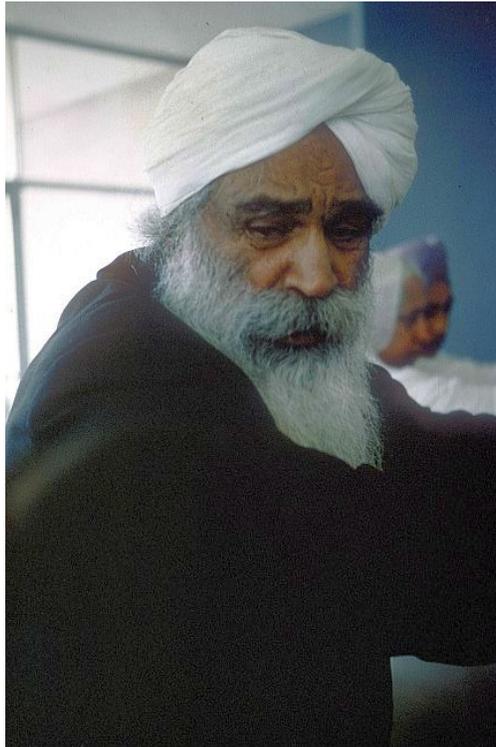


Dye Your Prayer Carpet in Wine

The following is an excerpt from Circular 7, long out of print, and served as an introduction for a long discourse on a hymn of Guru Ram Das Ji. It contains some beautiful stories of the great Masters and was originally published in the March 1972 issue of Sat Sandesh.

This is a hymn composed by Sri Guru Ram Das Ji, and like all his other hymns this one too is characterized by a peculiar devotional attitude. In the talks of all the Saints can be found a tinge of "devotion to the Master" and this devotion too, can be found in all religious and holy scriptures. It does not surprise us therefore to find in all the talks given by Sri



Guru Ram Das this singular exposition of devotion to the Master, for in him love for the Master reached a culminating point. A simple incident in this respect is on record as under:

When Guru Amar Das was 125 years of age, each of his disciples hoped that he would succeed to the spiritual leadership when the Guru died. Each one thought himself to be the most devoted amongst the Guru's followers. The Master, of course, knew all this; great men often employ peculiar ways to bring home the ignorant and the recalcitrant.

With the object of putting them to the test, the Master called these disciples together and ordered them to build *tharas* (small platforms or terraces). No sooner was the

order given than each one of them selected a suitable spot and began building the tharas. When the tharas were completed Sri Guru Amar Das Ji ordered His followers to demolish their work, and then again instructed them to build others, this time in a different place. This process of building and demolishing was repeated several times after which most of the disciples left the work. Those who always perceive things from the level of the sensual plane, with never an opportunity to introvert and witness the greatness of the Master within, made all sorts of conjectures with their limited intelligence and thus wavered on the path of the Master.

Sri Guru Ram Das Ji, however, held on with steadfastness and perseverance to the work of setting up and demolishing the terraces as the Master directed. He knew that there should be no "why and how" in carrying out the orders of the Master, for in his eye Sri Guru Amar Das Ji was no ordinary person and he had himself established this during his spiritual experiences. His co-disciples however, began speaking ill of the Master who was so fastidious in the preparation of tharas which after all were of no consequence to them at all, and felt that the Master had lost his wits owing to dotage.

These poor people could hardly realize what mystery lay at the bottom of their Master's strange request. They could not understand the greatness of that Enlightened Soul. The underlying purpose was in fact to find a real aspirant who could safely be entrusted with the spiritual legacy, one who was above and beyond the range of mind and intellect.

History tells us that Sri Guru Amar Das Ji had the terraces built and demolished no less than seventy-two times, and when the people said the Master was not in His senses, Ram Das Ji, with tears streaming down his cheeks, said:

In this wide world Master alone is a living personality. If He too is not in His wits, alas! What could happen to us who are wholly dependent upon Him for salvation?

In the course of time spiritual leadership was duly bestowed upon Sri Guru Ram Das Ji and this hymn is his composition.

Nowadays many *mahatmas* (great souls) are initiating people, but they little know the responsibilities which initiation carries with it. It is not child's play, nor does it depend on riches, power, knowledge or worldly grandeur to bestow initiation. As the Great God is hidden from view, even so is it with the real and perfect Saints in whom His Light manifests itself. Their greatness does not depend upon the opinions or recommendations of others; such souls are free and independent and freely bestow their spiritual riches on whomsoever deserves it.

In these times they do not hold tests as Sri Guru Amar Das Ji did, for they are the sole judges, and the spiritual heritage is passed on to one who either deserves it through his past *Sanskaras* (actions), or one who is specially fitted by the Master for the purpose. They do not come to establish a new religion and they preach from no particular script; from their celestial abode they come with a law peculiar unto themselves, and this is why the worldly people often fail to understand them. As for the strict trials and tests of fitness, it is gratifying to know that these have been done away with during this *Kali Yuga* (Iron Age); but whenever necessary they do put searching questions to the aspirants.

So long as these Masters remain in their physical raiments they are not limited by this as is a slave who is confined to the galleys. The worldly people, entangled as they are in the meshes of the senses and worldly pleasures, regard them also as being bound within the

limitations of the body and the body's attachments as they themselves are.

The world is not governed by blind laws, nor do the Saints talk of or do things without a pole of set principles. But the labyrinth of intricate rules and regulations is so bewildering that one feels lost in it. Often, however, we try to find a way out by the study of the holy scriptures, or by carrying on a search, which usually proves fruitless. When all efforts fail we involuntarily raise our hands in prayer for our rescue, and as the Universal Law of Demand and Supply is in operation everywhere this cry is no sooner heard than the Master appears on the scene with his own uncommon laws and regulations which are paid no heed to by the men of the world.

The rules and conduct of the Great Souls are very simple and straightforward. Hazur used to tell of the *Kazi* (*Kotwal*, or Censor of Morals) in Persia, who by a turn of fortune was compelled to leave his country with his only daughter. On the way the caravan was attacked by robbers who killed many in the party; and in the looting that followed carried away the daughter of the Kazi with a view to selling her for money. The Kazi, though wounded, escaped with his life, and in a sorry condition reached a town where he began to eke out a bare living. The Governor of the town, on learning that the new arrival was learned in religious law, sent for him and made him the Kazi of the town.

Time is a great healing force and gradually the memories of friends and relations, of deaths and losses fade away from the memory of a person. He either busies himself in rehabilitation and adjustment to new surroundings, or if touched deeply he turns towards God alongside his worldly pursuits. The Kazi had a heart rending experience and sometimes he would find time in all his multifarious activities for devotion to God in solitude. Thus several years passed.

One day a few theologians appeared before the Kazi and complained that Hafiz, a great religious devotee in Persia, was guilty of blasphemy and spoke things against the Koranic injunctions. They asked that he should be tried and sentenced for heresy as he would lead the people astray from the path of rectitude and thereby endanger religion itself. The Kazi, after hearing the complaints, inquired as to what the accused preached, and was informed that he very often repeated a half-couplet which was nothing but un-Islamic. He would say: *Bai mai Sajada rangin kun, garat Pire mughan goeid.* (Dye thy prayer carpet in wine should thy Master so ordain.) As the use of wine was an act of sacrilege, a teaching to the effect that the prayer carpet be dyed in wine was nothing but a horrible crime in direct opposition to the religious tenets and tended to corrupt the morals of the people. The Kazi heard this with grave attention and inquired the address of the devotee. He told them that he would himself go to the man and request him to stop his pernicious teachings.

The next day after discharging his daily religious duties, the Kazi went alone to the man he had heard of, and after formal salutations he sat before him and said: "O thou respected being, I, thy servant, have received a complaint against thee from people who charge thee with leading others astray from the path of religion. Wouldst thou stop all this?"

The Fakir replied that he only repeated a half-couplet before each of his visitors, which enjoined them to dye their prayer carpets in wine should a Master so direct. The Kazi requested him to change or complete the couplet by adding the second half to it so as to clarify the meaning. At this the Fakir directed him to another religious Fakir whose abode was on a hilltop, who in turn told the Kazi that he would complete the couplet if he

(the Kazi) would spend the night at a particular prostitute's house.

This request came as a double-edged shock to the Kazi. He, as the saying goes, had come with a request for the abstinence from the observance of fasts (Mohammedans observed these to gain religious merit) but was asked to offer prayers as well! To die the prayer carpet in wine was in itself a sacrilegious thing, but to spend the night in a brothel was intolerable blasphemy. The Kazi was indignant and on the verge of an outbreak of passion, when the thought of all his learning and his respect for the Man of God kept him under restraint. He tried to think of a way out of the strange predicament in which he found himself. He had often heard that the mysterious utterances of holy people are filled with hidden wisdom and that they utter nothing in vain. These thoughts prevented him from taking any hasty action against the man, and he therefore determined to fully investigate the position first.

Reaching his home he accordingly sent word to the prostitute that he would spend the night in her house. When she received the message she was beside herself with joy at the thought of such a renowned visitor, and that night when the Kazi appeared she presented a young girl for his entertainment. As the Kazi looked towards this girl he saw that she was weeping and asked her what the matter was. Seeing the tears stream down her rosy cheeks, he consolingly told her that he would not lay a finger on her, but asked her instead to relate, without fear, the tale of her woe. At these words the girl gathered courage, and after wiping her tears she informed him that she was a poor orphan girl from a noble family. For a long time she had been tended by prostitutes who were, this very night, using her as a helpless instrument in their nefarious trade. So far she was spotless and requested the Kazi to spare her the

ignominy, and as she concluded her story the tears once again welled in her eyes.

The Kazi felt very sorry for her and inquired as to how she came to be with the prostitute, and where her original home was so that he could restore her to her parents. The girl then narrated her story in full and told him that when she was eight years of age she had accompanied her father on a caravan journey. The caravan had been waylaid by marauders who had murdered most of the persons, wounded many others, plundered their belongings, and had carried her off and sold her to a prostitute.

In those days such incidents of people being waylaid and robbed were very common, and the Kazi had himself been such a victim some years earlier. He made up his mind to restore her to her parents and inquired of her place of origin, which strangely enough turned out to be his own home town. When she told him the street and the locality he was very surprised at this remarkable coincidence, but when she gave the name of her father, the Kazi, now beside himself with surprise and joy, drew the girl towards him in loving embrace, for it was his daughter who sat before him. That night they spent in relating to each other their experiences, and the following day they both went to the religious devotee to thank him.

The Kazi prostrated himself before the sage and confessed that it was impossible for men of the world to understand the wisdom of the Great Souls. All worldly learning was of no consequence before such men, and it was only by implicitly following the sage's injunctions that he had been able to locate his daughter. He expressed his utter inability to show his gratitude for the great favor bestowed upon him and asked for future guidance and instruction. Thereupon the devout man directed him to go back to Hafiz and ask him to complete the couplet by adding the second half of it. This Hafiz did: *Ke Salik be*

khabar na baud. Ze rah-o-rasame manzalha. (As the Master Traveler on the Path is not ignorant of the twists and turns on the Highway.)

Thus the Kazi established his faith in that good man and from then onward became his disciple. The truth then, is that only a fortunate person can understand the meaning of their apparently stray and off-hand remarks. Every word uttered by a Saint is pregnant with unalterable truth which lies far beyond the human ken.

They are the mouthpiece of God and whatever they utter comes to them from above, though it may appear to be coming from mortal throats.

A Hindu poet has expressed the same idea in a simple and lucid form:

Whatever the disciple does in accordance with the instructions of the Master; that forms part and parcel of his devotion.