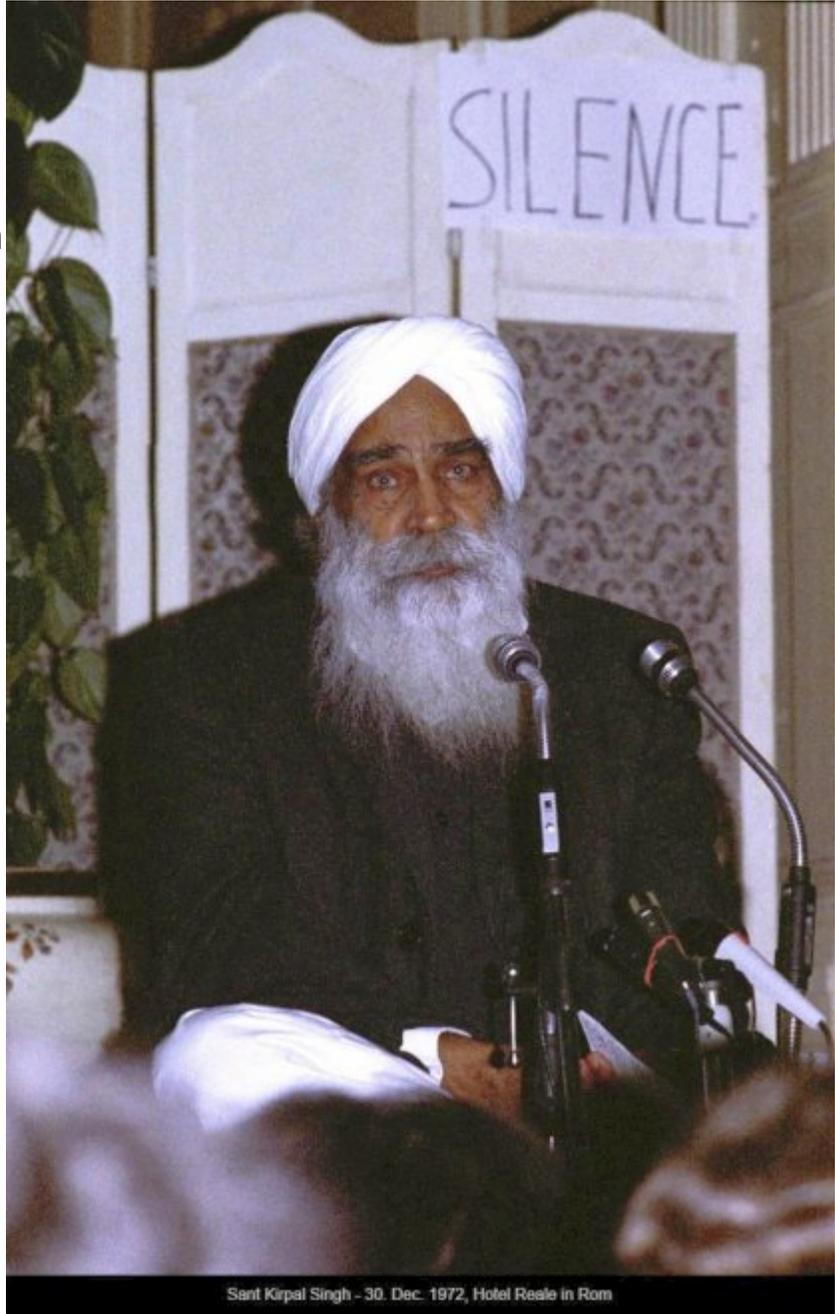


# Ek Onkar, Ashabd, Anaam

*This is the English version of a talk given in Hindi by Master Kirpal Singh at Sawan Ashram, Delhi, India. This was originally published in the February, 1969 edition of Sat Sandesh.*

There is only one Reality. All the Rishis and Munis from time immemorial have talked of that Reality, but none has been able to describe it in its fullness nor will anyone be able to do so. The Reality can neither be known nor can it be comprehended. One has to merge one's self into it or, in other words, one has to rise into it, growing into higher consciousness. When a drop of water enters the ocean, it ceases to be a drop and gets merged in it. Thus the drop cannot know the magnitude of the ocean. So is the case with the sages and seers. They have made pointed references to the great Reality, inasmuch as they could do with the help of inadequate words. With all their attempt at describing the Reality, it remained undescribed.



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remained undescribed. All the philosophies of the world have tried to describe God in one way or the other, but the enigma has remained

unsolved as ever. All attempts at explaining the Reality have failed, the last words generally being "not this, not this." God is something more than we see or we understand. The mind and the intellect cannot reach Him. The Absolute, at best, has been described as *Ashabd* (wordless). God-in-abstraction is inexpressible as He has not yet come into expression. We may call Him *Anaam* (Nameless), *Ashruti*. Nanak speaks of Him as "One" or *Ek Onkar* – the Primal Manifestation.

These epithets have been given only when He first came into manifestation or expression. Before coming into being or expression, He cannot be called either One or Two. After expression, He has been termed as "One." The great teacher then goes on to explain what is meant by "One." The first form as assumed by the Absolute is that of *Sat Naam* or Truth or Unchangeable Permanence. From *Anaam* (Nameless), He became a Name — the Absolute coming into expression or being. As such He became the Creative principle enlivening His creation, the substratum of life immanent in everything. What is life? It is something which is eternal, imperishable and indestructible, and hence *Sat* or what remains unchangeable under all conditions and circumstances. Again, Nanak tells us about the nature of *Sat* or Truth:

*Truth ever was, Truth was the beginning of the cycles of time;  
Truth doth remain, and Truth shall ever remain, saith Nanak.*

After having said so much, one could not wean himself away from the Reality which ever was *Ashabd* or *Anaam*, and hence homage was paid to that Reality addressing it as *Anaam*.

When this Reality came into being, it came to be known as 'One' and Nanak tells of this 'One' as:

*Behind the great Power called One there lies a great mystery.  
And he who knows it, knows that Power to be both the Absolute as well as  
the shining principle going into expression.*

This mystery has got to be solved. It can be solved intuitively by one who becomes a conscious co-worker of the Divine Plan. The Power and Spirit of the Absolute which is running into expression is called *Brahman*. The knower of this *Brahman* merges in the *Brahman*. But our goal is elsewhere

in what may be called *Par Brahm* or *Sat Brahm* or *Kutaseth Brahm*, the bedrock on which *Brahm* rests. Hence *Sat Naam* and *Brahman* are but different degrees of the Absolute. *Par Brahm* is the ground on which *Brahman* stands. We have, therefore, to expand ourselves by degrees until our little self grows so big as to embrace the totality of His Being beyond *Brahman*. As we rise gradually into higher consciousness and expand, we unwittingly rise above the petty ego in us, – sacrificing it first for the sake of the family, then the tribe, then the nation and finally for mankind, nay for the entire creation, until one coincides with the One Principle *Sat Naam*. This is called self-elevation:

*Thine, O Thine is all power and greatness;  
The more I see Thee, I see Thee alone, losing all thought of myself.*

They, whose inner eye is awakened, see that the Power of God is working in and around them. Whatever they do, they do for the love of the Lord. Of Sain, the barber saint, it is said that once when he was cooking his food, a dog snatched a bread and ran away. The saint ran after the dog, calling him back so that the bread could be buttered. This is what a really awakened man would do for he sees the same self in the dog as in himself. We have, therefore, to take hold of a real saint, no matter in what garb he may be. He would lead us from the Name to the Named – from words to the Word and on to the Wordless. The Sound is of two kinds – outer and inner. The outer sound depends upon the inner Sound, but leads us outwards and not inwards as the inner Sound would do. When the Absolute God came into being, He came in the form of inner Sound. Of this inner Sound, it is said:

*The creation and the dissolution both depend on the Shabd (the Word),  
And it is from the Word that creation once again springs into being.*

Now we have to see how we can get a contact with the Word. This contact can only be established by the Guru-power in the Guru who is Word-personified. Though the Word is in us; and we live, move and have our very being in the Word; yet we are not conscious of it. — Why? — Because the Word lies beyond the range of the senses, the mind and the intellect; while our attention, as at present, is flowing outward into the world. We are, every moment, going into expansion without, and until we learn to invert, we cannot experience the Word:

*So long one is running fast without, carried away by egotism,  
One cannot have a taste of the Word nor can the Word attract him.*

Every moment we are being tormented by the lusts of the flesh – desires, greed, anger, attachment, and selfishness or egotism – we cannot possibly invert. We shall have to retrace our steps, rise above body consciousness, to get a contact with the Word which for its manifestation depends upon the grace of some perfect Master. Unless we get this conscious contact and a foretaste of this, we cannot love the Word. We shall have to forsake the world for the sake of the Word. The flesh and the spirit are two disparate entities. To arise into the life of the spirit we must rise above the flesh. Love for the Word is quite different from the knowledge of the Word on the intellectual level only. Faith in the Word would come only after an actual experience of the Word.

Faith is the root cause of all religions. Namdev, as a boy, used to see his grandfather making an offering every day to his deity. One day, in the absence of his grandfather, he made an offering to the deity. But when he saw that the family god did not take anything out of the food offered to him, the child vowed not to take any food until the god accepted the offering. This is called faith. So we will have to develop a childlike faith in the Word; the Word upholding the earth and the heaven. Whatever we see in the world is from the Word. Nobody has seen God with the eyes of flesh. But one can have an experience of the Power and Spirit of God – the Light and Sound – the first visible expression of the Absolute God. – But how? – Nanak says: “Those eyes are different which can witness the glory of God.” Lord Krishna speaks of it as *Divya Chakshu* or the illumined eye, or the Single Eye of Christ. The Hindus call it *Shiv Netra* and the Muslims *Chashm-e-Batin*. Until this eye is developed, one cannot see the Light of God.

All of us are living in the world of words, and we know how inadequate is the language of the three dimensional world; and how we are constantly flowing out with the current of time. There is yet another Word – the Holy Word which enables us to withdraw from the world of words and takes us out of it into the world of the Word – the Kingdom of God. There is a divine symphony in the Holy Word. Socrates tells us: "I hear a voice which attracts me and takes me into a new world of which I cannot give any

description." This voice is of the Voiceless. Annie Besant speaks of "the Voice of Silence." Tulsi Das, the author of the famous epic *Ramayana*, writes: "I cannot sing of the greatness of the Name, even Lord Rama can hardly do justice to it."

When we cannot adequately describe the Word, how difficult would it be to talk of the Wordless? With our poor intellect we cannot possibly understand the Word and its potentialities. Still the Rishis and the Munis, in their own way, tried to tell to us something of the Word. What we cannot comprehend on the intellectual level can yet be apprehended by rising above intellect. The scriptures by themselves cannot give us this intuitive knowledge. A man of intuition can give us an experience of what he himself has experienced. His company alone is not enough. It may, for a while, give us some kind of peace but not real and everlasting peace, which will come only when he chooses to manifest in us the fountainhead of peace. All beauty and glory lies in the Word. And until the Word is manifested and we consciously establish a contact through the grace of a perfect Master, we cannot have an appreciable idea of this Power and Spirit of God. In the *Rig Veda*, we read of *Vak Sidhi* or the Power of God coming into being. We have to catch this God-into- expression Power by rising above mind and matter.

We have now before us a hymn from Guru Amar Das. He has said the same thing which we have been discussing. Let us see what the great teacher has said:

*One who worships not the perfect Master and communes not with the Word,  
Woe be unto him and his life in the world.*

Human birth is a great blessing. Man occupies a place at the top rung of the ladder of life. He is the roof and crown of the creation. It is in the human frame that one can contact the Power and Spirit of God, and be one with God. This then is the goal of human life. But if we waste away this precious opportunity, we are nowhere. The Power of God resides in the heart, and in the terminology of saints "heart" lies at the eye-focus — behind and between the two eyes. We have, therefore, to rise to the centre of our being behind the eyes in order to contact the Holy Word. Lord Krishna in the *Gita* speaks of the nose "ending between the two eye-

brows." This is the seat of the soul, and from here the sensory currents spread from top to bottom, enlivening the whole body structure. It is here that the sensory currents withdraw and collect at the time of death.

We have, therefore, to pass through the similar experience of death while living in order to contact the higher Power in use. This is called transcension or trans-humanization. It is possible only by a practical process of self-analysis and not by book-learning or worldly wisdom which may, at the most, inspire us but cannot take us out of the magic house of the body. At present we are tied down to the body and the bodily adjuncts. We have to untie the Gordian knot between the matter and the spirit to be able to unhook our Self from the body at will. For this we will have to subdue the mind and the mental currents which are ceaselessly running riot. Until we do this, we cannot ascend to the sky within. We may read all the *Vedas*, the *Puranas* and the philosophical treatises but will not be any better than a parrot unless we consciously contact the Holy Word within.

All the time, we dabble in theories. The books keep us bound to knowledge on the intellectual level. We have to rise above discursive knowledge. It is a practical subject. Feelings, emotions and inferences are all done by the intellect. But intellect itself is blind. Our conclusions cannot be correct. To err is human. The real knowledge comes not from the avenues of mind and the intellect. It is all independent of these instruments. It is an action of the soul. The light of the soul is flawless. Behind the soul is the great Power called God – the Power and Spirit of God come into expression. It is in the sight and Life of this Power that we get our enlightenment. We have, therefore, to get into touch with this Power. This Power is all divine and cannot therefore err; though a person who is able to see the working of this Power becomes a conscious co-worker with the Power itself. Such a person witnesses within and around him the play of this Power. He sees the divine hand working around him and involuntarily says:

*It is not I who wills it,  
It is all the Will of God that is working.*

A Godman like Christ would naturally say: "I and my Father are one. My Father, sitting in me, is doing all the work." In the company of such a Godman, we also feel the truth of what they say:

*Listen to the true testimony of the Saints,  
For they speak what they actually see.*

Herein lies the difference between a Godman and an ordinary individual. We speak on the level of the intellect, while a Godman does from actual experience. Once a philosopher fell into a discussion with Kabir; it was but natural that the two differed, and Kabir had to say: "How can we two agree; I say what I see with my eyes, you speak from the authority of scriptures." Intuition or integral knowledge ranks much higher than scriptural knowledge. We do not know what we are. We are identified with the body and have not the ghost of an idea of the Power that is working in the body from the body itself. We may say that we are not the body, not the senses, not the *Pranas* (vital airs), not the intellect and not the mind. But what we are, we do not know. We speak in negative terms and have nothing to affirm. Affirmation comes from practical self-analysis, by separating the Power working in us from the body. The living self is therefore to be separated from the material self. We have to untie the Gordian knot; but how? One who has for himself been able to untie it can help us to do so.

Guru Amar Das had been in search of a Godman for no less than 70 years. Of him, it is said: "God Himself speaks through the Godman." Again, Nanak says: "Whatever Impulses I get from behind, the same I give out, O Lalo." Similarly, Christ used to say: "I do nothing on my own. I do what my Father bids me to do." But, unfortunately, we have not yet developed the eyes to recognize a Godman. The majority of mankind dubbed Nanak as one with a perverted outlook on life. So was the case with Socrates. He was charged by his countrymen for perverting the intellect of Athenian youth. For this he had to pay with his life by drinking a cup of hemlock, as decreed by the judges. To come across such a person is not enough. We have to accept him and to follow him if we want to make a headway on the spiritual path. Fortunate are they who serve a Satguru. A lip service will not do. "If ye love me, follow my commandments," said Christ. Their first emphasis is on ethical life. Ethical life is a stepping-stone to spirituality. Then they emphasize on the process of self-analysis, so as to separate the self in us from mind and matter, because it is the spirit that has to contact the God-power.

The God-power is characterized by the Light and Voice of God. It is from the Light of God that the Divine Music flows. Now the question is where does God-power dwell? It dwells in the eye-focus behind and between the eyes. It is already there but we are not conscious of it. We, on the plane of the senses, are flowing out and have never known to invert within. The human life without conscious contact with this God-power is valueless. While in expansion, we cannot possibly contact what is at the top of our being. Life on the circumference of our being keeps us far removed from the center of our being. We have, therefore, to change the course of our attention, from without to within. While immersed in the desires for the sense-objects, we concentrate and contemplate.

Buddha, therefore, emphasized on being desireless. At present the desires of the world are dragging us out into the world. We must learn to change the course of our desires; but how? By practicing the instructions of the Guru who has found the Reality in himself and can help us to find it for ourselves. The world which is the source of all solace and peace is within us. But we are searching happiness without us. The Word is all subtle and beyond the range of sense, the mind and the intellect. We have, therefore, to transcend all these avenues in order to realize and experience the holy Word:

*Unless one rises to the level of God,  
One cannot apprehend the Power of God.*

All knowledge, maybe temporal or spiritual, is to be gained only when one's range comes on the same level as that of the thing to be learned. While living in and by the air, we do not know that the air is full of tiny living creatures called microbes. Similarly, the water we take also has countless little germs in it. But we are not aware of them. It is with the help of a microscope that the microbes and germs when magnified come into the range of our sight. We have, therefore, to adjust our visual level to the thing we want to perceive, may be without or within. For a contact with the God-power, we have to withdraw from without and concentrate at the *Agya Chakra* or the eye-focus, far above the ganglionic centers in the body below the eyes. All this and much more is possible in the company of a perfect Master. We will have to cast our selves into the mold of the Master, and follow his instructions implicitly. All this requires some faith in the competency of the Master, may be an experimental faith so as to carry on

the experiment as he directs. By ourselves, we cannot manifest the Word and come in conscious contact with it, though the Word is within us.

Man is thrice blessed. He has the capacity to work on three levels: physical, mental and spiritual. Fortunately, we know the first two phases of human life and have made great progress therein. But we know very little about the spiritual level which is the back-bone of the other two. But it is within the possibility of man. We can fly in space because of the ethereal element in us. This gives us the power to discriminate – truth from untruth. Truth is the substratum of all life in various forms in the universe. We have to understand this life-principle. This is the *summum bonum* of human life. One who has gained the highest in him can help us to do likewise. As light comes from light, so does life from life. And the source of life lies at the eye-focus. We have to dig at the roots of life. For this, we have to pull ourselves to the roots of the inverted tree of life, as man is. This pulling process is to be done by a competent Master. He knows how to pull up the sensory currents out of the body to the seat of the soul. When the soul-currents once get concentrated, the inner eye is automatically opened. And then one begins to see the Light of God in himself.

Kabir tells us: "O ye, light the lamp in the dark and dismal dungeon of the body." This lamp is to be lighted while living, and not at the time of death as some traditional sects do. When a Hindu is about to die, it is customary to place a lighted earthen lamp near the head of the dying person, who is directed to fix his attention in that light so the departing spirit goes in that light. Little do we know that the light outside cannot help the spirit as it flies out of the body into the ethereal region. Salvation to be real is to be gained while living in the flesh and not on leaving the flesh. The *Vedas*, in this context say: "The ignorant souls on leaving the body go into darksome regions. And the souls of the learned go into still more dismal places."

Intellect is but an instrument which helps in the work-a-day world. It also helps us to understand the subject under discussion. Once we have understood the subject, we have to work on it. But if we remain in the intricacies of reasoning like a logician, we would be endlessly entrapped in its meshes. Reasoning is the help to a certain extent, but it fails to get to the Reality. For a dip in the Reality, one has to take the mortal plunge. But mind this plunge will not lead to death but will awaken you into higher consciousness. The *Upanishads* tell us: "One can witness the Light of

*Atman* (soul) only when the senses are well subdued, the mind is stilled and the intellect is equipoised."

This then is the ideal before us. We must get to the Reality somehow or the other, or else human life goes in vain. The sages go to the extent of saying: "It is better that a woman remain barren rather than to give birth to a child who loses the game of life." Else it is said: "If a woman has to give birth to a child, he must either be a devotee or a philanthropist or a great warrior. If that is not possible, it is better for her to remain barren rather than to waste her life energy."

*It is through Guru's instructions that love springs in human heart,  
And then one begins to take delight in the Divine Melody.*

The term Guru consists of two words: 'Gu'+ 'Ru' meaning thereby a torch bearer in the enveloping darkness. Elsewhere, "Guru" has been defined as one who can remove the veil of our eyes and we begin to see the Self in us. What does the Guru do? He gives us a contact with the Power of God which is pervading everywhere. The moment we see the real Self in us, all charm for the body vanishes. Then one gets a glimpse of the ideal before him, and he strives for it. The ideal is *Sat Naam* or the Primal Manifestation of Godhood. It is the elixir of life, drinking which one gains life eternal. Who would not like to live eternally? To be one with that Great Power is something of immense value. In contrast, he now feels his insignificance. The love for the little self (the body) now vanishes.

A part feels restless until it rests in the whole. But one must first know that there is something like "Whole," for it is this knowledge which brings into relief the ephemeral nature of the part. One can understand the distinction between the part and the whole only when one listens to the Master's instructions and gets a first-hand experience from him. Time and tide wait for no man. It is in the human body that one gets an opportunity to understand this mystery. "Once this opportunity is lost, human life goes in vain." Who knows when such an opportunity may come again. We have, therefore, to make the most of the time with us and try to get in touch with the Naam-power. Guru Amar Das, therefore, says:

*Whosoever has writ in his forehead,  
O Nanak! he alone ferries over.*

The Naam-power is within the human body. We live by it:

*The eternal Word of the Lord is a great treasure.  
And this treasure lies in the human body.*

There is a deep sense of intoxication in the Holy Word, so much so that Nanak, speaking of himself, says: "Nanak remains in a state of perpetual intoxication day and night." It is, however, possible to get into a state like this only when Lord God so wills. It is He who brings one to Himself in the garb of a Satguru. "On meeting a Truth-personified teacher, one develops an inner vision." In brief, it is with the grace of God that one meets the Godman. On meeting the Godman, one begins to "commune with the Name of God." What a pity that we have a rich heritage with us, but we wander outside all athirst and ahungry.

*O Bhikha!\_ none in the world is poor for everyone has a gem of inestimable value tucked in his girdle,  
As one does not know how to untie the knot, so one goes abegging.*

We are a combination of the material body and the conscious spirit. We know this fact on the intellectual level, and we speak of the Self in negative terms. But we have never analyzed the Self from the body in a practical way. This becomes a possibility when we get an inner awakening and testify to the Light of God in us.

God has given us the human form, and it is a great thing. He has also brought us to the feet of the Satguru. It is another great gift from Him. But we have not yet come into contact with the Naam-power. The greatest good comes only by communion with the Word.

*Those who commune with the Word, all their labors end; O Nanak! their faces shine with glory,  
And many escape from the wheel of life along with them.*

A *Gurumukh* (a chosen vessel) has a great potential in him. With just a particle of the Naam-power in him, he can help myriads of souls to cross over. One who is commissioned and has an authority, he can at a single sitting help hundreds of souls together to an out-of-body experience. This

initial experience the disciple can develop by daily practice according to the Master's instructions.

*Those who follow the dictates of the mind do things blindly,  
And they are ever raging about wildly;  
They do not understand the melody of the Holy Word,  
Nor do they know of the divine Light of the Word.*

After having explained the benefits accruing from the devotion to the Satguru, the Master is now telling us about the *manmukhs*. He then goes on to explain what a *manmukh* is: "A *manmukh* is one who is not aware of the Sound-current, nor does he know that he is all-knowing." The Word, as explained, dwells in the eye-focus which is far above the plane of the senses. As such one cannot enjoy the glory of the Word and acquire a taste for it until he transcends the senses. A contact with the Word comes only from a perfect Master. Even when one may meet a perfect Master, it is necessary that he should have faith in the omniscience of the Master. Otherwise, the result is that he continues doing things on his own mental level, and does not care for the instructions of the Master. "Seeing they see, but do not perceive; and hearing they hear, but do not understand." Perception and audition are very essential on this Path. God has given us eyes to perceive and ears to understand the glory of the Power and Spirit of God. The Word or the *Bani* is within us. It is made manifest by the Guru. It is, therefore, said that the Word of the Guru resides in every (human) breast – the eye-focus:

*The Word of the Master permeates in all that is,  
It is he who makes it manifest and contacts us with the same.*

Before the Master came in our way, the Word lay unmanifest in us. It is his grace that makes the unmanifest manifest. The question arises: Since when has the Word been in existence? The scriptures tell us: "The Word has been resounding in the universe throughout the ages; coming from the Truth, the Word leadeth to the Truth." Again, it is said: "In us is the Light of God, and from within that Light there emits the Holy Melody. If we merge in the inner Music, we come nearer the Truth."

The God-into-expression-Power is nothing but vibration. Where there is vibration, there is bound to be Light as well as Sound. By getting into touch

with this vibration, we begin to see the Light and hear the Sound, without which we are blind inwardly and deaf on the inner level. The Godman in whom the Power-of-God is in full vibration, raises us up and gives us a contact with these inner manifestations of God. But mind this is not our ideal. It is just a way back to God, from the Word to the Wordless. There is no other way besides this. Mere talk would not help us. The mind and intellect do not help us in this inner awakening. From outer words we have to catch the inner Word. One who has not yet risen inwardly, is yet mind-ridden. Thus, we are all blind in the terminology of the saints. We might be proud of the eyes we have. The *Gurbani*, however, tells us that in spite of these eyes we are nothing but blind:

*We cannot call a person blind simply because he has no eyes,  
O Nanak! blind is one who is cut off from the Power of God.*

Blindness then depends upon the condition of the inner eye – *Divya Chakshu* or *Shiv Netra*. If this Single Eye has not developed, one is nothing but blind in the real sense of the word. And the result is that such a person is an abode of anger, envy, ill-will and what not. He is every moment in his life being consumed by the invisible flames of lusts of flesh. A mere repetition of the words signifying God will not give any solace. We, for solace, have to get into touch with the God-power which is characterized by inner Light and inner Sound. The contact with this Power will keep you cool and collected. It will drive away all mental ills from which we usually suffer. You will then see within you:

*All the creatures are embedded in the Creator, and the Creator in the creation.*

*O ye, do not delude and deceive yourself, for the Power of God is surging in fullness everywhere.*

This, then, is the condition of one who has awakened to the Reality. The knowledge of the scriptures, the high-sounding talks, the narration of the epics and wise discourses cannot open the inner eye. An awakened person will certainly awaken you. Yajnavalkya, with all his learning, could not awaken Raja Janak. He could simply discuss in detail the theory of the subject. He was bold enough to admit that he could not give anything more – no practical experience.

Raja Janak, once again, called an assembly of the sages and seers to get a practical experience of what Yajnavalkya had explained to him so beautifully on a former occasion. The Raja addressed the sages and invited anyone among them who was competent to give a practical demonstration of the Reality to come to the stage. No one had the courage to come forward except Ashtavakra, a sage with eight humps in his body, but a really awakened soul. He took his seat on the stage. The appearance on the stage of humped Ashtavakra excited derision and laughter in the assembly. Seeing this, Ashtavakra asked the King: "Do you want an experience of *Jnana* [inner knowledge]?" The King replied in the affirmative. Thereupon the sage remarked, "If so, why have you summoned an assembly of cobblers who look only at my body?" Such, then, is the state of an awakened soul. This is why the *Vedas* and other scriptures speak in such glorious terms of the glory of an awakened soul.

The world is, no doubt, full of false prophets and half-prophets, of whom one must beware. They are "wolves in sheep's clothing." Thus we see that a mind-ridden person has no knowledge of the inner awakening and always dances to the tune of his mind. He may offer obeisance, but inwardly he may be no better than a butcher. Such souls cannot possibly invert. Sheikh Saadi, a Persian mystic writer of great repute, compared such a person with an ass overloaded with a mass of books. Similarly, Guru Amar Das, speaking of such a person, compares him to a ladle in the pudding, for the ladle itself cannot have a taste of the pudding in spite of the fact that it helps in its preparation. A *manmukh* likewise dabbles in all kinds of scriptures, reads them studiously, but is unaware of the practical process of self-analysis and of the consequent experience of the soul that follows as a natural consequence.

*They are not aware of their inner wealth, nor do they put faith in the Guru's words.*

*The real Jnani communes with the Guru's Word made manifest, and they are ever in tune with the Power and Spirit of God.*

A *manmukh* does not know the spiritual riches in him. And if the Guru tells him of the inner Light and Sound, he would not believe. On the contrary, he might assert that in spite of his having 40 to 50 years of practice, he could not get any such experience. This does not mean that the science is wrong and that others cannot derive the benefit therefrom. Saints tell

us: "The worthy disciple of the Guru sees the Reality with his own (inner) eye."

A perfect Master always teaches and shows the spiritual path. By precept and example, he tries to engrain in us the truth of what the sages and seers have said in this connection. For our benefit, he would give pertinent reference from the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, the *Quran*, the *Bible*, and other scriptures. He does so simply to convince us by varied testimonies because we are bound up with the scriptures, and these come as handy aids to him to lead each one of us from the line of least resistance. A perfect Master is a rare gift of God, and he tries by various means to convince us of the Power of God within us and helps us in contacting the same. It is just a question of an experiment, and there is no harm in experimenting just for the sake of experiment. The Master offers this experiment free, as a gift of nature like air, light and water. Where, then, is the harm to bring an experimental faith and have a trial?

When I was in the West I laid emphasis on the Christ-power, and parallel thoughts from other sources were presented in order to strengthen the belief of Christians in their own Messiah. I would then ask them to attend the meditation on the following day. Those who sat for meditation would invariably get some inner experience. It is the attention of the Master which momentarily helps the disciple to rise above body-consciousness. It is not something new, nor is it out of nature's course. It is the most ancient science which, unfortunately, we have forgotten. It is to revive this forgotten science that the saints come from time to time. Moreover, it is an eternal and established science which does not admit of any addition and alteration. It is so from the beginning of time. It is God-made and not man-made.

A real *Jnani* may not have any academic degrees. He may not have passed any examination. A *Jnani* is defined as one who has inner awakening. A *Jnani*, whether literate or illiterate, rises into higher consciousness. This is why Swamiji asks us to contemplate the conscious Self in us. Thus, a *Jnani* is one who has realized himself by a process of self-analysis and sees the Overself working in and around him. He is always in touch with the Power and Spirit of God, in the form of Light and Sound.

The divine harmony is very attractive and keeps a person attuned to itself, and pulls him up to higher regions. Plato speaks of it: "The Music of the

Spheres is so intense and swift that it pulls me up in an instant." The Word of the Guru is made manifest within. It is something which is quite different from outer sounds. It vibrates in fullness in the disciplined souls, and they are always in tune with it, and actually dwell in it. They see the Light of God reflected everywhere:

*The whole creation is the manifestation of the Holy Light and, as such, all are the children of God.*

This inner Light is a valuable treasure. We are all gifted with this treasure but are unaware of it. As, all the time, we keep busy on the plane of the senses, we never get an opportunity to come nearer this inestimable wealth. It therefore, remains buried with us and we remain a pauper all our life. The scriptures with us are the finest records of the awakened souls and their experiences. By reading them, we get a little interested in the subject, but remain where we are without making those experiences as our own. We can have similar experiences if we could but know how to tap inside. This is an experience of the soul and, as such, has to be experienced at the still-point of the soul (eye-focus).

*The Jnanis are ever under the protection of God, and I would fain offer myself as a sacrifice unto them;*

*The beloveds of the Guru are ever in the service of the Lord, and humble Nanak is ever-ready to serve them.*

This, then, is the glory of the *Jnanis*. Free from all desires, they are always in love with the infinite and live under the shadow of his protecting wings. The Power of God pervades everywhere, but it works in fullness on some human-pole of its own choosing:

*My Lord is in every heart, and there is no heart where He is not;*

*Blessed is the human heart where His Power manifests itself in its fullness.*

The Godman, with the Power of God manifested in him, can help us also in manifesting the said Power. He, by a little of his life-impulse, raises us from the human level so as to enable us to have a direct and immediate experience of the God-power that resides in the human heart (the eye-focus). Such a God-intoxicated sage is a real worshipper of God and is worthy of our love and reverence. Guru Ram Das, therefore, prays: "O

God, make me the slave of Thy slaves." This is how an awakened man would always feel. We, on the other hand, are the slaves of our wives and children, our houses and riches. The beloved of the Guru, however, revels in the greatness of God. – But what of us? All the sacred books tell us that the soul and the Oversoul are within us. But we, being in expansion on the sensory plane, do not know this fundamental phenomenon.

God is the soul of our soul but, strange as it may seem, we search for Him in the world without, and by the means of the senses and the sense-organs. We may continue our search by and through *apravidya* (outer knowledge) all our life, but we cannot gain anything therefrom. The Light and Sound of God can only be contacted beyond the plane of the senses by means of inner awakening. The outer eyes are helpless in this respect. Whosoever has been able to develop his inner vision is really blessed.

*The delusion of the world, like a python, is holding the world in its deadly grip, and is breathing out poisonous fumes all around; God's Name alone can save us from the affect of this deadly poison, and the Guru, like a snake-charmer, provides us with the antidote in the form of the Holy Word.*

What is this delusion after all? And how does this delusion come? Delusion means to forget the real values of life. This forgetfulness begins when we take the human body as the be-all and end-all of life on earth. It is, therefore, said: "The roots of forgetfulness lie deep in the human body." We are the indweller of the body and not the body itself. To identify our self with the body is the beginning of this delusion. We are now looking at the world from the physical plane. We have to change our angle of vision. When we rise above the physical body by the grace of a Saint, we cross over from the material to the immaterial, from the earthly to the unearthly level, and see things from a higher level. With the opening of the inner vision, we begin to see the world from a spiritual height and that makes all the difference. As, at present, we are steeped in darkness and see things darkly, we are ignorant of the intrinsic nature of things:

*Delusion, like a she-serpent, is encircling the universe; Those who feed this serpent are fed by the serpent itself.*

It is customary with the she-serpent to keep her eggs within her coil and, one by one, keeps on swallowing the infants. But those who escape from her deadly coil are saved. All the people of the world worship *Maya* or delusion, with the result that they are flowing without through the avenues of the physical senses. This expansion without is the cause of our destruction:

*A rare devotee of the Guru, who has conquered the serpent of the mind, May, like the Guru himself, trample over his physical and mental Self.*

This, then, is the way to get out of the delusive wilderness of the world in which all of us have lost our way. It is by trans-humanizing the human in us that we get to the Light and Sound of God, which work as a "lamp unto our feet," and gradually lead us God-wards. Once we know and practice the Holy Word, step by step, we come nearer to the Wordless. It is a clear-cut science as "two and two make four." The poison of the world is now left behind and can have no effect on the one who practices *Naam* or *Shabd*. As diamond cuts diamond, so *Naam* nullifies the effect of the shadowy existence of the world emanating from him. One cannot catch his own shadow but by catching himself. We have, however, mistaken the shadow for the Reality and are, therefore, lost in the shadow.

*Those who are pre-ordained, they alone come to the feet of a Satguru. It is by meeting the Satguru that one is washed clean of the poison of egotism.*

The scriptures tell us: "It is by the grace of the Lord God that one meets the Satguru." The law of demand and supply works on all levels of existence, physical or otherwise. There is food for the hungry and water for the thirsty. Where there is fire, oxygen, on its own, comes to its aid. Where there is an intense longing for the Lord, He provides the means to bring one to His feet. He leads the aspirant to a Godman, and the Godman unites the aspirant to the Power-of-God in him. The very touch with the Spirit-of-God is enough to expel the poison of mind and matter. The moment one rises above the body, the sense of "I-ness" is left behind. The Holy Word makes one holy. All this comes as a free gift from the Satguru. All this is His work:

*All attachments born of egotism are burnt to ashes by the Power of the Word;  
The beloved of the Guru comes to find the Light of God in himself.*

Egotism is an ancient malady and very deadly in its affect. Nanak has given a beautiful pen-picture of egotism in one of his psalms:

*In ego man cometh, and in ego he goeth.  
In ego he taketh his birth, and in ego he perisheth.  
In ego he liveth, and in ego he settleth all his scores.*

Continuing the theme, the great teacher concludes his song with the following words:

*Ego is an age-old malady of man,  
And yet its remedy, too, lieth in man.  
Should the Lord's grace be with him,  
He can commune with the Word made manifest in him.*

*O Nanak! those who have the ears to hear the melody, Sure enough are they liberated from ego.*

There is no ill in the world for which there is no remedy.

Egotism, though engrained in the very nature of man, can likewise be remedied. And the remedy for egotism lies in *Shabd* or *Naam* (the Holy Word), which is sustaining and enlivening the whole universe. When the little self (ego) merges in the higher self, one becomes a conscious co-worker of the Divine Power. This little self, too, has different gradations – physical, subtle and instrumental – all of which have to be removed and crossed over, one by one, with the help of the divine melody, which rises in a crescendo. Nanak spoke so eulogistically of the greatness of *Naam* or *Shabd* that one was tempted to question as to where it could be found. He replied: "Go ye, and search for *Naam* wherever ye may; then practice it with the grace of the Guru." When asked as to what *Naam* was, he replied: "Whatever there is; is from *Naam*. There is no place where it is not."

The entire world is the manifestation of *Naam* or the Power of God. But, as said before, it can be contacted and practiced with the help of a living Master. Those who attempt to do so with the help of the scriptures or, at times, get a little insight into it as a result of reaction of their past *karmas* (impressions), they fail to make any headway on the path because of their ignorance of the esoteric science. An awakened person, on the other hand, is fully conversant both with the theory and practice of this ancient wisdom and can easily explain things to us and help us in developing this inner experience. Moreover, without the help and active aid of a Master proficient in this science, we sometimes get involved in difficulties of one nature or the other.

The books cannot help us out of the impasse, and we feel bewildered like babes in the wilderness. – Hence, the need for a practical teacher of the inner science. Again, one who is competent enough in the practical working of this divine wisdom can help us both in the science and art of life. The greatness of a Master lies in casting us in his own mold. Guru Amar Das, emphasizing this point, says:

*At one time, I too, reveled on the plane of senses, but now I have risen far above it.*

*This miraculous change was wrought with the active aid and help of my Master.*

Every Saint has had his past, and every sinner has a future. There is hope for everybody. What a man has done, another can do, provided there is proper guidance and help. Whosoever would tread the Path of the Masters is sure to get inner awakening. Some people regarded it as a wild-goose chase, a figment of the human brain, a will-of-the-wisp, but this is not so. It is a science – definite, certain and solid. It yields results as definite as two and two make four. Rome was not built in a day. There is always a time factor for success on the Path. The saints do not claim any special privileges for themselves. They speak to us as man to man, on a level of equality, and hold out the possibility of our becoming like them in the course of time, provided we work with patience and single-minded devotion.

*The devotees of the Master shine forth in glory and are accepted in honor at His Court.*

*The humble Nanak would ever sacrifice himself at the feet of the holy Ones who follow the perfect Master's instructions.*

One must strive to become a worshipful disciple of the Master, in order to ensure success on the spiritual path. Such a one is respected not only in this world but in the next as well: "A life of purity endears one to all." If, along with purity in life, one were to gain some spiritual merit, he would find a place of honor in His Court. Wherever a real devotee sits, it becomes a holy place.

For a real devotee, the words of the Master are gospel truth. He follows them in letter and spirit and does not go the mind's way. He sees God in his Master. He understands the Will of his Master – the Will which has already become manifest in him. He makes His Will his own, losing himself in Him. Such a devotee is worthy of our highest esteem. But how many of us do understand such a worshipful disciple? Even if we may come across such a being, we accept his words only to the extent that they are in consonance with our purpose. If his words do not suit us, we simply bypass them. We measure him and his instructions on our own mental level. What then is the result? We get stuck up, and our further progress on the spiritual path is retarded:

*Those who merge in the Shabd, they escape:  
Without the Shabd, there can be no salvation.*

Liberation, then, comes through contact with the *Shabd* or *Naam*. All the great sages say so. We, on the other hand, remain all the time engrossed in the repetition of God's names but seldom think of reaching the Power which these names imply. The crux of the problem remains that we do not get to the Named. A thirsty man may go on repeating the words 'water', *pani*, *jal*, or *aqua*, but he will not be able to quench his thirst by simply crying himself hoarse with these words. His thirst would go only when he actually takes the liquid which all these words denote. We have, of course, to start with words or names. But to what end? – Simply to get the substance or the desired thing. We have, therefore, to travel from ordinary words to the Word, contacting which would give us solace and peace. Similarly, outer garb also does not matter in the least in getting to the Reality.

*Apravidya* (outer knowledge) keeps us in outer pursuits. One may have long hair or a cleanly-shaven crown. One may put on a blue garb or a yellow one, but these cannot help one in his inner approach. Nanak, therefore, says:

*One may choose any kind of apparel one may like,  
One may torture one's body by austerities and penances, One may thus  
extend his sphere of influence as much as he may like . . . .*

We have, after all, to contact the Power of God, and this cannot be done by outer garb, symbols and such-like things. We have to change our inner being. We have to find a way of life: "One who practices the way of life as the Master enjoined, the Master honors him and helps him to his utmost." By self-propaganda and outer show, one may deceive himself for any length of time and deceive others for some time, but he cannot deceive God within:

*One may, for the time being, secure a good following for oneself;  
But one cannot win over the Power of God by these things.*

The God-power within is all-knowing and omniscient. It reads us through and through. It would not allow us an ingress until it finds us fit in every way. Herein, Guru Amar Das is, in a way, making a passing reference to his own life – the 70 years of his life that he spent in the company of various *Sadhus* of different orders. With all his intense search of over seven decades, he could not get nearer to the Truth. The outer hallmarks of one or more lines of sandalwood paste on the forehead were once indicative of the approach which the ancients had in their quest for God. But now, unfortunately, they mean nothing. We are, however, worshippers of these lines and marks on the body but do not know the riches that lie inside the body. One's true and intrinsic value lies in the extent to which one has traveled God-wards. Nanak, therefore, emphasizes:

*O Nanak! without the Satguru one cannot get to Naam, No matter if one  
may try to find Him by myriads of acts and deeds.*

*Naam*, as such, has already been defined above. It comes by practicing the process of practical self-analysis and rising to the center that lies mid-way between the physical and subtle bodies. It is, therefore, said: "One must

rise to His level to know Him." He is the subtlest of the subtle and we, too, have to become subtle within us to reach His level. We may find an ingress within and sit in the silence of our heart, enjoy a little of our heart, enjoy a little of the happiness emanating therefrom, but we cannot go up. Most of us sit like this and get contented. The way-up is, however, a different matter. Where, then, is the real happiness? It comes with the opening of the inner vision, and this is what really matters. Without this, one goes in darkness after death. The second essential is the conscious contact with the Sound-current. Both of these are practical things. One may be very learned and well-versed in the sacred books, but until one rises above body consciousness, one will remain as ignorant as ever before.

*Without conscious contact with the Shabd, all are flowing recklessly,  
So recklessly as to baffle all understanding;  
God alone may sustain and uphold one with the Power of His Word, and  
one may remain in tune with it.*

*Shabd* is the rope-ladder that leads into *Ashabd* (Nameless). God came into being in the form of the Light and Sound principle. We can catch the twin-principle if we rise above the sensory plane. This is the true way back to God – the Absolute God where there is neither Light nor Sound. When God so wills, He provides the means for reunion of the soul with His own Self. It is He, in the form of a Godman, who does this thing. We have, therefore, no other way to reach God except through the Godman. The seekers after God always go in search of a Godman for their union with God.

*O Nanak, God very well knows His own plan, for it is He who has Himself made His plan.*

God's way lies through the *Shabd*, and the *Shabd* is like an electric lift. One has to sit in this lift, and the lift shall take him to the top. One has not to do much in this context. He is simply to sit in it and press the button:

*Guru is the key of the mobile house of the body and the mind;  
Without the aid of the Guru, the mind does not provide a way-in, and  
there is no other remedy.*

Guru is the arch-stone in the edifice of spirituality. He provides you with the means to transcend both the body and the mind. He takes us to the

realm to which He himself belongs: "When the Guru and the *Sikh* (disciple) become one, both work on the same lines." A perfect disciple enters into the life and spirit of the Guru, and the Guru dyes the disciple in his own color. This is how one becomes a worshipful disciple.

*Without the Satguru, one cannot be a true devotee nor does he come to love the Holy Word,  
O Nanak! those who commune with the Word, the love of the Satguru ferries them across.*

The term "devotion" has been defined by the saints. In common parlance, it denotes love and affection. We may develop a disposition towards a certain thing. This is the common aspect and it can be developed by the study of books or by singing devotional songs. But real love is something quite different. It develops when one gets a real taste of something – something really delectable. Again, elsewhere, it is defined as:

*The devotion of the worshipful disciple brings down the Music of the Spheres,  
And with this descent, one comes to know of the Divine Plan.*

It is from this inner awakening, resulting from the manifestation of the Sound-current, that one develops true devotion and begins to tread the spiritual path.

A perfect Master is Word-personified, and whosoever meets him, he connects with the Word. The saints are Ministers in the Kingdom of God. They hold the portfolio of God-power and come into the world to take the *jivas* back to God. *Avtaras* or the incarnations of *Brahman* keep the world going on an even keel. Thus, we see that there is a great difference between the two. And yet incarnations, like the saints, derive their authority from one and the same supreme Power called "Absolute God," for carrying out their respective missions. The position may be likened to that of the Commander-in-Chief and that of the Viceroy, both of whom hold a direct commission from the King Emperor, each to work in his own sphere. Both of them, however, point to the same Power but in a different way. Lord Krishna, while manifesting his universal form, was commanding the whole show of the [battle] field at Kurukshetra. Kabir has beautifully described this position:

*The time and the timeless, both are the creatures of the Great Power.  
God created them to carry on the administration of the world.*

We are the worshippers of the God-power at the back of them both. Each of them has his own sphere of work. We respect them both. In times of disturbance and unrest, it is the *Avtaras* that come to our aid. The administration of the world is then handed over temporarily to the *Brahman-power*, and it works relentlessly in crushing down the evil elements in the world so as to restore normalcy. Even in the most chaotic conditions, the *Avtaras* respect the authority of the saints and do not touch their disciples, for the saints hold a permit of *Naam* and can freely move about unmolested. Thus ends the hymn of Guru Amar Das. Summing up, we have to rise above body-consciousness and recognize our own real nature. This can be done by a process of inversion and by contacting the Light of Life within us. When once we taste this divine beauty, we lose love for the world. While living in the world, one lives beyond the world (in the inner plane):

*Like a lotus with its roots in the pond and yet its head aloft,  
Or like a swan stately sailing on the water remains unaffected by it,  
So does the soul cross the sea of life by the aid of the Shabd.  
So saith Nanak, one remains uncontaminated with the Word's Power.*

When a person takes to communion with the Word, he gets detached while living in the world, and so also he goes detached from it. It is only our attachment which keeps us bound to the world, and when there is no attachment whatsoever, there can be no bondage. The contact with the Word can be established only by a Word-personified Saint. It is something that is self-evident and has been in vogue from time immemorial. But, unfortunately, we are fearful of gurudom. — Why? — It is because real Gurus are very rare in this age; but it may, however, be added that the world is not without one at any time. Most of the so-called Gurus merely act and pose like genuine Gurus. They are as much slaves of the senses as we are, in spite of their outer garb and hallmarks on their persons.

One must be true to one's Self, rather than one should deceive one's Self and others too. If a blind attempts to lead a blind, both are sure to fall into the ditch. "Be true to thine own Self and it must follow as night and day,

thou canst not be false to any man." One cannot deceive another without first deceiving himself. Theory is one thing and practical experience is another. If a person has not had a practical experience, why should he say otherwise? This would save gurudom from being damned. But nobody is prepared to admit that his water-milk is sour. Whosoever comes forward claims to have the power to grant salvation. In this way, both the teacher and the taught go the wrong way. What a shame.

Once a *pandit* (one learned in the sacred lore) claimed this power for himself. Kabir confronted him boldly with the words: "Thou hath no direct experience of Godhead, and yet thou art prostituting His Name." Ordinarily, saints hardly use such harsh words but at times, it cannot be helped. But when they see plain and honest people being exploited by wily priests, they cannot but condemn such business-like dealings in the name of religion. Christ had once to castigate Pharisees and scribes to clear the temple as they had turned it into a robbers den. But the innocent folk, in their ignorance, worship such false teachers. "The hungry sheeps look up and are not fed. They are, in fact, wolves in sheep's clothing."

How, then, may one know that a teacher is a real teacher? Tulsi Sahib has given us a criterion, a touch-stone, to test the veracity of a Sadhu: "A real Sadhu would always take initiative to accost the disciples." It shows an inner awakening in the Master for he with his insight sees the same God-power in others as in himself. So he accosts the God-power in the disciple. But what do we see in common practice? The Gurus of today are stiff



necked and take pride when the people bow down before them. One who has got the goods can deliver them to you. But one who himself has nothing with him, what can he do for you?

## The Master speaks: explanatory notes

- (1) Nanak: (1465-1539): The founder of the Sikh religion.
- (2) Sain: (1390-1440): He was a court barber to the Prince of Rewa (Central India). Subsequently he became the Court Guru under the guidance of Ramananda.
- (3) Namdev: (1269-1344): Born in Maharashtra, Namdev was a tailor by profession. His 60 hymns are included in the *Adi Granth*.
- (4) Guru Amar Das: (1479-1594): The third Sikh Guru.
- (5) Tulsi Sahib: (1763-1843): The Saint of Hathras. Original name: Sham Rao Hulkar, Crown Prince of Gwalior. He spurned the throne to practise meditation.
- (6) Kabir: (1440-1518): A well-known Indian saint who practised and preached *Surat Shabd Yoga*.
- (7) Lalo: A disciple of Guru Nanak and a carpenter by trade.
- (8) Bhikha: A sixteenth century Indian saint.
- (9) *Gurbani*: The sacred writings of the Sikh Masters.
- (10) Raja Janak: Father-in-law of Lord Rama (of *Ramayana*).