater of the same kind, as though the brightness of this should be manifold brighter, and with its greatness take up all space. Not such was the Light, but other yea, far other from all these. He that knows the Truth knows what that Light is, and he that knows it, knows Eternity.” (St. Augustine)

Kabir Sahib says that without the Shabd the soul is blind and does not find the way, so it wanders hither and thither.

“Blind is the soul without the Shabd. Oh! Where can it go? It finds not the door of the Shabd, so wanders to and fro.”

Zoroaster also mentions the Light and even now Parsees worship the outside fire.

All the great souls whether of the East or the West, who went inside and had access to the inner regions, have mentioned the Sound and the Light. The soul is imprisoned in the cage of the mind and the body. Both Light and Sound are within us. The Sound and Light are related to the two faculties of the soul namely Surat, (hearing) and Nirat (seeing). Surat hears and Nirat sees. In ascending upward through the spiritual regions, Nirat leads and Surat follows.

Light is Faster than Sound

After the maturing of the Surat (the soul's power of hearing) and of Nirat (the soul's power of seeing) the soul is freed from the bondage of the body and rises to the higher regions. It then gains freedom from birth and death. Reference is made to this fact in the Sar Bachan.

“I will follow the lead of Nirat and reach Sat Lok.”

In the beginning the Sound alone is manifest. The Light appears later. In practice also, we first rely upon the Sound, although we begin with Simran (repetition) and Dhyan (contemplation). Their function is to prepare the ground for hearing the Sound. Simran and Dhyan have their own functions, but they merely act as pilots or advance-guards for the bridegroom – the Shabd which alone really counts.
Simran is the key to the practice of listening to the Sound. During his practice the seeker comes across regions in which he is surrounded by effulgent Light. For crossing the brilliance of this Light, the Sound is the guide. There are some regions where it is complete darkness, like Maha Sun, the Great Void. There also the Name given by the Master is the only guide. In these regions, the Sound is the only true pathfinder or guide. It is just like a traveler trying to find his way to a habitation when he is lost in a lonely jungle and enveloped in thick darkness, by following the barking of a dog. The Sound helps the blind seeker within in similar circumstances. This is the superiority of the path of the Sound Current.

Shabd is the Truth

Guru Nanak has described Shabd as Truth. This is because it never perishes. “It is true from the beginning and has been true through the ages. It is true in the present and shall be true hereafter, oh Nanak.”

Guru Nanak says:

“He is One, and the Shabd is His insignia. He can be realized through a Perfect Master.”  
(Basant M1, 1188-14)

Both Guru Amar Das and Guru Arjan Dev support this:

“He who loves the Truth, Loves the True Word too.” (Sri Rag M2, 33-17)

“Listen to me, my friend and comrade; the Master has blest me with the Initiation of the True Shabd.” (Vadhans M5, 576—18)

Shabd is Nectar

The Gurbani also describes the Shabd as Nectar – the Nectar that makes us immortal. This power is possessed only by the Shabd. The Shabd of the Guru is that Nectar, the drinking of which rids us of all our cravings and merges us in the True Lord.

“The Guru’s Word is the Nectar; he who drinks it quenches his thirst. The mind is dyed in Truth, and it merges with the Truth.” (Sri Rag M3, 35-8)

The whole world is senseless without the Shabd and human life is being wasted. The Shabd alone is Nectar which is realized only by a devotee.

“Without the Word is the whole world senseless, and wastes away the opportunity of life. Nanak! The Word is the only Nectar, and only a true devotee finds it.” (Sorath Var M4, 644-6)

The Nectar is overflowing within us but egotistic persons do not enjoy it. They are like the musk deer, which has musk in its navel but wanders about searching for it, being ignorant of its presence within its body.

“The Nectar fills the house, but vain persons know it not. The deer knows not the musk; it wanders in delusion.” (Sorath Var M3, 644-2)
The pool of Nectar is within us. The soul of a man can gain possession of this Nectar through the Shabd and drink it.

"Within you is the well filled with Nectar, draw it out through Shabd and drink it."
(M 3 Vadhans 570-18)

The Shabd is the True Treasure

The Gurbani says that the best of all practices is the practice of listening to the Shabd. This is acceptable to the Lord and leads to salvation.

"The practice of listening to the Shabd is the true spiritual practice." (Majh M3, 114-10)

"The practice of the Guru's Shabd is the true practice." (Prabhati M1, 1344-19)

No other spiritual practice can lead us to Reality. Man is entangled in the darkness of worldly attachments. Guru Nanak says:

"In this world the practice of (listening to) the Shabd is the only true deed. Without the Shabd one is enveloped in ignorance." (Prabhati M1, 1342-10)

In this Iron Age only devotion to the Shabd is fruitful in developing spirituality.

"In the Iron Age know the greatness of the Shabd. By devotion to It pride is removed." (Asa M3, 424-1)

Man can attain salvation only by means of the Shabd. Through It alone man turns from glass into gold and is transformed from poison into nectar.

"By listening to the Sound, glass turns into gold, and poison becomes nectar when the Naam given by the Master is practiced." (Sawayya M4, 1399-10)

In this way, one achieves the mission of his life.

"Fruitful is the life of a god-man who is attuned to the True Word. The Lord illumines his inner self and he abides in peace." (Suhi M3, 755-4)

Shabd is the Lord’s Law and Name

Various names have been used to describe the power of the Lord. Among these are Shabd, Law and Name.

"He who obeys His Law is acceptable to Him. Through the Guru's Word he is blest with the insignia of His Name." (M 3 Basant 1175-6)
The Shabd of the Master is the essence of sweetness and it is realized within.

“Very sweet is the Guru's Word; this Nectar I find inside myself.” (Prabhati M1, 1331-16)

**Shabd is Inexhaustible**

The Shabd has no end. Its supply is inexhaustible.

“He to whom He is kind lacks nothing. Oh Nanak, Shabd is inexhaustible, however much one may spend.” (Shalok M5, 1426-2)

The Guru's Shabd is limitless. It has no end. It is beyond the reach of Kal.

“You are the Friend, the Wise, the One who unites. Through the Guru's Word I praise You. But there is no end to Your praise. Kal cannot reach where the Lord's Name abides.”

(Sri Rag M1, 55-16)

**Shabd is All-Pervading**

The Shabd is within us. It exists in all the Four Ages and is all-pervading.

“Oh Avdhu, in all the Four Ages men devoted themselves to the Sound and became attuned to It.” (Ramkali M1, 908-8)

It is everywhere. Everything is full of the Sound. It is the form of the Lord. It is not far away from us. It hears and sees everything.

“Oh mind, think not the Lord is afar. His presence is always near. He hears and sees all. And He is contained in the Word.” (Asa M3, 429-1)

The Shabd is the Lord's Law which pervades everywhere and is within all.

“Your Law pervades on all the four directions. Your Name pervades even the four sides of the under-world. The Shabd pervades everywhere. We meet You through Your infinite Grace.”

(Malar M1, 1275-13)

**Shabd is Found Within the Body**

The Shabd or Naam is heard and realized by research within the human body.

“If one searches the township of the body, through the Shabd, one gains the nine treasures of Naam.” (Ramkali M3, 910-13)

It is by turning inwards and purifying the mind that the Lord is found.

“By purifying the mind one crosses this world. This is done by reflecting on the quintessence of the self. They who serve the Master enjoy peace, and the Shabd pervades their inner self.”

(Ramkali M1, 908-2)
Guru Nanak, telling us about the location of the Shabd, says that it can be heard beyond Ida, Pingla and Sushmana, through the Grace of the Master.

“*He knows Ida, Pingla and Sushmana. He sees for himself the Unseeable. Oh Nanak, the True Master takes him beyond them, He merges him in the Sound.*”  (Ramkali M1, 944-18)

**How is Shabd Realized?**

(1) Through the Grace of the Lord. He alone realizes the Sound on whom the Lord showers His Grace. The Shabd then manifests within him.

“*When He showers His Grace, the Shabd abides in the heart, and one is rid of all doubts. Body, mind and speech become pure, and the Name dwells in the mind.*”  (Ramkali M1, 944-13)

“*He alone realizes Him whom the Lord unites with Himself. One is then attuned to the True One singing day and night the Guru’s Word.*”  (Malar M3, 1259-8)

For the one to whom the Lord is kind, the Shabd is coined in the mint of Truth, and he alone meditates upon it.

“*The Shabd is coined in the mint of Truth. Those on whom He showers His Grace receive it.*”  (Jap Ji, 8-9)

(2) Through Satsang and the Satguru. When the Lord is kind, we meet a Master who connects our soul with the Sound.

“*By the Lord’s Grace is the True Guru met, and then alone He joins our soul with the Word.*”  (Majh M3, 110-I)

This boon can be had only through the Satguru and His Satsang.

“*He is One and the Shabd is His insignia. He can be realized through a Perfect Master.*”  (Basant M1, 1188-15)

“*The Perfect Master enables us to hear the Shabd. The three attributes are overcome, and one attains the fourth state.*”  (Gauri M3, 231-7)

“*The beneficent Master makes us hear Shabd, which stills the wanderlust of the mind.*”  (Gauri M3, 232-6)

The Master is Himself the Shabd or the Word made flesh. He alone can manifest the Shabd. The Shabd is a boon from the Master. The Master makes It dwell in our hearts. It is impossible for anyone else to manifest It.

“*The Shabd of the Guru can be bestowed only by Him. It cannot be manifested by anyone else.*”  (Sarang Var M4, 1249-8)

The Sound of Shabd is an unspoken language which is constantly emanating from the mouth of the Lord without being uttered. The Master also gives this Shabd to His disciples in the like manner, without using the tongue. Maulana Rumi says: “*The Master behaves in the same manner as God. He teaches the disciples without speaking.*”
The Master points to this indescribable and formless Shabd and makes the disciple turn inward. With His power, He then connects the disciple with Shabd.

(3) The Shabd can be had by giving up pride of knowledge, caste and creed, and by sitting at the feet of the Master:

In order to gain this wealth we have to give up pride of knowledge, and to take shelter at the feet of a Master.

“Give up pretense to knowledge and devoutness; drink the wine from the divine cup.”

Do not let the feelings of 'I-ness', wealth, knowledge, caste, creed or nobility of family or glory come near you. All these lead to stopping of the Sound. Put on the adornment of humility and listen to the Sound, and obtain bliss from its intoxicating powers and sweetness.

If seed is sown in a field which is not prepared, or if it is sown out of season, it does not bear fruit. Similarly, so long as the mind is not rid of its cravings and has not become pure, it does not cease its wandering or running about. The mind becomes pure only through devotion to the Shabd. So long as the mind is divided, there is no success. We neither realize the Shabd, nor see the Lord. So long as the mind is wandering and there is pride and egotism, the Shabd is not heard and there is no love for Naam. Therefore, it is far more necessary to rid the mind of inner uncleanness than to remove outer impurities.

What is Devotion to Shabd?

Devotion to the Shabd consists in turning inward and listening one-pointedly to its Melody. The Sound is subtle, and unless we ourselves become subtle, we cannot hear it. The Shabd is the cause of consciousness. Our soul is a particle of the Lord, and the Lord pervades the whole universe in the form of the Shabd. To connect the soul with the Shabd is to connect the soul with the Lord.

“By realizing the Shabd, the Lord is realized and one's service is fruitful.” (Sri Rag M3, 27-9)

In order to be connected with the Sound, the soul should be devoid of all worldly coverings. Unless we meet a Saint, who is an adept in the practice of the Shabd and obtain the boon of the Shabd from Him, the soul which is entangled in the fetters of the mind and the matter, cannot gain release and return to its Original Home.

Shabd is Realized Only By a Rare Devotee

Everyone desires to see the Lord, but it is only a rare soul that can realize Him through the Shabd.

“How many there are who crave for Your vision. But it is only a rare one to whom You are revealed through the Guru's Shabd.” (Basant M1, 1188-12)
The human body is the temple of the Lord. The Shabd is inside it and can be easily realized. It is the birthright of all. Whether one is rich or poor, literate or illiterate, belonging to one country or religion or another, all can realize the Shabd by receiving initiation from a Perfect Master. After becoming a devotee, we can easily practice listening to the Sound and this practice quickly bears fruit.

“The Lord's temple is also the Lord's shop, embellished with the Word, and therein is sold the Lord’s Name and it is through the Guru that one obtains it.” (Prabhati M3, 1346-12)

“Without the Shabd is the whole world senseless, and wastes away the opportunity of life. The Shabd is the only Nectar, and through the Guru it is received.” (Sorath Var M4, 644-5)

The self-centered man cannot recognize the Shabd because of the restlessness of his mind. He is, therefore, deprived of its taste.

“The restless mind knows not the way. The egocentric is not pure in mind and hears not the Word.” (Asa M1, 415-3)

“The self-centered know not the Name. Without the Name they lose honor. They are torn by duality, and love not the taste of the Word.” (Sri Rag M3, 28-9)

The man of riches is blind and deaf and remains entangled in darkness and doubts, for he does not hear the Shabd.

“The favored of Mammon are blind and deaf, they can never be attuned to the Heavenly Harmony.” (Gauri Var M4, 313-18)

What Does Shabd Do Within?

The Shabd is conscious and consciousness. It is a wave of the ocean of the Lord and man is a particle of His Being. He is related to Him as a part is related to the whole. The Lord is the ocean of super-consciousness, and Shabd is its wave. The soul is a drop of this ocean. The wave of super-consciousness or Shabd attracts the conscious soul towards it and absorbs it. Until the soul, with the help of the Shabd, rises to its Original Home, it cannot achieve salvation. The melody of the Shabd is ringing within us. When the soul is connected with it, it becomes fit to rise from the finite towards the infinite.

The connection between the soul and the Divine Sound is a natural one. There is form and melody in the Shabd and through these the mind becomes still. The soul then becomes absorbed in the Sound and merges in the Lord. The Shabd emanates from the Supreme Lord and through it the soul realizes the Lord. By practicing breath control, we can reach the place of origin of the vital force in the body – the chid akash – but no further. The Gurbani tells us that the Lord is eternal and can be realized only through the practice of listening to the Divine Sound.

“My Master is eternal. He can be seen through the practice of the Sound.” (Gujri Var M3, 509-5)

It is only by realizing the Shabd that one meets the True Lord.

“On realizing the Shabd, the Lord is realized. One's service is then fruitful.” (Sri Rag M3, 27-9)
"Inside of man is the Shabd whereby the Lord can be met." (Sarang Var M4, 1250-3)

The Shabd is the only path that leads us to our Original Home. It is the ship that ferries the soul across the ocean of Existence and takes him in the lap of the Lord.

The Supreme Lord, the soul and the Shabd are a Holy Trinity. The One Lord exists in all the three forms. The soul has no separate existence from the timeless Being. It is a particle of Him.

"Oh Kabir, the soul is a particle of the Lord." (Kabir, Gond 871-10)

In spite of this relationship – that of a particle to the whole – every soul considers itself to be a separate entity.

The Kingdom of Sach Khand is within us, but it cannot be entered without knowing the proper way. We should go within. The way to do this is the practice of listening to the Shabd. It is only by this practice that we can obtain release from the mind and Maya, pain and pleasure, duality and birth and death.

The Shabd is the conscious melody-current of the Lord. It is His form, and It creates and sustains the entire universe. The Shabd is the seed of the entire creation. Whatever is in the seed is also in the tree which springs from it. Everything is within that Eternity. Whatever is manifested in time and space merges in It, and the origin of everything is in the Shabd.

The effect is a form of the cause. The Shabd is the cause. The entire creation is Its effect. What is not in the cause cannot be found in the effect. If a ray of the sun falls on a clean mirror, the entire sun can be seen in it. If our mind is entirely clean and there is not even an iota of egotism in it, then the reflection of the Lord can be seen in it. The rays of the sun emanate from the sun and are not different from it. Cause is always present in its effect. Similarly, the attributes of the Lord are not different from those of the soul.

The true Shabd is Dhun-atmik which means that it cannot be spoken or written. It is resounding within us. It is the same Shabd through which the world was manifested. There is no other method, except the practice of listening to this Sound, of obtaining release from the woe and misery of the world and the cycle of birth and death. This method is the highest and the purest of all methods. One who practices it, also obtains the benefits that accrue from all other spiritual practices. You should seek a holy man who is an adept in the practice of the Sound Current and learn it from him. By its practice you will attain salvation and will be freed from the bondage of Maya. When the inner ground is clean, the Shabd will be heard. But where the Shabd comes from is not known.

Shamas-i-Tabriz says about it as follows:

"A strange sound was heard; It was not from inside or outside. It was not from the left or right, nor from behind or front. It was not from above or below, nor from East or West. It was not from water or air, nor from fire, earth or ether. You may ask where it comes from; it comes from the direction in which you search. You may ask which direction to face. Face the way from which the King comes. That direction where the parched fish remains alive by getting water. That direction from which the hand of Moses appeared like the moon. That direction which ripens the fruits. That direction which turns stones into pearls. The unbeliever turns in that direction in the hour of need. When he feels pain here, he goes in that direction. It is not proper to discuss this, for even the unbelievers would give up unbelief on hearing about it."
Yes! This sound is coming from the direction towards which the soul has to go. Without It the soul wanders in the dark.

"Blind is the soul without the Shabd. Oh! Where can it go? It finds not the door that leads to the Lord’s Name, and so it wanders to and fro." (Kabir)

All the Saints have asserted that this Shabd, which is heard inside, is the means for gaining release from the world. It cannot be had, however, until a seeker is instructed by a holy man who is an adept, and he then withdraws his attention from the nine portals of the body and fixes it on the spot behind the two eyes. This Shabd takes the soul to its Original Home.

A man obtains a new life through the Shabd. Jesus Christ also refers to the new life given by the Word or Holy Spirit but this has been forgotten by our Christian brothers of today. In this very connection St. John says:

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; but it is the spirit of man which is born of the spirit.”

He also clearly speaks about a new life which begins after hearing the Word.

“The wind bloweth where it listeth (wisheth) and thou hearest the Sound thereof; but cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.”

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven. Marvel not that I say unto you, ye must be born again.”

Whenever the Saints come to the world, they emphasize the importance of being born again through the Shabd.

When the Master, at the time of initiation, connects us with the Shabd, we are born again. Guru Nanak has hinted at this in his talk to Yogis:

“By being made to be born again by the Master, my comings and goings ceased.”

(Ramkali M1, 940-2)

The Shabd takes us out of the darkness of matter, cleans us of our accumulated dross and gives us a new life. By the practice of the Shabd, we are rid of this pot of the body and we see a wonderful universe without the use of our eyes.

“By contemplating on the Guru’s Word the thread of my breath was cleansed. I entered my Original Home and drank the Lord's Nectar. I saw a wonderful universe without using my eyes.” (Nat M4, 983-6)

Unless we realize the Shabd we cannot reach the Court of the Lord.

**Time for Practice of Naam Through Shabd**

The best time for the practice of Naam or the Name of God through the Shabd is the early morning hours, when the mind is one-pointed.
“He who contemplates the Naam through the Shabd; and does so in the early morning, giving up attachment to the world; says Nanak, the slave of the Lord’s slaves He wins; while the world loses.” (Prabhati M1, 1330-2)

Benefits of Practice of Shabd

The practice of listening to the Shabd brings a number of beneficial results. The Shabd is a storehouse of power. It is the essence of wisdom. Those who are connected with It and are sustained by It are true sons of the Lord. The Shabd cuts all the bonds of the soul and leads to its salvation. It is the Bread of Life which descends from Sach Khand (the True and Imperishable Region). Those who partake of It, become immortal and attain everlasting life. Those who engage in the practice of the Shabd need no outer light like that of a lamp or the sun or moon, for the Light of lights appears within them.

(1) The Mind is controlled by the Shabd and is rid of lust and anger:

The mind is not controlled by millions of other efforts. It is very difficult to subdue it. It cannot be conquered by outer practices such as recitals and austerities, rites and rituals, rules of hygiene discipline, pilgrimages, fasts or alms-giving and charities. It is very hard to overcome the mind. In the Ramayana, the sage Vashisht says to Lord Rama thus:

“If someone should say that he had lifted up the Himalayas, even though it is impossible, I would believe him for a moment. If he should say that he has drunk the whole of the ocean, even though it is impossible, I would believe him. But if he should say that he has controlled the mind, I would not believe him.”

Just as a spark sets fire to a heap of hay and reduces it to ashes in a moment, so also are the stored sanskaras (tendencies) created by karmas of previous births burnt up in a trice by listening to the Shabd. Just as a deer is enraptured by the sound of a drum or a moth, seeing a bright light, sacrifices itself, similarly does one attain bliss on hearing the Celestial Music of the inner Shabd.

The mind is fond of pleasure, but it gives up its ramblings when it gets delight of the inner Shabd.

“The mouse-like mind is incapacitated by drinking the mercury of the Name of the Lord.”

There is no other way to still the mind except by listening to the divine Sound.

“The mind is not stilled without the Guru’s Word.” (Asa M1, 415-8)

“The mind is kept absorbed in the Shabd. This is the most pious deed one can do.”
(Ramkali M1, 908-5)

Through the practice of the Shabd the turbulent waves of the mind subside.

“The Shabd calms the waves of the mind; it then easily merges in the Shabd.”
(Sarang M3, 1233-13)

Without realization of the Shabd the mind continues to rove sometimes in the skies and sometimes in the nether-lands.
“So long as the mind does not realize the Word, one moment it flies to the skies, and the next it sinks to the underworlds.” (Prabhati M1, 1345-13)

By listening to the Sound all worldly bonds and external attractions are removed. The mind gives up its base desires, and one conquers the five enemies – lust, anger, attachment, greed and pride. When the soul gains release from these passions, it soars upward to the spiritual regions.

“Becoming fear-free with the eternal Lord in his mind, he plunged the spear of Guru’s Word into his heart, he shattered the citadel of the five – Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment and Ego.” (Swaya M3, 1396-3)

“It is by praising the Name thru the Guru’s Word that one is dyed in detachment. He conquers the five enemies. Fruitful is such a song.” (Shalok M5, 1425-1)

According to Kabir Sahib, he then becomes engrossed in contemplation of the Lord.

“He burns the five sins and is attuned to the Lord.” (Kabir, 1366-14)

(2) The Shabd is a remedy for the disease of egotism:

The entire world is suffering from the disease of egotism and cannot get rid of it without the Shabb.

“All the world is suffering from egotism. It cannot be cured save through the Word.” (Bhairon M3, 1130-7)

Egotism is an incurable disease, but the Lord has placed its remedy within man. If the Lord bestows His Grace, then alone can one practice the Shabd as directed by the Master and destroy egotism.

“This ego is a chronic disease, which yet can cure itself with ease, when Grace from Lord descends. Through Guru’s Word the soul ascends, from self thus gets release.” (Asa Var M1, 466-18)

“The Guru’s Word is the only antidote for the poison of egotism.” (Bhairon M3, 1133-12)

“Oh Nanak! The Shabd burns away egotism.” (Basant M1, 1189-2)

Shams-i-Tabriz also says that release from egotism can only be gained by the practice of the Shabd.

“When you hear the sound of the drum, He releases you from egotism and envy. You suddenly hear the call of love, and it releases you from the miseries of life.”

(3) Happiness and Peace are gained through Shabd:

All the world is running about in search of happiness and peace. The bodily pleasures are momentary and are ever-changing. Whatever pleasure is felt through the senses is due to the attention of our mind being concentrated on the objects that give rise to the pleasure. That alone is our own pleasure, which is felt as a result of stilling the mind. The sense pleasures are like a dog that crunches a bone. Its mouth bleeds and it enjoys the taste of its own blood but thinks that the enjoyment is from the bone.
The soul is conscious. How can it ever derive pleasure from unconscious things? It can be really happy only on uniting with super-consciousness. The Shabd of the Master is a current of super-consciousness. Whenever the soul touches It, it experiences true happiness.

“*The Guru’s Word leads to joy and peace. The devotee of God is never in pain.*” (Asa M3, 361-4)

There is coolness in the Shabd that makes both body and mind very peaceful.

“*Within me rage the fires of passion, bless me with Guru’s Word that I am cooled. My body and mind are immensely comforted, and rid of my maladies, I sleep in peace.*” (Kalyan M4, 1326-1)

It appears as if those who practice the Shabd drink the ocean of coolness.

“*He who contemplates on the Guru’s Word, becomes an ocean of coolness. His egotism is killed, and release is obtained.*” (Malar M1, 1275-2)

When the soul contacts the Shabd it is comforted and merging in the Lord it attains bliss.

“*In the meeting of the Soul with the Shabd is peace. Imbued with the Lord one is in bliss.*”
(Sri Rag M1, 62-4)

By the practice of listening to the Shabd, pure eternal bliss, which is imperishable, is obtained.

“*Attuned only to the Shabd, one abides in bliss day and night.*” (M 4 Malar 1265-8)

“*He who meditates on the Guru’s Word obtains great bliss. Blessed is the ever happy bride who is filled with the love of her Lord.*” (Asa M5, 370-16)

(4) Many other benefits result from the practice of the Shabd. Desires, hopes, cravings, attachments and delusions are destroyed.

“*The fire of desires is quenched by the Shabd which washes off the sense of duality the natural Waj.*” (Gauri M1, 222-15)

“*The Shabd burns away all our hopes and desires, and one dwells on and repeats only the Lord’s Name.*” (Asa M1, 413-19)

“*The Shabd burns all attachment and delusion; it makes one dear to the Master, and one’s body and mind are in bloom.*” (Basant M3, 1173-18)

A man is never alone when he realizes the Shabd. Whether he is at home or anywhere else, his Lord, with His Divine Music, is always with him and is calling him back to his original Home. By practicing the Shabd, all diseases, vices and sins are removed; lust, anger and the other passions do not get a foothold; one becomes very pure and completely detached. Shabd is the support of life and death. The fear of death is banished. At the time of death the devotee discards his body just as one casts aside old clothes. Through the power of the Shabd one is freed from the cycle of birth and death. The misery caused by Kal and the fear of death end. The difficulties of the inner path are resolved; the karmas of millions of births are destroyed and one crosses the ocean of worldly existence.
By the practice of the Sound, Light appears within and the lotus of the heart blossoms. One realizes his true Self and attains the state of dying while living. He transcends the domain of the three attributes and time. He goes into trance in the void, and the tenth door opens. He learns the sign of the Lord's door. He is dyed in the hue of the Lord, and true devotion and divine bliss arise within him. He is honored in the Court of the Lord. He attains salvation and realizes the most blissful state.

He then dwells in his original Home and is absorbed in Truth. He realizes the Lord and becomes happy here and hereafter.

Those people who are without the Shabd are in a pitiable condition. They continue the round of the cycle of eighty-four. They are beset with doubts and suffer privations at the hands of the king of death every time they die. They forever remain miserable and helpless.

The waves of the ocean of Shabd are surging in each one of us. Those who drink of its waters are no longer troubled by thirst or hunger and gain eternal life. This was the Water of Life that Christ offered to the woman of Sychar at the well so that by drinking it she might quench her thirst forever. It has also been described as the Bread of Life, by eating which one's hunger is fully satisfied. The Shabd is that medicine which is the panacea for all ills.

"The Name is the panacea for all our diseases." (Gauri M5, 274-18)

The Gurbani says that if we do not search for the Shabd and our inner eye is not opened and if we do not hear with our inner ear the true voice of God, what use is our human life?

The Timeless (Anhad) Shabd

The Shabd is of two kinds – ahad and anhad. Ahad is the Shabd or sound which is produced by striking two objects against each other. All outer sounds fall in this category. Anhad is that which is free from this limitation and is independent. The Muslim holy men who call it Anhad, say that it is a continuous Sound which is not perishable.

"Listen to the unending Sound, It is free and unending." (Niaz Shah)

As its beginning and end are without limit, It is called Anhad (without limit). The Supreme Lord is silence. He is the ruler of the entire universe. Shabd is unmanifest there.

"He is the Lord of all places. His Shabd rings there." (M5 Sorath 621-12)

The Lord is without form. He manifests as Unending Sound.

"Anhad has no form, no sign; It is a subtle Sound from the Immaculate One." (M1 Asa 351-2)

There is Light in It and melody springs from it.

"In the cave of equipoise have I my seat, and rings there the luminous and unending music." (M5 Asa 370-15)

"The melody of Anhad (Unending Sound) rings loudly. My mind is filled with the essence of the Lord." (M1 Ram Kali 879-7)
This melody of Anhad resounds all the time without a break.

“Within him rings the Anhad Shabd, and he is then imbued with God's Essence.” (M4 Jetsari 698-3)

“The Anhad Shabd is ringing day and night.” (M1 Ram Kali 904-7)

The melody of Anhad is very blissful and is beyond description.

“Myriads of blissful melodies of Shabd continue ceaselessly, of whose delight there is no limit, no end.” (M5 Sarang 1236-11)

Many kinds of melodies are resounding at the door of the Master.

“It rids us of the woes of myriads of births, and we hear the Anhad Shabd ringing at His Court.” (M5 Bhairon 1137-10)

“O! What is the sign of the Lord's Abode? There rings the Anhad Melody.” (Beni Ji Ram Kali 974-7)

This Anhad Shabd is resounding in the sky of every mind.

“The Anhad (Unstruck Music) is ringing at His door. The Name of the Lord is abiding in every heart.” (M5 Vadhans 578-14)

“The devotee abides in heaven. He looks upon all alike, for he is dyed in the Unstruck Melody.” (M1 Ram Kali 907-7)

When the soul withdraws from the nine doors of the body and enters the tenth door, it can hear the Anhad Music.

“He who closes the nine doors and stills his wandering mind, enters he through the tenth door his Original Home. Hears he day and night the Unstruck Music through the Guru's instructions.” (M3 Majh 124-12)

“When I closed the doors of my body, I heard the Anhad Music.” (Kabir, Sorath 656-10)

Bhai Gurdas Ji also describes the Anhad Shabd.

“The soul is absorbed in the Shabd. It becomes satisfied on hearing the Melody.” (Var 19 Pauri 8)

“I realized the Anhad Music when my soul abided in the Shabd.” (Var 19 Pauri 21)

The Anhad Shabd is perfect knowledge and contemplation. It is a recital of God's Name. One gets salvation by listening to It.

“One listens to recitals about the Lord. One gets perfect knowledge and contemplation. The Anhad breaks all the worldly bonds. By its melody the devotee realizes the Lord.” (M5 Sahi 783-12)

The unending music is wonderful. It cannot be obtained by our own mental processes or activities. It can only be had as a result of the Grace of the Master. It is the supreme gift of a Perfect Master.
“The melodious unending Music is heard only by following the directions of the Master.”
(M1 Sri Rag 21-2)

“The unending Music is wonderfully pleasing; It is the supreme gift of a Perfect Master.”
(M5 Bhairon 1143-6)

“O Nanak, he who has a Perfect Master hears the Unending Music.”
(M5 Asa 393-16)

This music is the means of uniting the soul with the Lord and when it manifests itself, the soul enjoys the bliss of the Lord.

“The Unstruck Music resounds at my True Home. I sit on the same bed with my Lord. O Nanak, I have found the Lord. He is my spouse and I live in peace.”
(M5 Gauri 247-18)

It is only a Gurmukh who can hear this Music. It cannot be heard by an egotistic person.

“Lo, the Lord has manifested His wonder, and I hear the Unstruck Melody of the Word. The self-willed have strayed from the path. To God oriented ones the mystery is revealed. The Creator produces the cause that causes all of this.”
(M3 Bhairon 1154-2)

Through the practice of listening to this Music, all sins, impurities and afflictions are removed. The pains of many births are eliminated and one gains bliss. Doubts and fears are destroyed. One enjoys heavenly bliss and dwells in his Original Home. The souls of God-men leave their bodies and become absorbed in the Unending Music. This Music is the gift of the Lord. If it is so ordained, one gets it through the Master.

The Five Sounds (Shabds)

There are numerous Anhad Shabds. They manifest within, with the Grace of the Master.

“Many were bewildered on hearing the Sound of the Unending Music within themselves.”
(Bhai Gurdas, Var 13 Pauri 4)

Of these numerous Sounds, five are the genuine ones. The Gurbani speaks of these five Sounds.

“By following the Master, the five Sounds ring within. By a great good fortune one hears them.”
(Bhai Gurdas, Var Kama; M 4 1315-18)

“The Unstruck Melody of the Five Sounds rings within me, and I live ever in God. Oh absolute, formless and dispassionate one, this is how Kabir performs Your worship.”
(Kabir, Parbhati 1350-13)

“The five pure Sounds are played. Banners are waved and conch shells are blown.”
(Beni, Ram Kali 974-18)
The Lord is described by the Gurus as 'Panch Shabdi' (One who has five Sounds).

"The Lord of the Five Sounds came; and the happy marriage was celebrated." (M1 Suhi 735-15)

The Five Sounds emanate from the Lord and are the means of attaining Him.

"They contemplate on the Master of the Five Sounds." (Jap Ji 3-13)

Bhai Gurdas says that after transcending the five elements of the material world – earth, water, fire, air and ether – five Sounds are heard.

“On transcending the five elements, one is welcomed by five beautiful Sounds.”
(Bhai Gurdas, Var 29 Pauri 6)

These five Sounds are however heard through the faculty of the soul and only by a Gurmukh. He unites with the Lord through them:

“He follows the directions of the Master, his soul hears the five Sounds.” (Bhai Gurdas, Var 6 Pauri 18)

“He is the Supreme Lord. The five thunderous Sounds are His insignia.” (Bhai Gurdas, Var 7 Pauri 5)

All the Saints have taught their disciples to listen to the Five Sounds. Hafiz Sahib has described them as five melodies.

“Be silent and hear the five Sounds coming from the sky. The sky lies beyond the six centers of the body and the seventh heaven.”

Shams-i-Tabriz also taught the observance of these five Sounds. He says:

“Every day the five melodies are being played at the door of the Lord. If we hear the beating of that drum, we are freed from envy and egotism.”

He again says that if a man were to transcend the six centers of the body and reach the seventh sky, he would hear the five Sounds resounding there.

“One hears the Five Melodies in the seventh sky when he strikes his tent and leaves the six regions.”

This Shabd or Sound is really one. In the lower parts of the creation, where the proportion of mind and Maya is greater and the Shabd creates the regions of subtle and gross matter, its melody or Sound Principle changes. Since there are five primary regions in the creation, this one Shabd appears to be five. There are two Shabds up to Trikuti; two from Trikuti to Satlok; and the fifth one is in Satlok. These five Sounds become perfect there. By the practice of listening to them according to the directions of a perfect Adept, the soul becomes one with the five Sounds and unites with the Lord from whom they emanate. Guru Amardas says:

“The highest good is gained through the Grace of the Master, when the Merciful One plays the Five Melodies.” (M3 Bhairon 1128-17)
The melody of the Five Sounds is resounding within every human being. He who merges his soul in melody and ascends to the sky hears the Five Sounds.

“Where praises of the Lord and the Creator are sung, there the melody of the Five Sounds resounds.” (M4 Sarang 1201-3)

The Masters say that the melody of these Shabds is heard in the forehead.

“I was Your servant in my previous birth; how can I deny You now? At Your door rings the Melody of Equipoise, and on my forehead is inscribed Your stamp.” (Kabir, Ram Kali 969-19)

Where exactly is this Sound in the forehead? It is present between the two eyebrows, in the so-called Royal Vein, through which it is heard.

“Seated in the home of Sushmana (Royal Vein), one hears this Melody; attuned to the state of the desireless void.” (M1 Malar Var 1291-2)

The God-intoxicated Muslim faqirs called this place Mehrab (arch) in Persian. The Vein has also been described as the Shah Rag or (great Royal Vein). Khwaja Hafiz Shirazi writes:

“While bowed in heartfelt prayer, when I remembered You it happened that a sound came from the arch.”

Bulleh Shah says, “Allah is nearer than the Royal Vein.”

In the Holy Quran also it is written:

“I am nearer than the Royal Vein.”

The devotee who practices listening to the Shabd gains a twofold benefit from its Music or Sound. Firstly, he experiences the Truth as taught by the Master. In the second place, he recognizes the Music or Sound and by its harmonies recognizes the region he is in. These different harmonies are like milestones on the road which save the traveler from wandering astray.

The path of the Five Sounds can be learned only from a Master who is an adept in the practice of the Sound and who has himself merged in it. The ability to hear the Sound can be had only by following His directions.

“By following the Master the Five sounds ring within me; by great good fortune only one hears the unending Music.” (Var Kama M4 1315-18)

The Sound that is heard in each region is made plain at the time of initiation by the Master. After this, as the disciple continues to practice and ascends through the higher regions, he sees everything himself with his own inner eyes. It is only as a result of great good fortune that the Five Melodies play in this body and such a body is really blessed.

“In that fortunate home ring the Five Melodies, after the Lord has manifested His power.” (M3 Ram Kali 917-12)
These five Shabds are heard only by those whom the Lord wishes to hear them. The ability to hear them does not lie in the power of man.

“The melody of the Five Shabds is wonderful; the Lord Himself makes it heard.” (M1 Maru 1040-4)

These five Sounds are unceasing, perfect and all pervading.

“The Five Sounds resound without a break, and are unending and blissful.” (Bhai Gurdas, Var 3 Pauri 16)

“The Five Shabds are perfect. The unending Music is wonderfully blissful.” (M5 Ram Kali 888-17)

“The unending Music is all-pervading.” (Kabir, Ram Kali 971-7)

All these five Shabds combine to form one perfect Shabd. The mind can be stilled by It, and all the three gunas (qualities) are removed and one becomes free from birth and death and enjoys bliss.

“When the soul meditates in the company of Saints, all the Five Shabds then become one.” (Bhai Gurdas, Var 6 Pauri 10)

“The One Shabd is as dear to me as life, It frees us from rebirth.” (M1 Bilawal 795-14)

“He obtains everlasting bliss by merging with the One Shabd.” (M4 Malar 1265-8)

“When the three gunas are silenced, one is in communion with the One Word.” (M3 Sri Rag 66-6)

Those who have become attuned with the One Shabd are indeed blessed.

“Blessed are those who listen to the harmony of the One Shabd.” (M1 Ram Kali 879-4)

The Inner Music

The Lord is the Shabd in form and various kinds of unending Music are always resounding at His door.

“By good fortune the Lord is my spouse. The unending Music plays at His Court.” (M5 Bilawal 846-7)

The creation came into being through the Shabd. In it there are several regions. In these regions Shabds, which are special to each region, are heard. The Saints have given details of all the sounds. In the Gurbani also there is a pointed reference to them.

We find that bells are rung in Hindu temples. They are also tolled in Christian churches. In the Sikh Gurdwaras shell horns, conch and bells are used, and drums are beaten even today. By research, it can be learned that the outer musical instruments are imitations of the inner ones. Ponder deeply and you will find that Hindu temples have domes and a bell hangs in the middle. Whoever enters the temple rings the bell. In the human head, which also is like a dome, a devotee hears the Shabd at the seat of the soul. In the same manner, Christian churches have high steeples in which a bell is hung. These are based on the shape of the nose. In the human body at the root of the nose, when the soul is concentrated at a place between the two eyebrows, one hears the sound of the bell. Khwaja Hafiz of Iran said of this bell:
“Nobody knows where the home of the Beloved is, but there is a region where the sound of the bell is always ringing.” (Hafiz)

The Gurbani also says:

“You hear the ringing of His bells in all the four directions.” (M5 Asa 393-8)

Bells are also found in Buddhist temples. The ringing of bells, in fact, is mentioned in the Scriptures of all the religions. The fact is, that when one goes within the body, the temple of the living God, one hears a sound which is like the ringing of a bell. Similarly, various other sounds are heard in the inner regions. Of these, five Sounds are the principal ones. These inner Sounds are inter-related. After receiving instructions from an adept in the Sound-Current technique and carrying out spiritual practices, one can reach the region from where the melody of the Five Sounds is emanating. This is the abode of the Supreme Lord. The musical sounds are, in a way, milestones on the way that leads to the country of our Lord and which tell us how far we have come. Bhai Gurdas mentions the inner Music in his verses:

“The soul played the music of the conch shell horn.” (Bhai Gurdas, Var 20 Pauri 11)

“When the unending Music is played on the horn, the Light appears.” (Bhai Gurdas, Var 22 Pauri 13)

“Oh! Hear the ringing of the bells, the unending Music divine, beyond the tenth door.” (Kabir 29)

“Those who enjoy a natural trance and see the inner Light, contemplate on the unending Melody of the ringing of the bell.” (Kabir 222)

Khwaja Hafiz also mentions these inner musical sounds. He says:

“Oh! Listen to the singers in the garden. How harmoniously they play, on harp, lute, guitar, pipe, flute and reed.”

He mentions many different sounds ranging from the chirping of sparrows to the music of the harp, lute, guitar, pipe, flute, and so on.

By listening to the Melody of the inner music, the soul is elevated. The secret of this can be obtained from a Master. A disciple becomes a Gurmukh by listening to this Music and gains access to his Original Home.

**Outer Music and Dance**

Musical instruments are widely used in spiritual assemblies. All religions give them a special importance. Yogis use them, and so also do Muslims. Music is extensively used by Hindus, Sikhs and Christians. Wherever sadhus gather, they use musical instruments. People sing hymns with instrumental accompaniments and go into ecstasy over their beautiful melodies and harmonies. The mind becomes enraptured with this outer music but it does not become conscious nor is it awakened.

“One dances in myriads of ways; the mind, however, remains deaf and blind. For whom is all this dancing done?” (M3 Asa 364-14)
In the first place, some people have made a profession of religious singing and dancing.

“Some dance to music to earn their bread, and fall to the ground again and again.”
(M1 Asa Var 465-8)

“One ties bells to his feet, and for earning his bread dances before God. He performs fasts and the six kinds of actions; observes religious disciplines to impress the temple visitors. He sings the words with his tongue, but his mind does not sing of the Lord.”
(M5 Maru 1003-5)

There is greed in the minds of such persons and their delusions and doubts are, therefore, not removed. No Light appears within them, nor do they know the Reality.

In the second place, such singers always remain engrossed in practicing their tunes and correcting them. If you ask them, you will find that many are worried lest they break their voice or the melody so that they continue to impress their audience. They do not even pronounce the words correctly. It is a mere show for them.

“The Yogi strikes the string with his hand, but the vina produces no melody.”
(M4 Asa 368-1)

The audience, moreover, can also understand the hymns only if they are already familiar with them. Otherwise, they do not understand their spiritual import, and know only the tunes and their melody. The Saints do not accept this form of worship. They point out that outer music does not lead to contemplation. Truth is not realized. Egotism is not lessened even a little bit, and one gets no real or lasting peace.

“By listening to this vina one does not obtain a composed state of mind; nor does he realize the Truth. By this vina peace is not gained, and pride is not banished.”
(M3 Ram Kali 908-16)

The time wasted in correcting the tunes and rhythms and in practicing them could, with greater profit, be spent on the practice of the Name, according to the directions of the Master.

“Why should I search for anklet bells and play on a stringed instrument when the time between coming and going is so short? Why not cherish the Name? Why arrange the five or seven notes to produce some melody? Wasted is the time it takes to select and memorize a melody. My mind sings the praises of the Lord. Why should one dance and stretch out one's hands and feet?”
(M4 Asa 368-11)

To raise one's hand in ecstasy, or to cry, or to beat the body in an excess of grief, or to dance—all these are merely external expressions. The attention is not taken inside. The outer sound can help one in gathering the scattered attention; but it takes the heart to a center which has no settled place of its own. The outer music is a trap that makes us forget ourselves and the Lord. Beethoven, the great composer, said, “Music is the mediator between the spiritual and sensual life.” By listening to the outer music we find ourselves entangled in an imaginary world created by the player or the singer, but the inner attachment to the world is not broken and cravings are not destroyed. The Gurbani throws particular light on this point and tells us that even though we are enchanted by outer sounds and are attracted by them, even though the whole world is enchanted by beautiful outer music, one who listens to it remains within the domain of the three gunas and wastes one's life. Without the true and all-pervading inner music one always remains in misery and ever suffers at the hands of the billows of Maya.
“The world indulges in strife, and is swayed by music. Abiding in the three attributes it comes and goes. Without the Lord's Name one comes to pain.” (M1 Ram Kali 905-6)

“The Shabd rids one of the waves of Maya.” (M3 Maru 1049-6)

The Saints have, for this reason, not advised the practice of listening to outer religious music and dancing and being swayed by them. They have instead laid stress on the inner love of the Lord.

“Some dance to the tinkling of their ankle bells, others fast, wear rosaries and observe disciplines; some anoint their foreheads with sandal paste, but I, the poor one, contemplate on the Lord.” (M5 Ram Kali 913-3)

Muslim holy men have also stressed the necessity of giving up external music and relying on the internal ancient melody.

“Remove the cotton of doubt from your ears, so that you may hear the Celestial Music.”

“O brave one! Bring down the sky to your feet; listen to the Voice of Silence from the skies. Alas! You remain imprisoned in the bodily prison, and do not listen to the sacred Divine Music.” (Maulvi Rum)

Bhai Gurdas in his hymns says in this connection that so long as one remains immersed in external music, the true voice or melody of the Unending Music will not be heard.

“As long as you are engrossed in external music, you will not hear the Unending Music.” “Bhai Gurdas, Kavit, Savayye, 312”

When one hears the external music, one becomes intoxicated like a deer which is trapped. It cannot then be said that he knows the secret of the inner Music.

“By listening to the external music, one becomes trapped like a deer. He becomes happy-minded, but knows not the secret of the inner Sound.” (Bhai Gurdas, Kavit, Savayye, 412)

By transcending the external music, the devotee becomes merged in the unending Celestial Music.

“On transcending the external music, one merges with the Unstruck Music.” (Bhai Gurdas: Kavit Savayye, 11)

We transcend the three gunas by becoming absorbed in the inner Music. The Divine Music breaks our worldly fetters and we become truly pure. We float like a lotus on the waves of Maya, and like a duck living in water fly away with dry wings.

In the Gurbani the external music has been called poisonous music or poisonous sound by which one gets afflicted with the venom of Maya.

“The tongue and the eyes are the snares of Kal, by hearing the poisonous music the ears are poisoned. Without the inner music we are led astray day and night.” (M1 Gauri 227-10)

“One is pleased by the sound of external music. The mind however, is indifferent to Music in praise of the Lord.” (M5 SuhI 738-16)
The Saints have clearly stated that one should give up external music and remember the Lord, so that one may be honored in His Court.

“Give up external music and remember the Lord, so that you may be honored in His Court. Oh Nanak, the Gurmukh meditates on Brahm (God); and God's Grace rids the mind of pride.” (M4 Bilawal Var 849-7)

The external music is the trumpet of Maya. The egotistical people become engrossed in it.

“What is the power in the man-made music? It is all the false trumpeting of Maya.” (M5 Gauri 178-2)

According to the teachings of the Saints, one should become absorbed in the melodies of the Name. Only the singing by one who really knows Him is fruitful. All else is useless.

“The singing by him, who has faith in Him, alone is fruitful; he obtains honor in His Court.” (M4 Suhí 734-15)

The Gurbani says that it is the rhythm and the dance of the Name or Shabd that banishes Maya and worldly attachment. All other music and rhythms are futile.

“Let the mind dance strengthening its devotion, and keep the measure as Shabd wills; this is the true dance by which one loses love of the Maya.” (M3 Majh 121-18)

“The mind sings the song of Maya; it hears external musk for many ages. Without the Name the mind remains deluded.” (M1 Asa 414-15)

The true music is that of the inner Sound, which is played without hands and feet. It is beyond the seven harmonies of the outer music and through it the Truth is realized.

“It is played without hands or feet. One is really blessed when one realizes this Shabd.” (M1 Asa 412-10)

The Gurbani says that the melodies of the unending Music, which lead to salvation, can only be obtained from Saints by a rare devotee.

“Your devotee sings Your praises and dances. He plays the unending music on the rebeck and tambourine, accompanied by cymbals and ankle-bells. He washes the feet of holy men and places the dust of their feet on his forehead. He surrenders body and mind to the Master and obtains the true wealth. He who listens with faith is freed from birth and death. Oh Nanak, an awakened devotee is freed from hell by such a dance.” (M5 Asa 381-11)

Some Saints also used external music. They used it for gathering seekers and delivering their discourses, because there is a great attraction in it. But these Saints then turned the attention of the devotees to the inner Music by means of the outer music.
Action Without Desire
Chapter 10

What Is Action (Karma)?

Before we are able to understand the doctrine or the principle of desireless action, we must understand what really is meant by the word "action". Action means something done. Before you do anything, there is a desire, an intention or an urge in your mind. The desire is first formed within the mind, and then it is executed outside. A simple example will make this clear:

A person got it into his head that he wished to kill another person. This constituted his intention or internal action. In order to execute or fulfill the desire, he took up a weapon and killed the man. This was the external execution of that internal action. The internal action emits certain currents (the effects are in one’s aura even if one does not execute the action externally), so that it makes a deep impression not only on his mind but also causes a disturbance in the environment around him.

We should therefore keep careful watch over our mind and consider how we can attain the state of desireless action. The teachings of the Saints and those contained in our religious Scriptures enable us to make the proper choice.

Action plays a great part in spiritual matters. A man has a physical body, but he acts through his mind. Whatever mental attitude one has, becomes manifested in action. “Thought is the keynote of our success”, was said by the great philosopher, Emerson. Therefore, the actions of a person are governed by his thoughts. And good or bad actions are the results of the same degree of good or bad thoughts which he entertains.

Consequently, a person becomes a good person or a bad one as a result of his good or bad actions. And all this is done in accordance with one’s own desires. Actions, therefore, mold our lives in virtuous or evil directions so long as we perform such actions with desire.

All religions have laid great emphasis on desireless actions. The Bhagavad Gita, or the Song of the Lord, is replete with teachings of desirelessness or desireless action. It says: “In this world one should take refuge in God after renouncing all desires and all actions arising there from.”

Hindu philosophy also teaches that in order to attain salvation it is necessary to get rid of all desires and the fruits of all worldly actions caused by such desires. The same teaching of karmaless action is contained in all holy books.

In Chapter 6, Verse 29 of the Bhagavad Gita we find:

“The aim of human life is that a man should put his mind to yogic action. He should have fraternal thoughts for all fellow beings and should consider himself to be present in all, while everything pervades in him.”
Chapter 18, Verse 51, Lord Krishna says:

“Oh Arjuna, under the influence of your ego you believe that you should not fight. This idea of yours is fallacious, because the action which you do not wish to perform, you will have to do under the compulsion of your nature.”

It is most difficult to understand the basic principles of Karma Yog. You will find two viewpoints: One is that an action can only be performed through intention or desire, and without these no action can be executed (because whenever a person acts, it is difficult for him to get rid of the thought of reward or punishment). If, therefore, a person wishes to perform a desireless action, he can only do so by complete detachment from the world.

The Gita also says that it is not possible to give up the outer actions so long as the internal desires are not killed. Actually, a true Sanyasi (Anchorite) is one who has renounced all his desires. So long as a man has not achieved such a state of desirelessness, he should act and leave the results of all his actions in the hands of his Almighty Father. In that way he will not be subject to the consequences of his actions. In addition to this, he should engage himself in spiritual practice according to the instructions of a Perfect Master, because when he has made some progress on the Spiritual Path, his karmas will begin to disappear.

If it were necessary to renounce everything in this world in order to obtain the state of desirelessness, it would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for everyone to be able to do so. Very few indeed would be able to achieve it, and all praise would be due them.

At the moment, however, we have to consider how the large majority of people who regard such renunciation as beyond their reach, should achieve desireless karma. For such persons it is necessary to perform all action in the Name of God.

To obtain release from the fetters of karma, it would be necessary for such persons to engage in spiritual practice according to the instructions of a Perfect Master and to inculcate in themselves the spirit of devotion to the Lord and the Master.

Actually, all actions that are performed under the influence of the ego – whether good or bad – are equally responsible for the ties of attachment which bind an individual to this world. Even in the Gita it is stated that good and bad actions are equally responsible for binding a person. The fetters may be of iron or may be of gold, but both have the same effect of binding. Good actions may temporarily give us a reward in heaven, and bad actions may bring us the punishment of hell, but the bondage of transmigration remains. So long as a person considers himself to be the doer, he is weighed down by the shackles of karma.

A person who renounces all desires and the fruits of all his actions, becomes independent of all actions and their results.

“Oh Arjun, one whose mind has no thought that ‘I am doing it’ and whose mind is not engrossed in worldly attachments and worldly desires, such a person – even if he should kill everybody – does not kill anybody and is not bound by the result of his action.” (Gita, Chapter 18, Verse 17)
To say, “I am actionless” is easy, but to be able to achieve this state is most difficult.

“Oh Arjuna, renounce all self-interest and consider reward and punishment alike. Engage yourself in spiritual practice and then perform the action. Such action is free from effect, and you should perform all your actions in this manner.” (Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 49)

“A person who attains this state of mind is free from both sin and virtue. You should, oh Arjuna, always act in such a manner, because it is this type of action, which is called ‘Karma Yog’, the science of Karmaleess (Re-action-less) Action.” (Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 50)

“Those persons who do karmas (actions) in this manner are freed from the ties of transmigration and attain the highest form of Salvation.” (Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 51)

Then Arjuna asks:

“Oh Lord, if you hold that detachment of mind is superior to karma, then why do you throw me into the whirlpool of actions?”

Lord Krishna replies:

“Man does not become karmaless (without action) by simply renouncing actions or by not doing them, because a man cannot live even for a second without doing some action. The mental currents create actions in man at all times. One who forcibly suppresses his physical self from performing actions is deceiving himself, for his mind cannot be restrained permanently in this manner. Therefore, that person is really great who conquers his mind by withdrawing it from worldly desires and thus acts with disinterest as far as the fruit of action is concerned, but interested in serving the Lord only. He performs his prescribed duties as indicated in his moral or religious code, because to act is far better than not to act. The body is given to us for the purpose of action, both internal and external.” (Gita, Chapter 3, Verses 1, 4, 6, 7, 8)

Action is inherent in the mind and in the body. So long as the mind is not conquered, it is difficult, if not impossible, to be karmaless. Mind is restless. It is impossible to make it motionless even for a second. Therefore, it is impossible for anyone to be free from mental or physical action.

We have to act for the benefit of our own body and for the benefit of others. Otherwise, we would be a burden on society. Therefore, it is essential for human beings to act. History reveals that Saints have always practiced and approved of such actions. To remain “actionless” while acting is the main puzzle which must be clearly understood.

A person who has conquered his mind will be able to control his physical actions. One who is free from attachment and hatred is a genuinely karmaless person. The Gita lays great emphasis on the ideal of surrendering oneself to the Lord in order to become actionless.

“Whatsoever you do, whatsoever you eat, whatsoever you give, whatsoever you worship, whatsoever penances you perform, Oh Arjuna, surrender them all to me, because by doing so you will be free from the consequences of actions (you will be actionless) and, traversing the path of renunciation, you will attain liberation and will merge in me.” (Gita, Chapter 9, Verses 17, 18)
Surrendering Everything to the Lord

This is the first step towards the path of devotion because if everything is surrendered to Him in all humility, we are released from the load of karmas and become worthy of realizing Him within. But so long as the record of karmas is not obliterated internally by destroying our ego, we cannot go beyond the three gunas (qualities), and consequently cannot become actionless. Actions are pure only if performed without any desire for reward. And one who performs his actions in this manner is actionless even while acting. Such a person achieves God-Realization.

How can we attain this re-actionless state? How can a person be released from the bondage of attachment? How can the cycle of births and deaths, which is the necessary consequence of our actions, be made to cease? And who can understand the enigma of ‘re-actionless action’ even while acting? All these questions are answered in the Scriptures by a simple reply to the effect that these things can be understood only if one becomes a Gurmukh.

What is a Gurmukh? - one who surrenders himself to a Guru (Master); that is, one who lovingly and implicitly follows the instructions of a Guru. The Guru bestows the gift of Naam, by the practice of which one goes beyond the reach of the three gunas (qualities), burns away his ego, and attains the true state of “actionlessness”. Thus, by the Grace of the Master, the load of karmas is lightened.

Karma or action, is of three kinds: Sanchit, Pralabdha and Kriyaman. Sanchit is the store karma; Pralabdha is the fate karma; and Kriyaman is the fruit karma. Store karmas are the results of actions of past lives, which have not yet been paid for nor assigned. Fate karmas constitute that portion of the results of actions in past lives which have been allotted to our present life, and on account of which this human body has been given to us, that is, for undergoing the results of good and bad karmas according to our fate. Kriyaman constitutes the new karmas resulting from actions which we perform in this life. In other words, while undergoing our destiny (fate karmas) we are daily incurring new karmas as well, the results of which will be undergone in the next life as fate, or part as fate and part as Sanchit, in some future life.

Our own actions are responsible for the good and the evil, the pleasure and the pain that we undergo, as well as for our being born into this world in a high or a low species. “As ye sow, so shall ye reap.” We are happy as a result of good actions, because we must bear the fruit of our own actions in thought, word and deed.

One cannot escape the result of his actions by performing them in secret. The consequences of such actions have to be borne some time or other. It is therefore clear that whatever weal or woe, joy or sorrow we experience, it is all due to our own actions, and we should not blame anyone else for it. How can a person hope to achieve good results out of bad actions? Anyone who does so is laboring under a mistaken idea.

Dhrita-rashtra (a king who was blind from birth) was once asked to what action in a past life he ascribed his blindness. He replied that he could see as far back as all the actions of his past one hundred lives, and in all these lives there was no act which could have resulted in his blindness. Lord Krishna then granted him his own inner vision for the purpose of seeing beyond his last one hundred lives. Only then did Dhrita-rashtra find that in well over a hundred lives back he had performed a bad deed for which he was born blind in this life.
What can one do about the store of karmas lying latent through hundreds of past lives? The cycle of karmas is constantly on the move, and the results of our actions are brought forth and have to be paid for even after hundreds and thousands of lives.

The ocean of karmas is fathomless. It is almost impossible to obliterate all the store karmas. But when we meet a true Master, He clears the accounts of all our karmas by inculcating in us the spirit of doing actions without any thought of reward. When we do our spiritual practice according to the instructions of the Master and surrender ourselves completely to Him, we cheerfully undergo our fate karmas and create no new karmas to be undergone in a future life. The store karmas are gradually destroyed by the practice of Naam or Shabd. Sometimes the Master helps us in bearing the load of our fate karmas so that what might have been a fatal stab becomes a pinprick, with the result that we undergo our karmas without much pain or mental anguish.

In this manner all our karmas are eventually liquidated by the Grace of the Master. At last we are relieved of the load of karmas and achieve salvation by crossing the ocean of life. Only while living in this world and doing desireless actions do we become ‘actionless’.
Previous Actions  
(Karmas)  
Chapter 11

In India almost all religions and communities, namely, Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, and others, believe that a person undergoes pain or pleasure as a result of his own previous actions, and he bears the consequences of the actions performed in his present life, in the future.

Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans do not believe in the transmigration of the soul, nor in the Law of Karma. They believe that God is the Creator and the Lord of the entire universe. Just as a potter makes a pot or unmakes it at his will and the pot has no say in the matter, so is it up to God either to grant salvation to His creatures or to keep them all in ignorance. It is also their belief that since God is independent, nobody has the right or power to interfere with His actions nor does anybody know about His doings. These matters are beyond human ken and would best be left alone.

But the Saints in India have very clearly indicated the pros and cons of the Law of Karma. It is a theory of cause and effect, which operates throughout the universe. Emerson and other philosophers, and also professors of physics, have called it the Law of Compensation.  
“As ye sow, so shall ye reap.”

Whatever a person speaks has a two-fold effect. One is the action, and the other is the reaction. The reaction resounds in and near the speaker and creates the same type of thought-currents in his environment. Thus whatever thoughts – virtuous or wicked – emanate from him, they engender their exact resonance. This is an inviolable and unrelenting law, which operates in connection with both animate and inanimate objects alike. It cannot be erased.

Karma is also a process of working out one’s credits and debits. If we take from somebody, we have to give to him in return, and under this principle fate karmas are formed; and by this our ups and downs in life can be explained. Pleasure and pain, poverty and riches, sickness and health, taking and giving, are all the result of such actions and have to be paid for. If one is not able to pay off in this life, he will have to do so in some future life.

A person dies but the scroll of his actions does not perish. The account of all such deeds is imprinted upon the soul which, after death, is still enveloped in an astral body. The soul leaves the body at death, but the accounts remain with it until they are cleared.

In Hindu philosophy this is known as Awagawan or Ghaurasi, meaning the coming and going into the eighty-four lakh species of life. The Mohammedans call it ‘Tanasukh’. Saints of all communities have accepted and preached the principle of transmigration. Shamas-i-Tabriz, a Muslim Saint, says:

“I have grown a number of times as a blade of grass, and I have seen the eighty-four sides of life.”
Shamas-i-Tabriz also says:

“We live in this universe, and in various births we wear different garbs. Sometimes we come into one specie and sometimes into another, but we are all a part of the Creator. In other words, we came into this world and we left this world hundreds and thousands of times, because this universe is a workshop with exits and entrances.”

Again:

“Oh man, apart from my present parents, I have had nine fathers and have seen fourteen mothers. I have also seen myself happy in the devotion of my Lord. Even now, I have flown away from my real Abode. Oh my sons, I have lived in the seventh heaven with gods for many ages. If I were to tell you the entire story of my births and deaths, I would say that I appeared in seventy different species. And if you were to inquire from me the story of my past lives, then I would say that I have grown a number of times as a vegetable.”

Further:

“Transmigration is simply the coming of the soul into different species to enable it to carry out its allotted task according to its own karma. The soul emerges from the great ocean of life and returns to it. It is a drop from this ocean and assumes a human form, after which it goes back and merges itself into its Original Home.”

Maulana Rumi says:

“The Negative Power has created a vast web of transmigration, which is woven around three gunas, and in that net actions with their reactions play a very prominent part.”

Tulsi Das says:

“As is the action, so is the reward.”

We are all bound down by our fate karmas. Many people are good, and they perform good actions because of their fate karmas. Others are bad and perform bad actions on account of their fate karmas. They are all powerless to do otherwise. Even if an opportunity to do a good deed comes their way, they ignore it. They do not feel the necessity of the Master and the Lord.

Satsang is essential for spiritual progress. Good as well as bad persons are influenced by Satsang and make progress because of it, each according to the three gunas (qualities) predominant in him.

No specie below the human form is free to act. But human beings have freedom of action, consistent with their fate karmas. They can therefore take advantage of the power of freedom of action to a certain extent.

But the question arises as to how can one do it? By attending Satsang and by fully imbibing its teachings, we are able to gain freedom from some of our karmas. However, the shackles of our karmas, or the results of our own actions, are very strong. Even incarnations (gods and goddesses) are not free from them.
The Law of Transmigration is irrevocable, and the results of good or bad actions are borne even by Brahma himself.

In the time of Kabir Sahib, the great Sage, Ramanand, who was aware of all his previous lives, knew that since in a previous life he had impaled a rabbit on his spear and dragged it for some distance, he was to pay for that deed in his present life. It so happened that the same rabbit came back to this world as a human being and was a Minister to the King at the time. Whenever Ramanand thought of the dire consequences of his previous action, he would tremble and become unhappy. One day Kabir Sahib asked Ramanand the reason for his anguish. Ramanand then spoke out his heart and related the whole story of the previous life, as well as the fact that he was to die by being impaled on the spear of the Minister and dragged through the streets until the last breath of his life.

Kabir Sahib assured Ramanand that he would help him and then went to the house of the Minister and remained waiting outside his gate. One day the Minister asked Kabir the reason for his squatting there day after day, and Kabir Sahib narrated the whole story to him.

The Minister was also an evolved soul and had knowledge of this incident in a previous life. He assured Kabir Sahib that although it was not possible for him to remit the punishment of death for Ramanand, he would not have him dragged. When Ramanand was told about this, he heaved a sigh of relief. History tells us that in due course the country was invaded by Sikandar Lodi, and while Ramanand was sitting at his window, he was shot dead by the Minister during the attack on the city.

The principle of the karmic law, or action and reaction, has been described in the Adi Granth Sahib in terms of Palabdh or Fate karmas. It has been said that we are all helpless in the face of our fate karmas. Whatever a man does as a result of his Pralabdh, he does under the influence of his fate karmas. Such is the irrevocable law of the Negative Power.

"Man performs such actions as have been imprinted on his forehead, as a result of his actions in previous lives, and he cannot evade them." (Adi Granth, Maru 5, 1102-17)

Guru Amar Das Ji has also said:

"God Himself forces His creatures into destined paths of karmas (fruits of previous action) over which they have no control and which cannot be effaced. Whatever is destined to take place, must take place." (Adi Granth, Sorath 3, 601-9.)

"We have to meet certain people, we have to part from others. This meeting and parting is also in conformity with the Law of Karma. It is on this basis that the functions in and of this world are performed." (Adi Granth, Jap Ji, 6-19)

It is also as a result of previous actions that we incarnate as human beings or as lower species. All this, as well as our meeting and parting, is in accordance with our fate karmas. Whatever has been ordained will be performed by us. But from Satsang we get solace and sustenance. We meet a Master only if we are destined to do so. It is through His noble company alone that we receive the Elixir of Naam and attain God-Realization.
Our inner eye is shut, and we have imprisoned ourselves behind high and thick walls. We make ourselves subject to the dictates of our own mind rather than to the advice of the Saints. If we are destined to meet a Master, we do meet him, surrender ourselves to him and follow His Path. We repeat the Holy Names and we love Him. As a result, we behold the Light of Naam within.

“If your fate karmas justify meeting a Master, then alone we meet Him, and following the Path, we worship at His Feet and gain more merit than by going on the pilgrimage of sixty-eight holy places.” (Adi Granth, Mah 1, 147-13)

“Only if it is in our fate do we get to a Master, do we accept Him as a Master, do we surrender ourselves completely to His Will, and also does He unite our souls with the Audible Life Stream.” (Adi Granth, Suh 3, 757-2)

We are powerless to change our destiny. Whatever is destined to our fate must happen. We shall meet the Master and remember the Lord only if we are destined to do so. People who follow the dictates of the mind have worldly thoughts and objects dominating them. And those who follow the dictates of a Master have the predisposition for God-Realization imprinted on their minds.

“The cycle of transmigration is dreadful and it is beyond the comprehension of human intellect. The possibility of escape from fear of death is in the hands of the Supreme Creator, Sat Nam. The individual is incapable of breaking these fetters of karmas. Freedom from them lies in the hands of God, and by the Grace of the Lord alone are the shackles broken, for not even a small leaf can move without His Will.” (Adi Granth, Mah 1, 59-16)

“By our fate karmas do we move about in this world; undergo pleasure and pain; incarnate into different lives, take to slander and become arrogant and devoid of love and devotion. Consequently, we fail to achieve our only goal in this life, which is God-Realization.” (Adi Granth Sahib, Sukhmani, Mah 5, 280-13)

There are people who are not destined to meet a Master in this life on account of their fate karmas. Such people would not care to meet a Master, even if He were in their very midst. As a result of such an attitude and on account of their fate karmas, they continue their wandering in the cycle of births and deaths in various species.

Fate karmas are the result of actions in our past lives, as is repeatedly and vividly brought out in the Adi Granth Sahib. Our fate is imprinted on our foreheads through these previous karmas.

What is really meant by “past karmas”? The Scriptures tell us that God gives us a physical body – either in the human form or in that of a lower specie – and we come into this world in order to reap the fruits of an allotted portion of our past karmas. In whatever manner He wishes us to do this task, we do exactly that way, because that is the way it is written in our fate.

“Nobody can escape one’s destiny or fate. God alone is free and He manages the whole world by His Command.” (Adi Granth, Suh 4 736-3; Sorth Mah 1, 8, 59-8-19)

We understand that innumerable souls are living in Sat Lok – the region of Pure Spirit, free from dissolution, and also in the lower regions which are subject to dissolution. What was the previous karma or action, as a result of which these souls were placed in one region or the other? How did these regions come into existence? When were they created? The answers to all these
questions are beyond the limits of time and space, and it is not possible for anybody to find them. We can only, in all humility, ask Him who is the Creator of this universe and who sent the souls into these regions. God is beyond causality, the law of cause and effect; therefore we cannot comprehend Him.

Hafiz says:

“You should think only of the bliss which you get from the Nam of your Master, and should pay no attention to the secrets of this universe nor of the regions beyond, for all this is beyond the ken of intellect.”

If one is in a house that is on fire, he will first think of the quickest way of getting out of it before enquiring as to who set the house on fire and when it was set on fire. The answers to these questions can be determined after he has escaped from the burning house. In the same manner, we can find the answers to these questions after we have achieved our goal. The only thought that should occupy us at present is how to terminate this bondage and attachment.

Then why should we ask, “Why is this Path? Why is that Goal? How and when were this Goal and this Path made?” All this will be solved automatically when we reach our destination. At present, the only possible answer to all these questions that arise in the mind is that God created all this out of His own Free Will.

Whatever actions are performed by the souls that have been sent to the regions of dissolution, their fruit will constitute their fate, written in indelible letters by the pen of our Lord God. And by that fate the souls have been sent into the upper or lower regions. It has become their destiny as a result of actions performed in their previous lives. It can be said with certainty that the souls which descended into the regions of dissolution and then ascended to the highest regions by the Grace of God, are superior to the souls residing in the upper regions.

The Scriptures of the Muslims and the Christians have stated that God has created man superior to all gods and goddesses, who must bow before him. This is a concession that He has granted to the souls that degenerated from Him into the human form.

Action is in the hands of the one who performs it, but the Grace and the Blessing of God are the right of only a few, gained through His Mercy alone. It is no doubt true that human beings have freedom of action to a certain extent, but the key of such actions is in His Hands. And so long as we do not have His Grace, we poor mortals have no power to achieve anything, less so to realize Him.

It follows therefore that the Originator and the root of all actions is God Himself, and He cannot be realized by our own efforts alone. We can realize Him only within ourselves by the Grace of a Master. Grain is ground when put between the two parts of a grindstone, except the few grains that fall into the central shaft and thus are saved from being ground into flour. Similarly, we are saved from the cycle of births and deaths if we cling to God and enjoy His Grace and Blessing.

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