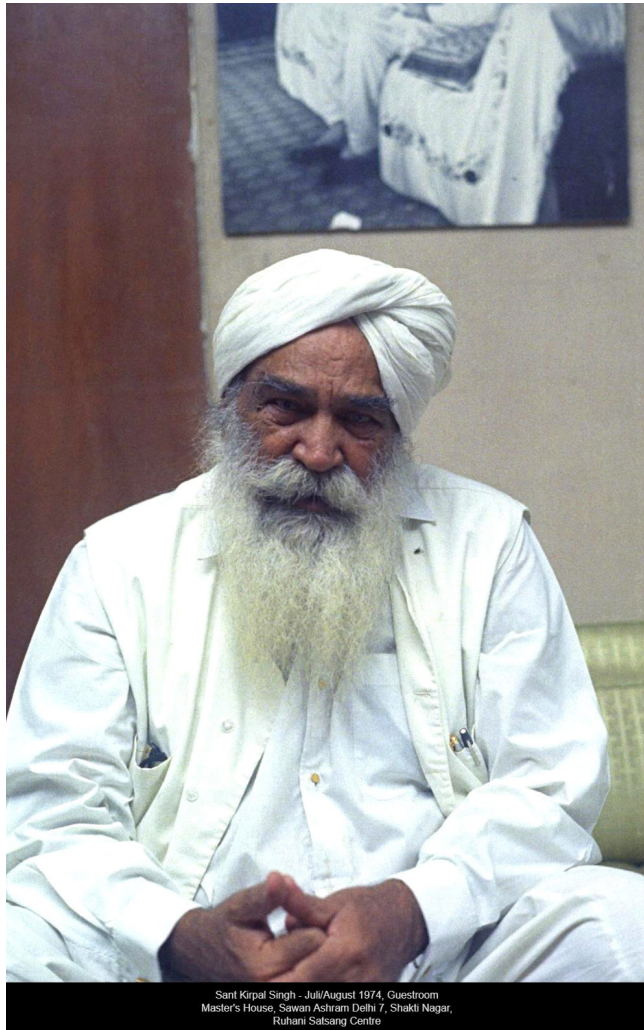


The Real Reality

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The awakened souls see the world in its true colors. They see from the level of the spirit, immanent in the world. But what do we do? We see it topsy-turvy. Why? We are not yet awakened to the Reality. The Reality in us is yet confined and cribbed in the body. We have not been able to separate the soul in us from the body. Hence, we look at the world from the physical level only. This is



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the great hiatus between the two ways of looking at the world. We have taken the physical mold as something real and, as such, the physical world around, too, seems to be real. The scriptures, however, tell us that the world is unreal. By "Reality" they mean what is eternal, unchangeable, and permanent (*Sat*). The worldly-wise say:

*If there is any paradise on the face of the earth, it is here.
O, it is here and nowhere else.*

They generally tell us: "Sweet are the pleasures of this world; who knows what lies in the beyond?" Babar, the first Mughal Emperor of India, would open his drinking bouts with his favorite expression: "O Babar! drink life to the lees. Who knows when we may not be." This is an Epicurean way of looking at life — eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow ye may die. This, then, is one way of looking at life. The other is that of the sages and seers. They do not speak from the level of intellect. They do not give philosophical dissertations. They are, however, very good observers. They speak from the level of common-sense. They see the world drifting into changing colors. They look at our pitiable condition; and from the anguish of their heart give a clarion call to stop where we are.

Man, like a coin, has two sides. He is an embodied soul. The soul is his real Self, but the body is not though he possesses it. The body is the valuable possession of the human soul that dwells in it. It is the temple of God. It has a divine purpose to fulfill. And what is that purpose? It is to solve the riddle of life — the life-principle, responsible for the creation of the universe. One can certainly know this life-impulse if he were to search for it within himself. How can one do it? One who has himself solved this riddle can help us to do likewise.

It is a matter of common observation that human life does not run smooth. We are the play-thing of what we call chance. Every day we pass through various vicissitudes of life. We are ever revolving in the wheel of life. There is not a single soul who is happy with his lot.

Kabir tells us:

*Being in the flesh, no one is happy; I have not seen one who
may be really happy.*

As we have identified our Self with the body, the ever-changing body, we cannot be truly happy.

Nanak also says likewise:

O Nanak! the whole world is in the throes of sorrows and sufferings.

The real happiness then comes from right understanding of the true values of life. Everyone is in affliction of one kind or another. Some are suffering from physical ailments; some from indigence and poverty, penury and want; some from mental obsession, memories of past regrets and fears for the future. When questioned if anyone was happy, the great teacher replied: "Yes, one who is devoted wholly and solely to the service of a saint." We must then know what distinguishes a saint from others. One who has resolved the enigma of life is a saint, for he looks on the world from the level of soul. He is gifted with correct perception and, as such, is always happy and so also those who remain in his company.

We know a lot about our physical Self. We are sentient beings. We are the living temples of God. We are nothing but micro-gods. We are endowed with the same attributes as of God, though these may be on a smaller scale. We are the children of God, but unfortunately we are beset with mind and the senses. We do not know that the self in us is enlivening the body, and it is in the light of that self that we live, move about, and have our very being. The body, mind, and intellect all depend for their very working on the light of the *Atman*.

This is what we have to realize, and the sooner we do it the better it would be for us. If we do not do this, we would ever be in difficulties. Unfortunately, we have reversed the order of things. The sense-enjoyments have taken hold of the senses; and the senses, in their turn, have captivated the mind. Again, the mind has in its control the intellect. Behind them all is the self, the rider in the body which is being swiftly whirled by the powerful steeds of the senses, out of control of the mind and

the intellect. We have, therefore, to apply a reverse gear. For this art, we require the help of a *Gurmukh* — a really worshipful disciple of the Master. Those who realize the need for reversion or recession always pray:

O Lord! grant us the company of a Gurmukh, a close contact with a Sadh (disciplined soul) and dye us in the fast color of Naam.

O my Beloved, take me to such souls in whose company we may think of nothing else but Thee.

This, then, is the only way. For right guidance we have to approach the God-power in us; and this Power, in its turn, would direct the intellect in the right direction. Enlightened by the God-power, intellect would control the sense-ridden mind. This is how the human machinery is to be set right. We are the living soul in the body. Kabir tells us: "O Kabir! the soul is from God." And again, "The Self belongs to the house of God." The soul then has quite a high birth and a proud lineage; but unluckily it has fallen in love with the material mind and has thus debased and disfigured itself beyond recognition, all forgetful of its real source.

When we come across an awakened person, we surrender our intellect unto him. Under his guidance, the intellect grows stronger from day to day and begins to judge things aright. Then we begin to hear the small little voice in us — the voice of conscience. At every step it gives us a correct lead. If we attend to this little voice of conscience, all goes well with us. But when we bypass this imperial wall, its voice gradually grows dimmer and dimmer until we cease to hear it altogether. — This means going back to the old way of life which irresistibly takes us into the fields of sense-enjoyments. And, once again, we find ourselves into difficulties.

A true devotee of a saint sets his house in order. He does not put the cart before the horse. This then is the right understanding. All people in the world are dyed in the color of

the world. When the awakened souls come, they address not to others but to themselves — their own body and mind. The body is our first companion when we come into the world. Then along with it there are the bodily senses; and they, too, are to be addressed and admonished: "O my body, what hath thou earned since thy advent into the world?" We come into the world for self-realization and God-realization. If we do not do this, we are no better than sheep and goats that nourish a blind life in the brain. The body and bodily adjuncts like mind, intellect, and the *Pranas* cannot help us in this respect. It is only the *Atman*, the sentient being in us that can apprehend the Power of God working in the body, and keeping the body and soul together.

My Master, Hazur Baba Sawan Singh, used to illustrate this point very beautifully by a parable of a monkey and a goat. The housewife would milk her cow and go out to attend to her household chores. In her absence, the clever monkey, though tied with a long rope, could yet manage to go near the pail, drink the milk, and then smear the goat's mouth with milk. When the lady saw the pail empty, she would, mistaking the goat for a culprit, give him a beating. The monkey would sit quietly and enjoy the scene. This is what happens with us in everyday life. The intellect is being led by the mind and the senses into the wrong direction; and the *Jiv-Atman* as enveloped in the intellect, suffers the consequences of the acts committed by the mind. It is thus the embodied soul that bears the ill effects imputed to it through the courtesy of the cunning mind. The world is a play of the mind, and mind alone is responsible for our deeds.

Let us for a moment think over the way we come into the world. Can we say how this body came into being? Every offspring takes after the fashion of his own species. What is there to give shape, substance, and form to the seed in the body? There is some Power that does this. We have to know this Power and to get into touch with it. This we can do only in

the human form. Thus their appeal, the appeal of the enlightened ones, proceeds to their own bodily senses:

*O my eyes, God has placed the Light of Life behind you;
It is now incumbent upon you not to see anything else but the
Light of God.*

*O my ears, God has placed the divine harmony (Sat-Bani)
behind you.*

*It is, therefore, necessary for you to listen to nothing but the
Voice of God.*

The ancients speak of *Sat Bani* as the Music of the Spheres. This music is going on eternally. The Voice of God has been reverberating in all the ages and speaks of the True One. Though the Music of the Spheres is going on all the time, we are not conscious of it. How to get a conscious contact is the next question. The scriptures tell us:

*The Word of the Master is immanent in the entire creation;
It emanates from God, and God Himself (in the form of
Godman) makes it manifest wheresoever he willeth.*

Again it is said:

*Whosoever gets in touch with it safely ferries o'er and gains life
eternal.*

Coming back to the appeal of the enlightened persons to themselves, we have:

*O my palate, thou hath endlessly been enjoying the pleasures
of the tongue and yet have never felt satiated.*

The most delectable and the most palatable thing in the world is the ambrosia of Naam or the Holy Word. The saints tell us that we should take delight in taking this elixir of life instead of running perpetually after sense-pleasures. We are overflowing with all kinds of impressions coming from earth-life and, as such, are leading merely a superficial life on the surface of our

being, far removed from the center of our being. Even when in the dreamland, we are haunted by worldly objects. Why is it so? — Simply because we never had an opportunity to tap inside. And we have never known what we are and who we are. We love the world because of our love for the body and the bodily needs. We have never realized that the beauty of the body is due to the soul in it. The moment the life-currents are withdrawn, the body becomes a heap of dust and loses all its charm:

So long as the soul dwells in the body, the body remains in fine trim;

The moment the soul leaves the body, worldly possessions become of no consequence.

Thus we see that the world and worldly riches hold out their charm only when we are living in the body. The enlightened souls try to bring home eternal truths to us in so many different ways. They come neither to build nor to demolish any social order or religious formation. They only try to place before us the right perspective of life. They tell us to remain where we are, socially and religiously, but not all the time on the level of the senses. The senses lead us into a wrong direction, and we generally become the slaves of the senses. They tell us the correct values of life and wish us to take full advantage of the human birth, which occupies a place on the top rung of the ladder. With all our spectacular advancement in science and technology, we are yet far away from happiness.

A Muslim divine in this context says:

There is but one aim and one purpose of all education,

The aim and purpose being that one should know one's Self.

Thou evaluates the cost and worth of everything;

What a pity! you know not your own value and worth.

We are very wise and know a lot about our physical being and how to keep it fit and fine. In the realm of intellect as well, we have taken tremendous strides. We are busy investigating the

inter-planetary systems. The knowledge of the Reality is quite a different thing, and we have never tried to probe into it nor do we know the means to do so. The scriptures cannot help us in this matter. But an awakened individual, even if he is not learned, can give us an insight into it. And if the awakened soul is adorned with learning, the learning gives him an added embellishment, for he can present to us the Truth in so many different ways as a spiritual academician would do.

Bulleh Shah, a seeker after God, went to Shah Inayat, an Arian Faqir (a farmer by profession), and inquired from him as to how one could find God. At that time Shah Inayat was busy in transplanting some plants from one place to another. The Faqir replied: "My friend, you have simply to change the direction of your attention from one side to the other" — from world to God.

If we are really in search of God, we will have to do this. God is the substratum of the world. The science of soul and God is not as difficult as we think or as our priests have made it. In all empirical knowledge, we have to work on certain hypotheses; but in God-knowledge, we have to start with self-analysis. We have to separate the material body from the non-material soul. And this is done by concentrating the soul currents at the eye-focus. It is both simple and natural, and it is at once the most ancient and the most modern. In this scientific age, it is presented in a scientific fashion. The saints move with the time and have to express themselves in the language of the time.

We are already living in the physical, astral, and causal worlds at one and the same time. But, unfortunately, we are aware of our physical existence only. There is, however, in us the possibility to traverse into the astral and causal worlds as well; and to transcend into the beyond if we will. In this life, we want to solve the riddle of the universe; but we are going the wrong way. The evolved souls come time and again to apply the reverse gear to our mad career in the world. We hardly pay any attention to them and much less try to understand them.

The blessed Lord Krishna, after having explained to his warrior disciple and friend Arjuna, said: "Have you heard what I have said? Has my talk gone deep in your heart? Do you feel at home with what I have said? How far have you escaped from the delusion of the world? See for yourself as to where you now stand." In the present age (*Kali Yuga*) there has been no dearth of sages and seers. We have before us the psalm of Guru Nanak:

*In this juggler's play of the world, he alone is happy who drinks the elixir of Naam;
And the rest, being in the grip of desires, do deeds of darkness and carry a heavy load on their heads.*

This world, says Guru Nanak, is a sleight of hand from the great magician. It is all a magic show with no reality in it. We are living in a grand delusion where things are not what they seem to be. This magic show begins from our body. We consider the body as the be-all and end-all of human existence. We never for a moment think that there is some motor-power behind us. When once this Power withdraws from the body, the whole play comes to an end. All of us are taken in by this empty show. Kabir tells us: "When a juggler juggles about, people come around to see the play." We, one and all, are running after the play of the world. We are flowing with the current of time — some laughing and some wailing. When a child is born, the people feel elated and celebrate his advent with gaiety, not knowing that some soul has been entrapped and enchained. Again, Kabir says: "A soul enchained to the body can never be happy."

If one were to learn how to transcend body-consciousness, one begins to know what is liberation. Here a question might arise as to why God became a trickster. This question may better be asked from one who has played the trick. He wished it and so it happened. From One He wanted to become many. Nanak tells us: "From One, myriads of currents flowed, creating the entire creation in so many forms and colors." Our question is why the

creation is on the level of the senses. When we are able to merge into the Will of the Creator, then alone we can know why He willed it so. It may even be added that all such questions would end when that stage is reached. On the level of the intellect, we cannot say whether the seed or the tree first came into being. The intellect fails to answer this question. If, at all, you want to know it — the secret behind the creation — you will have to rise above body, mind, and intellect.

The great Teacher is trying to bring home to us Truth. What we consider as eternal and permanent — body, mind, and intellect — is not so. Once a person came to a divine and said: "O holy man, a person is breaking away with his last life-breaths." The divine inquired: "What is his age?" The gentleman replied: "Seventy-two years." The divine said: "What are you saying my friend? The ailing person has been breaking away with his life-breaths for all these years. There is nothing strange if he is now finally doing away with what is yet left." Just consider when a child grows in age. His parents feel delighted as he adds another year to his life. They do not know the fact that the child, instead of adding anything to his age, is losing it year by year. We are all in a state of continuous delusion. Kabir beautifully describes our wrong notions about the world and the worldly things:

The still point in the swiftly revolving wheel, in spite of its extreme velocity, appears to be stationary; and when the water in the milk is fully evaporated by boiling, the residue is said to be Khoya (lit. lost though actually it is the real substance — milk-cake);

An orange so beautiful in color is called na-rangi (lit. colorless); seeing such delusive scenes, Kabir could not but shed tears of remorse.

As said before, the delusion begins with our wrong conception of the human body, which we consider to be permanent while it is not. How can we get the real conception of this? — Only when we, by a practical process of self-analysis, get an actual

out-of-body experience. It is then that we know that the body is not something permanent, and it has got to be vacated one day whether we will it or not. Until this experience comes through practical demonstration, we cannot know the impermanent nature of the body. Have we not carried these bodies on our shoulders to the cremation grounds or burial places? But with all that we never for a moment think that we, too, will have to leave the body one day. Isn't it a great delusion? Nanak, therefore, says: "O Nanak! without analyzing the Self from the body, we cannot get out of the veil of delusion."

We have not the least control over our mind and our senses. We are merely their slaves and dance to their tunes. No doubt, eyes cannot but see and ears cannot but hear. But this seeing and hearing is just of a superficial nature. We have no control over them. We must know how to perceive and how to understand and when to do so at our will. But, unfortunately, we have not yet become the master of the house in which we are living. Our conscious attention is just slipping out and flowing into the world. We are adrift on the sea of life, rudderless and steerless. We have not developed any roots in us. It is, therefore, of paramount importance to direct and channel our attention in the right direction. We must know where the roots of life lie in us or, in other words, where the seat of the soul is. Man is like an inverted tree with its roots upwards at the eye-focus and branches (limbs) stretching downwards. So we have to invert our attention from downwards to upwards.

All acts on the plane of senses, whether good or bad, will keep us down in bondage. But when we learn to live in the Light and Life of God, then the Reality and the real nature of things will dawn on us. This living in the Light of Life is what matters the most. It gives us right understanding and correct lead. It takes us from untruth to Truth, from darkness to Light, and from death to Immortality. While living in the body and leading the life of the body, we cannot understand what is what. We come

into the world simply to score our old accounts of give and take. All our relationships — father and son, husband and wife, mother and daughter, brother and sister, and vice versa — are the result of past *karmic* reactions. It is said that the pen of destiny moves in accordance with our deeds. What we sow we must reap. We come with fate writ in our forehead: Even the body itself is the result of our *karmas*, and it is rightly said to be *Karmansharir*. It is the destiny that casts our mold. Without body there can be no deeds, and without deeds there can be no body. It, therefore, behooves us happily to pass our days and ungrudgingly give what we have to and what we must, for there is no escape from it. We have, of course, to be careful not to create new relationships and sow fresh seeds. This is the only way to get out of the abysmal depths of the *Karmic* ocean.

This world is a pantomime show. It is a stage on which we come, play our part, and then depart. Why has this stage been set? Nobody can say. We can, however, go to the stage director to understand the purpose and plan of stage-setting. There is some Power that is upholding all this play, and we are mere actors or puppets on the stage of life. We cannot, however, escape from this stage until the part allotted to us is performed. He alone knows how long this play is to last and in what way each one of us is gathered up. The rich and the poor alike have to quit sooner or later, each in his own turn, and carry the load of his deeds — good or bad — with him.

The purpose of human life is to know the secret of life. But, strange as it may seem, we remain indifferent to it. We bring with us quite a heavy load of *karmas* in the form of destiny or fate, leaving behind a large storehouse of deeds sown and garnered in the distant past to be utilized in the distant future in course of time. The destiny or fate has, of course, to be gone through with smiles or tears, as the case may be. While doing so, we unfortunately go on adding to our storehouse by sowing fresh seeds in the present span of life. Thus we are forging, from day to day, new chains to bind ourselves with. Is then there no way of escape from this intricate *karmic* web?

The saints tell us that there is a way out. If we could but understand the Law and the Will of God, we cease to be the doer of deeds. Then we would see the invisible Hand of God working in all directions. In this way from doer we become mere seers or onlookers. Acts alone do not amount to guilt unless they are accompanied by a guilty mind. Once we rise above the mind and transcend all the mental zones, we outstrip all the contagion of the deeds lying in store. In the Light and Life of God, all the un-fructified karmic seeds become infructuous. On the contrary, we delight in enjoying the sense-pleasures, little knowing that they, in their turn, eat into the very vitals of our system. The Hindi word *Ann* (food) means at once what is eaten and what eats away. Have we ever realized that in course of time we become so weak and incapacitated by constant use of our senses that the senses themselves refuse to take any delight in the sense-objects. We always try to pamper the body and bodily senses as if they are with us eternally; herein lies the great delusion.

Desires are the root cause of all our troubles. What the mind wishes is a kind of desire (*Kaam*). When we feel, rightly or wrongly, that there is some hurdle in getting our desire fulfilled, we often get angry (*Krodh*). The more there is delay in getting the thing desired, the more we long and pine for it. This is called greed (*Lobh*). When once, by fair or foul means, we get hold of the thing desired, we hug it and do not want to part with it. This is termed attachment or infatuation (*Moh*). When the thing desired is in our possession, we begin to gloat over it and ascribe the success to our own endeavors. This connotes egotism, for one claims the thing in his own right and refuses to be thankful to God — the Giver of all gifts. I-ness and my-ness coupled with extreme selfishness are the essence of egoism and egotism, both being born from ego. This is styled as *Ahankar* or victory of the little self in us. In this way we are, all the time, engaged in getting and spending, unconsciously doing shameless deeds of rapine and snobbery.

The question before us is not of religion, nor of society. It is one of right understanding and proper evaluation of things of the world. All our acts and deeds are but for one purpose — the purpose being to secure ease and comfort for our body. We judge everything on this touch-stone. A husband loves his wife not for her sake but for himself. Similarly, a wife loves her husband not for his sake but for herself. We love the children so that they may be of some help to us in our old age. There is nothing wrong in wealth and riches. It is only the use to which these are put — selfish or otherwise in selfless service and the way in which these are earned, which determine quality and value, and also their effect on the earner. We generally spend our wealth for our personal comforts and to satisfy our needs. Truly speaking, one does not need much to live. We, unnecessarily, go on expanding our desires and create a kind of subtle web around us; and for what? Just for a brief span of time in which we have to live. Life is a great struggle. We have to struggle with our minds and senses. We have to struggle for right understanding of things instead of flowing down with the current of time with no foothold or handhold to steady ourselves.

An awakened soul cannot but pity our condition and out of compassion give us a piece of his mind. They speak in aphoristic terms full of deep meaning in them. They talk to us in parables and stories to bring home to us our faults and shortcomings. They tell us that this world is a puppet show and there is some Power behind us whereby we move. But with all their teachings and preachings, we continue to tread the same old path as before. We do not try to understand the Will and Purpose of the Power behind us. If we do so, we can easily escape the magnetic field of karmas.

The problem of *karmas* is very complicated; *karmas* continue to dog us from age to age. Time is a stern arbiter. All our deeds make an indelible impression on the tablet of time, and the mind working in the time cannot but draw upon those impressions. Of King Dhritrashtra, the congenitally blind

progenitor of the Kaurvas, it is said that he could read back his past one hundred incarnations but could not say as to why he suffered blindness when he had a clean slate for all these lives. Lord Krishna then placed his hand on the head of the blind king to enable him, with the help of his own yogic powers, to penetrate further back to find out as to when and to what deed he could ascribe this calamity. It was then that the king was able to say that his blindness was the reaction of a particular action committed in one of the incarnations beyond the hundred of which he was originally not aware. We simply see the effect of our past karmas on the present screen of life and remain ignorant of the causes set going in the past, may be in this life or in some previous incarnation, and are thus taken aback. These effects come so suddenly and swiftly that we get flabbergasted. Our desires and longings are at the root of all our karmas. This is why Buddha, the Enlightened One, laid emphasis on "desirelessness."

In fact, all saints say so, each in his own words. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth in line of succession to Guru Nanak, said: "Cut yourself away from desires."

In the time of Akbar the Great, there was, in his council of ministers, one Wali Ram. It was customary with the ministers to stand in attention when the king came to preside over his council of ministers. It so happened that one day a scorpion got into the toga of Wali Ram. As he was standing in attention, the scorpion stung Wali Ram at different places as it moved. The minister silently bore the agony and kept standing erect so as to maintain the decorum of the royal court. When the king sat on the throne, Wali Ram, with folded hands, came forward before the imperial majesty and said: "O king, I have been thy slave for all these years. Little does your majesty know that I have been stung by the scorpion so many times but could not for all that raise my little finger to throw the scorpion down for fear of violating the court etiquette." Saying this, Wali Ram tore his mantle and ran out of the court to serve the King of kings, the Lord God.

Akbar felt sorry to lose such a wise minister as Wali Ram. He sent his courtiers to recall Wali Ram. But now Wali Ram was not the Wali Ram of old. He refused to come back. Then the king himself went to persuade him but in vain. The king, in all humility, wanted to confer some rare boon upon his old minister who had served him so well for so many years. He inquired as to what he could do for him. Wali Ram replied, "O mighty king, all I beg of you is to spare your shadow from over me. I am grateful to you for the royal patronage that you so kindly extended to me, but now I am a free man and I do not need any more royal favors." It is such like incidents that bring about a sudden change in the way of one's thinking. With an awakening like this, one feels like one liberated from the bondage of the world.

Our troubles begin our desires, and desires, in their turn, lead to all other vices as enumerated already. They have become part and parcel of our life, and we live and die for them. If you were to step aside, you can for yourself witness and see how people drift along helplessly simply by force of habit. A really awakened person looks on the world from a safe point of vantage — from the level of the soul. They take pity on us and, in loving terms, try to impress upon us the futility of the life which we are leading. They tell us: We have seen many a human mold rotting under the earth. When this is the case with the human body, what is there in it for us to be proud? It is rightly said, "Dust thou art and to dust returneth." This is the angle of vision that is presented to us by Godmen. Guru Nanak now goes on to explain:

*Listen ye to our sage counsel; listen ye must.
Godly acts shall alone save thee from the cycle of births.*

With what a sense of compassion these words have come from the heart of Nanak. The body and the bodily adjuncts have been given to us as aids in self-realization and God-realization. But we are going the other way around. When Godmen see us

in this sad plight, they are moved to the extreme and cannot help giving us a piece of their mind. They, having solved the enigma of life for themselves, tell us of the way whereby we, too, can do likewise. It is the godly acts that can help us in this behalf. Human life is a great blessing. It provides us with the opportunity and the means to save ourselves from this mighty maze of the world in which we are lost like babes in the woods. Godly acts may be distinguished from good acts. Good and charitable acts, whatever their merit, keep us in bondage like their counterparts, the evil acts. If latter takes us to nether regions, the former, to higher regions. But in each case, after the period allotted for undergoing punishment or enjoyment is run out, we have to return to the mortal plane again. Thus we see that good acts are not of much avail in gaining freedom from mind and matter.

The saints, therefore, speak of godly acts — acts which take us Godward. These acts are termed *Sukrat*. Kabir also emphasizes: "Do *Sukrat* deeds; commune with the Word — who knows what may happen tomorrow?" And significantly enough he adds: "What to speak of the morrow, one does not know what may happen the next moment." In the list of godly acts, the most important thing is righteousness. One must be true to himself. If one is true to himself, he cannot be false to anybody. He would not try to deceive and cheat others. He would be truthful in thought, word, and deed. We have very hazy notions of truthfulness. We try to be clever by suppressing truth and by giving false suggestions in the garb of truth. Both these things are despicable. *Suppressio veri* and *suggesstio falsi* are equally condemned, for they are far from truth. Some of us are in the habit of giving out half-truths — as much of truth as suits our purpose. Some of us feel that in business we cannot succeed unless we adopt such tactics. But mind, this is not the case. You may lose a customer here and there; but when people would know of your integrity and honesty, you will have brisk business.

Next in importance are chastity (a life of rectitude) and non-violence, universal love, and selfless service and sacrifice. We must not only wish well of everybody, but think and act likewise. These are some of the instances of *sukrat karmas* or godly acts.

When the five Pandavas were sent for schooling, the first thing that the teacher taught to them was to speak truth, accept truth, and live truth. In the traditional way of teaching, emphasis was on practicality and not simply understanding a thing on an intellectual level. After some time the teacher inquired of them if they had learned their lesson to heart. All the brothers except the eldest Yudhishtira replied in the affirmative. When his turn came, he said, "I am trying to learn the lesson by the roots, and it would take some time before I take roots into it." Again, sometime after, the teacher repeated his query Yudhishtira replied that he had not yet fully grasped and practiced the truth of what he had been taught. This is called learning the lesson by the roots and not by rote. Yudhishtira learned his lesson to the very core and practiced it all his life, with the result that he came to be known as *Dharmaputra* (a real apostle of truth).

*Those who are devoted to the Master and follow his commandments,
They live carefree in all the three worlds, so saith Kabir.*

Righteousness is the greatest of virtues. It washes off myriads of evil impressions. If we are obliged to hide our deeds or to polish them up with lies or prevarication, we must take it for certain that there is something wrong in them. Next to righteousness is chastity. Truth is great but true living is greater still. Chastity is life, and indulgence is death. To live as a householder in conformity with the scriptural injunctions is no sin. Marriage is no bar to spirituality. It is a sacrament and must be observed and lived as such. If we indulge in it for sex enjoyment, it is sinful; and the wages of sin are death. We must lead a life of continence in thought, word, and deed.

Again, God dwells in all of us. We are children of God, and we worship the same God. This being the case, there is no reason why we should hate anybody. One may be occupying a seat of honor and another may be standing in attendance upon him. It is all a play of karmas. Furthermore, when the same God-power is in each one of us, it is but natural that one should be of service to another. In fact, by serving another we are serving our own self in another form.

Next comes *Ahimsa* or non-violence. It is said to be the greatest *Dharma* (duty). If you are in search of God, try to see Him in yourself and in others. If you realize this, you will not do injustice to anyone. All these are godly acts, and help one in self-realization and God-realization. And, we must take to them forthwith, for life is uncertain and we cannot be sure of the next moment. While practicing these we have to commune with the Word.

The next question before us is as to the nature of the Holy Word. God in absolute is Nameless. When He came into expression, He became a Name (the Word). It is by this Power of God that the world came into being. Why He exercised this Power, we do not know. We are all engaged in the game of blind man's bluff in which one person is blindfolded by the master of the game and the rest hide themselves. Whosoever touches the master of the game is considered safe, while the play goes on with the rest. This is exactly the case with us. We are blindly searching for God, each one in his own way. He, who is fortunate enough to find his way out to Him is saved, and escapes from the clutches of mind and matter. We have, after all, to develop our inner eye whereby to perceive the Power of God in us.

For this purpose, we have to accept and practice godly acts, and establish a communion with the Holy Word. These are the things which abide with the soul, and help in liberating it from the wheel of life and death. Having learned the two

prerequisites for the way-out, we still need the help of someone who has already become one with that God-power. It is in his company and with his guidance that we can safely traverse the spiritual path which is fraught with dangers and pitfalls. The Guru knows the turns and twists of the road; and without his able guidance, one cannot make any headway on the Path. We have to accept his guidance without any mental reservations; and one who does so will know the secret of the God-power, for it is working in fullness at that human-pole. Guru Nanak then goes on to say:

Addressing himself, Nanak lays emphasis on the instructions of the Master;

Why dost thou talk idly of others and speak ill of them?

To slander others is a vile act. It is a double-edged weapon. It hurts both the slanderer and slandered. To speak rightly of a person or a thing is a very difficult job. It is, therefore, said: "Judge not, lest ye be judged and found wanting (by the Great Judge)." But, we recklessly indulge in talking loosely of others and take delight in it. My Master, Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji, used to say: "There is, no doubt, some taste, sweet, sour, or bitter in whatever we eat; but tell me, what taste does calumny bring to you? Is it not something tasteless? Why then should we indulge in something which has no taste at all?" But, with all this we waste most of our time in talking ill of one or the other. We, all the time, try to weigh each other's thoughts, words and deeds, riches, and domestic affairs. What is the result of all this? When we hear this talk all around us, of our friends and relations, we naturally lose faith in everybody. So, instead of working for God, we become unpaid apprentices of the C.I.D. of God.

If a person is good, we should try to emulate him. If one is on the God-path, we should try to follow him — so far, so good. But to be jealous of others does not pay. Jealousy breeds suspicion and unnecessarily makes one nervous and timid. The God-way is for the strong and not for the weak. Constant worry

corrodes the mind. We must forget the past, and work for our betterment in the living present. The great men say: "So far and no further." They draw a dividing line between the past and the present, and want us not to fall again — fall below the eye-focus.

O ye, thy eyes are set on the affairs of others and how ye may steal a march on them.

The moment thy soul departs, thou shalt remain behind as once deserted.

For most of the time we are occupied with the affairs of other people: their wealth and riches, their robes and attires, their wives and children. The whole day we talk of nothing else but these things. We never for a moment pause to think if there is anything else besides them. We make odious comparisons and then start fretting and fuming over what we call our ill-luck and misfortune. We work ourselves to a pitch over our supposed grievances and injustices of God. What is the result? We buy for ourselves heartaches and headaches for nothing. Then in a fit of frenzy, we try, by hook or by crook, to get to the level of others. We do not know that with all our cleverness and cunning, we cannot get more than what is destined for us. The result is that we go on adding to the load of our karmas without any return in the shape of material gains. And if at all, we secure some advantages and make trivial gains here and there by our maneuvers and tactics, what is their value? For how long are they going to last with us? — Ill-got, ill-spent. Ill-means and ill-ends remain with us, and we shall have to pay for them — pay for trash and at a heavy cost indeed.

All the misdeeds we do are just for satisfying our momentary desires. Life is but a vapor and vanisheth in no time. When the ghost leaves the body, what remains? — This very material body for which we make so much bother, and indulge in all sorts of mad tricks and dirty games. What is now going to be the end of this tabernacle of the flesh? Nobody in the family likes to keep it even for a moment. Everyone seems keen to

dispose of it and consign it either to the flames or to the grave. While he was living, he was the cynosure of all eyes; and everyone looked up to him for one kind of favor or another. Now that the indweller has slipped out, nobody cares for it. This then is the body for which we work so much day in and day out.

Why sleep ye in the dreamland of the world and not do anything of abiding interest to thee?

Why try ye to hoodwink others just for the passing pleasures of thy mind?

What dost thou gain here in this world and the next except that ye barter life for nothing?

It is a common-sense talk. In great detail, we are told how we waste the precious human life that is given to us for a specific purpose — the purpose being self-realization and God-realization. But when an awakened person like Nanak sees us going the wrong way, he cannot but make a heart-rending appeal to our common-sense. He tells us to have a correct view of life.

First things first; from the level of the soul, which is the substratum of everything in the world including our mind and senses, we must pay first attention to it. On the contrary, we work all the time for the welfare of our body and for mental development, and pay scant attention to the soul, the driving force in us. Karmas by themselves, however good and meritorious they may be, cannot be of any help in this respect.

We have to reach the still-point of the soul by rising above both the body and the mind. It is here that one becomes *neh-karma* or actionless in action. Until and unless we cross all the mental zones by the grace and guidance of the God-power manifested in some human-pole, we cannot transcend this treacherous ground. It is only with singleness of mind that we can gain anything. We cannot achieve anything in the world, may be riches of the world or name and fame, without working for

them wholeheartedly. The world is ready to adore you if you make yourself worthy of the Self in you. We know of Nanak and Kabir and love them for their own sake. Excuse me — very few of us know their parentage and other details about their families. While they lived they gave right understanding to the people, and the people to this day give them great honor and reverence. We are fighting the losing battle of life, and God alone knows when we may get an opportunity like this:

*O Nanak, attend ye to the affairs of thy body so that
Ye may make God-power manifest in thee and ye be engaged
in singing the praises of the Lord.*

It is necessary that the body may be looked after and taken care of so that it helps us in our objective. We may also square up our accounts with those around us. The main thing, therefore, is to realize self in us. If we do not do this, all else is of no avail. In this context Guru Arjan says:

*Accursed are all our deeds: the foods we take and the comforts
alike,
Accursed are the fineries with which we wrap our bodies,
Accursed also are the friends and relations that surround us all,
if, with all these, we do not reach the Lord.
For once we lose this opportunity and let it slip away, we are
lost.*

It is the same old story that all the sages have, from time to time, given to us. But think for yourself how much you have changed. We hear a thing but do not act. "Be ye the doers and not hearers alone," says Jesus. We simply hear and pass on to others but do not adopt them in our own life. We try to reform the world and not ourselves. Swami Ram Tirath aptly said: "Wanted, reformers not of others but of themselves." What would we get? He replied, "God-head."

Guru Nanak now tells us of the sad plight of the body and how it wails in agony. "Woe unto me, O Nanak; what a shame that

no one now bothers for me." When the Lord of the body leaves the body, what remains? Now it ceases to have any value, and nobody is prepared to keep it on for any length of time. All get keen to dispose of it as quickly as possible. It is regarded as an abomination in the house; and so long as it remains, one cannot do anything else. This, then, is the dirge of the poor body in distress lying unattended and uncared for. All the life's labor is undone in a moment. All religious creeds, all social orders, and all possessions of the world remain behind.

*One may have the finest steeds, immense wealth, and the costliest of clothing;
O Nanak! none of these would go with the departing soul and all shall be left behind.*

Nowadays we have big limousines for our transport. We have air-conditioned and centrally heated mansions to live in. We have brocade and chiffon draperies to cover our bodies with. We indulge in all these luxuries so that we should feel cozy and comfortable. After all, the body needs something to be wrapped in — why wrap it with costly material beyond our means? We can have a simple shelter over our heads. But everyone tries to run a race and outstrip others who are in affluent circumstances. And what is the result? Man is forced to beg, borrow, or steal. An honest man cannot, honestly speaking, afford to have all these things. But he is forced to adopt foul methods to meet the increasing demands of his wife and children. If he fails to do so, he is nagged day and night. We have become slaves to fashion and, like a weathercock, move this way or that with every whiff of the wind that blows.

Our ladies can do much to help the earning members in the family — the lesser their demands, the lesser the chances of men going out of their way to procure and secure ill-gotten gains. It is said that a housewife can build or raze down a house just by the point of her needle. If an average man gets two square meals a day and a simple night shelter over his

head — that is enough. The rich and the poor go alike empty handed.

We have before us the cases of Croesus, Alexander the Great, and Mahmood, the iconoclast. All of them were great monarchs, each in their own way. What did they take with them while departing from the world? — Nothing. Each shed bitter tears of repentance. Repentance, though good in itself, cannot cure the past. This being the case, it is always safe that one should earn by honest means than to acquire plenty of money by oppressing others and trampling on their rights. In short, "One cannot amass riches without resort to dishonest and unfair means; but alas! — in the end, all shall remain behind." And the poor soul clothed in the old mental coverings takes its solitary flight alone.

*O man! thou have tasted all the pleasures of the world,
But what thou hath not tasted is the elixir of Naam, sweetest of
them all.*

In the world we have been late and soon with everything pleasurable. Everything has had pleasure in one form or another:

*The candy, sugar, molasses, the honey, and the milk,
All these things are wonderfully sweet;
But, O Lord, none of these reaches to the sweetness of Thy
Name.*

God is Light in fullness. Our soul, too, is a spark from that Light. We are so constituted that we find no rest until we rest in Him. A part is ever restless until it rests in the whole. A conscious soul, when conditioned, keeps moving up and down in the wheel of life. It is only the unconditioned soul (fully awakened) that can reach the ocean of consciousness. Conditioned in the body and the mind, we have been embellishing our environments and not the indwelling spirit. Take care of the house as much as possible, but do not forget

the indweller of the house. He, too, needs as much of food and attention as the body. The spirit, being of God, is to be fed by the Power and Spirit of God (the Holy Word or Naam). All this has to be done even as a householder. A true horseman is one who holds himself firm with his feet firmly settled in both the stirrups. There is no need to leave your hearths and homes and to go into the wilderness. A boat on the surface of the water sails smoothly and not on dry land. The God-power has to be contacted while in the body and in the world and not otherwise.

I am telling you all this from my personal experience. Even if one goes into the forest, he is still dogged by the problems of life. Even for his bare sustenance, he is to depend on others. The memories of his family and children continue to haunt him all the time. Here, too, one gets attached to trees, develops kinship with forests and the silk-skinned animals, like spotted deer, and milk animals like goats and cows. So, leaving the house under the stress of circumstances or otherwise does not matter much until there is real inner detachment (*Vairagya*). One living in the midst of the world and worldly activities still can be detached if he develops right understanding.

Take, for instance, the case of Raja Janak. He was *Raj Rishi* (a royal sage) who was unaffected by the splendor of his court, and ruled well and wisely. Thus the question is one of changing one's angle of vision. One may live where one may be, carry on one's usual vocation or calling in an honest and straightforward way, but at the same time have an inner awakening which would automatically free him from all thoughts of his surroundings. And the inner awakening, as said before, comes through the grace of some Word-personified Saint who makes the Word manifest in us:

*O ye, take it for certain, without the least shadow of doubt,
Without the active aid and guidance of a perfect Master none
can get out of the mighty maze of the world.*

The need of the Guru is a must if one wants to ferry over the sea of life. Even a renunciate cannot do without a Guru. So is the case with a householder. But a householder needs a Guru who has himself been a householder. Why? — A Guru who has never passed through the vicissitudes of life can hardly understand the difficulties of worldly aspirants for God. One who has lived in the world and has risen above the world can give us a correct lead Godward. He tells us that there is hope for everybody — even for the worst of sinners. Every saint, he says, has had his past. Rome was not built in a day. Things can be mended and changed by regular daily practice, even while living in the family.

One may raise a palatial mansion, but what is it?

— a house built on sand.

Whatever thou gathereth for thy comforts and in blindness regardeth as thine is all delusion.

We are living in a state of continuous flux. In this changing panorama of life, we too are changing every moment. This is why we cannot appreciate the changing nature of the physical self and of the world around us. We think that we have to live permanently in this world. We, therefore, build big and tall houses with deep foundations so that they may last long. They may outlast us, but they cannot last forever. Like a caravansary, our sons and grandsons may live in them for a while like us and depart likewise. Even these solid stately houses cannot last forever. In course of time, they are reduced to rubble. Do we not see so many ruins around us as relics of the past glory? A really awakened soul is not bothered about palaces and cottages, which are to him just as night shelters — one may be for the rich and the other for the poor.

It has rightly been said that a camel may pass through the eye of a needle, but a rich man cannot enter the Kingdom of God — and why? — Because the path God-wards is for the humble in spirit and not for those with an inflated ego. A rich man, on the other hand, is too much mixed up with the world. And more so,

he has a heavy load of karmas on his head. Stuck fast in the quagmire, an animal with a heavy load on his back cannot be pulled out easily. What do we do? We have first to lighten his load and then drag him out of the mud. This is exactly what a Guru does. In his grace and compassion, he momentarily lifts up the soul currents from the body in which they are stuck fast and then opens the way-up to give a little demonstration of the Power-of-God in us.

Herein lies the greatness of a perfect Master: "What does it avail to take refuge with a *Jagat Guru* (world teacher) if he cannot wind up our karmas? In the presence of a lion, the jackals cannot come nigh and howl about." A saint who has himself transcended all the karmic zones knows how to wind up our karmas. At the time of initiation, in particular, it is he who by his power pulls us up, in spite of us, and grants a peep into the inscape.

This experience cannot be imparted by the so-called teachers of the world, however learned they may be. But an unlettered Guru may do it if he is a Guru in the true sense of the word — a torch-bearer. The question is one of giving an actual inner experience. "It is with the grace of the Guru that one begins to understand himself." And this understanding comes when one rises above the body and bodily senses. There is a way-up above the body. As such you are the manipulator of the body and not the slave of it. Behind you there is a vast reservoir of Power called God. We have to know God, understand God, and to experience God. This is the purpose of our birth — to know the Will and Ways of God.

We are all engaged in amassing wealth and feel proud to do so. But all our riches remain behind when we depart from the world. What do we take with us when we leave? Not the wealth, not the ill-gotten gains, but the sad memory of the evil ways and inhuman practices by which we gathered our possessions. Possessiveness is the greatest evil. A blind man regards his possessions as his own. But an awakened person

does not. We, sadly enough, live in the realm of mine and thine: "One may build golden palaces and live in the midst of gold; but in the end, none of them will go along, and the golden palaces and glittering gold shall all remain behind." It does not mean that we should not earn riches and should not have property. There is nothing wrong in them. All that is required is that we should be honest in our ways and means in the acquisition of these things. And then we should be grateful to God Who has helped us to them. These should better be considered as His gifts and should be treated as such, free from all sense of egoism:

*We must remember God in the closet of our mind;
God by Whose grace we are happily living in the temple of our
body.*

Excuse me, when I say that the priest-craft has vested interests even in their religious performances. They are making a business out of them. They offer prayers for and on behalf of others just to make their own living. They sell indulgences for a pittance. They have found an easy way to earn money. All this is a kind of profession just like any other profession. But spirituality is altogether something different and is a heritage of saints. Now, Guru Nanak, addressing his mind, gives an axiomatic truth of immense value:

*Listen ye fool of an ignorant mind,
What thou geteth is ordained from above.*

Now appeal is direct to the mind. Mind is the chief factor in the drama of life. Every action has a reaction. The invisible finger of God moves in accordance with our actions. As we sow, so we have to reap. Can we escape from this network? Yes, we can. If we develop an all-seeing eye, we become the seer and cease to be the doer. In the holy Light of God, there remains nothing to bind us down. So this exhortation to the mind:

O mind, thou liveth in the Light of God,

Why doth thou not recognize thy source?

This is a cry of anguish from the heart. Why? — Because all the while we are busy in the world and the worldly things. We never pause for a moment to think of our own Self. We cannot possibly save our soul without becoming a conscious co-worker of the Divine Plan. This is the *summum bonum* of life, and the Masters have laid great emphasis on it. Nanak now winds up his song with the following words:

Our Lord God is the Supreme Being, and we have to trade with Him;

Our mind and body are both from Him; we live, die, and are born again because of Him.

The greatest fact in God's universe is God. The greatest need of human-kind is to know God. And the greatest purpose of God is to reveal Himself to man. And again, God reveals Himself through some Godman.

The Godman, with a clarion call, invites us to his Father's mansion. "I do nothing on my own. I call them as my Father wisheth." Guru Arjan says likewise: "He who hath sent thee into the world is calling thee back; come thou with me with ease and pleasure." Thus we are sent into the world to find our real Self and then the self of Self. This is the sole purpose of the Divine Plan. This is real trade — the trade of Naam or the Holy Word. How can this be done? — By Satsang and search for *Sat* (Truth).

For Satsang, we have to find the *Sat Purush* or one who is Truth-personified. Having found a Godman, we have to develop loving faith in him and to scrupulously follow what he says. He wants us to lead a clean life of purity and chastity. And then he gives instructions and guidance, and enables us to have a practical experience of God within us. Truth is above everything, but true living is higher still. We have to mold our lives on the pattern of the Godman.

Without this nothing can be achieved. It is, therefore, said:

*He who lives truly for Truth is my true disciple;
Such a one is my Lord God, and I feel proud of such a disciple.*

We have to forsake the flesh for the spirit. We have to leave the world for the Word. But what do we see? Crying we come and wailing we go. Are we not children of God? Is not God-power surging in us from top to toe? Do we not live and die according to His Will? His Will is wrought in the very pattern of our being. It is then all the more necessary that we may learn to live in His Light of Life. Mere hearing is not enough. Do it and practice it from day to day. Let us practice God in our daily life and be forever happily free.

