

The True Name, Vol 2

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CHAPTER 1

Fear Is A Beggar

1 December 1974 am in Chuang Tzu Auditorium

THERE IS NO END TO HIS VIRTUES,

NOR TO THEIR NARRATION.

THERE IS NO END TO HIS WORKS AND HIS BOUNTY,

AND ENDLESS WHAT HE SEES AND HEARS.

THERE IS NO KNOWING THE SECRETS OF HIS MIND;

THERE IS NO BEGINNING OR END TO IT.

SO MANY STRUGGLE TO KNOW HIS DEPTH,

BUT NONE HAS EVER ACHIEVED IT.

NO ONE HAS EVER KNOWN HIS LIMITS;

THE FURTHER YOU LOOK, THE FURTHER BEYOND HE LIES.

THE LORD IS GREAT. HIS PLACE IS HIGH,

AND HIGHER EVEN IS HIS NAME.

NANAK SAYS: ONE ONLY KNOWS HIS GREATNESS
WHEN RAISED TO HIS HEIGHTS,
BY FALLING UNDER THE GLANCE
OF HIS ALL-COMPASSIONATE GRACE.
HIS COMPASSION IS BEYOND ALL DESCRIPTION.
THE LORD'S GIFTS ARE SO GREAT HE EXPECTS NOTHING IN RETURN.
HOWEVER GREAT A HERO OR WARRIOR, MAN KEEPS ON BEGGING.
IT IS DIFFICULT TO CONCEIVE THE COUNTLESS NUMBERS WHO GO ON ASKING.
THEY INDULGE THEMSELVES IN DESIRES AND DISSIPATE THEIR LIVES.
AND OTHERS RECEIVE, YET DENY IT.
THEY GO ON SUFFERING FROM THEIR HUNGER,
YET WILL NOT TAKE TO REMEMBRANCE
O LORD, THESE TOO ARE YOUR GIFTS.
YOUR ORDER ALONE GIVES FREEDOM OR BONDAGE.
NOBODY CAN DEBATE THIS FACT.
HE WHO INDULGES IN USELESS BABBLE
REALIZES HIS FOLLY WHEN STRUCK IN THE FACE.
HE ALONE CAN KNOW HIMSELF,
AND ONLY THE RAREST CAN DESCRIBE HIM;
HE BEQUEATHS THE QUALITY OF HIS STATE TO WHOMEVER HE CHOOSES.
NANAK SAYS, HE IS THE KING OF KINGS.

There is no end to His grandeur. Whatever we say about it is so little as to betray our utter incompetence.

Rabindranath Tagore lay on his deathbed. An old friend sitting by his side said to him, "You can leave this world satisfied, you have accomplished whatever you wanted to do. You have attained

great respect, you wrote many songs, and the whole world knows you as the divine bard. Really nothing is left undone.”

Rabindranath opened his eyes, looked sadly at his friend and said, “Don’t say such things. I was just telling God that all I wanted to sing is still unsung. What I wanted to say is still unsaid. My whole life has been spent merely tuning my instrument!” He felt he had not yet begun to sing His praise and already the moment to leave had arrived.

Rabindranath had written six thousand songs, all in praise of God. Yet he felt he hadn’t sung a single word of His glory. Nanak also says the same thing and this is the experience of all the rishis who have known. Whatever is said about Him is only like adjusting the instrument; His song can never be sung. Who will sing it? How can one limited personality contain the boundless expanse? How can you hold the skies in your fist? All our efforts prove futile and only after trying totally can we realize our incompetence.

Only when you realize how insignificant you are can the understanding of His greatness take root. Fools always think themselves great; wise men are aware of their smallness. As understanding increases the feeling of being too small, too insignificant, parallels the sense of His vastness and all-pervading presence. A moment comes in this quest when you are completely lost, and only He remains.

The speaker is lost – what is there to say? Only he remains: His glory, His grandeur, His endless resonance. The seer is lost; only the seen remains. You are extinct, completely annihilated; then who will give tidings of Him? Whatever discussions men have had about God have been hopeless. When a tremendous event occurs we are struck dumb; when a person reaches God he becomes speechless. Not only is speech lost, but the very breath stops. You stop completely at the moment of knowing Him: neither thoughts move, nor words, nor breath, nor does the heart beat. Even a single heartbeat would deprive you of His sight, that slight trembling can produce a separation.

In just such a moment of speechless silence, Nanak has uttered these words. They are not to teach others, but to express his own helplessness.

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NOR TO THEIR NARRATION.

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AND ENDLESS WHAT HE SEES AND HEARS.

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THERE IS NO BEGINNING OR END TO IT.

SO MANY STRUGGLE TO KNOW HIS DEPTH,

BUT NONE HAS EVER ACHIEVED IT;

As long as you feel you have known God, you are under an illusion – you err. For whatever you have known cannot be God, whatever you have measured cannot be God, whatever you have fathomed cannot be God. You must be diving into some lake; you are nowhere near the ocean. You have gone into some insignificant valley; you have not known the abysmal depths where falling is endless. You must have climbed some nondescript hill on the outskirts of your village; you have no knowledge of His Everest where climbing is impossible. We have succeeded in climbing the Everest of the Himalayas, though with great difficulty, but to scale His Everest is unthinkable.

Why is it impossible? Try to understand how inconceivable it is to gauge or understand God.... we are a part of Him. How can a part know the whole? I can hold everything of this world within my hand, except myself. How can I hold myself in my own hand? My eyes can see everything under the sun, but how can they look at me? They cannot see me completely for the simple reason that they are a part of me, and the part can never know the whole; it may get glimpses but not the complete picture.

The difficulty is that we are a part of this vast expanse. Had we not been a part of God we would have known Him; had we been distinct and separate from Him, we could have gone around Him and investigated. But we are a part of Him; we are His very heartbeat, His breath! How can we go around Him? How can we grasp Him? Man is but a particle of sand in this vast expanse, a drop in the ocean. How can this one lonely drop contain the whole ocean? How can it know the entire ocean?

This is very interesting: the drop is in the ocean and the drop is the ocean. So in a very profound sense, the drop knows the ocean, because the ocean is not different from the drop. And yet in another sense it cannot know the ocean because the ocean is not separate from it. This is the biggest paradox of religion: we know God and yet we do not know Him at all. How can this be when He throbs in us and we in Him? We are not far from Him; in fact there isn't the slightest distance between Him and us.

So in a sense we know Him well; and yet we do not know Him at all, because we are a part of Him. How can a part know the whole? We dive in Him, we float in Him, live in Him; at times we forget Him and sometimes we remember Him. Sometimes we feel ourselves very near Him and sometimes far. In clear moments we feel that we have known Him. When the heart gets over-filled, we know that we have known, because we have recognized Him. Wisdom comes, then again it is lost and there is deep darkness. Then we falter again. But this very state of knowing and not knowing is the basic condition of a religious person.

When anyone questioned Buddha about God he would keep silent. What could he say? Contradictions cannot be spoken about. If he were to say, "I know," he would be making a mistake, because who can say that he knows? And if Buddha were to say he did not know, he would be making a false statement, because who knew more than he!

Early one morning a very learned pundit came to Buddha to ask about God. Buddha remained silent. Soon the pundit left. Ananda asked Buddha why he had not answered, since the pundit was a man who knew a great deal and deserved an answer. Buddha said, "Just because he is deserving, it is all the more difficult to give him an answer. If I said I have known Him, it would be wrong, because without knowing Him completely how could I claim to know Him at all? I I said I did

not, that too would be false. All claims derive from the ego and the ego can never know Him. Since he is deserving and intelligent and understanding, I had to keep silent. He understood. Did you not see him bow before he left?"

Then Ananda remembered how the pundit was so grateful that he bowed reverently at Buddha's feet. "How wonderful! Did he really understand? That never occurred to me."

Buddha replied, "Horses are of three types. The first type you hit with a whip and they will move, inch by inch. The second type you need not whip; just threaten them and they move. For the third, you need not even crack the whip; just the shadow of the whip sets them going. The pundit belongs to the third type. I had only to show him the shadow and he started on the journey."

Words are the whips; silence is the shadow. Words are needed, because it is the rare horse that responds to the shadow of the whip. The condition of one who knows is such that he cannot say he knows, and he cannot say he does not know. He is in between knowing and not knowing.

Nanak says He is without end. Whatever you say of Him is too little. You keep on saying and yet you find that there is so much to say that you have hardly said anything. All expressions regarding Him are incomplete. And all scriptures are incomplete; they are meant for the horses who don't respond to the shadow of the whip.

THERE IS NO END TO HIS VIRTUES,

NOR TO THEIR NARRATION.

THERE IS NO END TO HIS WORKS AND HIS BOUNTY.

As religion penetrates a person more and more profoundly, he begins to see His various works and also His beneficence.

His works are manifested all around us but most people are blind to it. They say, "Where is God? Who is the creator?" Seeing the creation around them, they are blissfully unaware of the creator! They persist in asking, "Is there a hand behind all this creation? Who could it be?" They are stone-blind, they cannot visualize the hand that has produced this vast creation. The irony is that in other respects they accept and believe blindly.

To date no one has seen the electron with the naked eye. Science says that the electron is the last particle of electricity. As the basis of the world of matter, its various combinations have given rise to the earth. But so far no one has seen the electron, nor is there any hope of seeing it. Then how can scientists believe in the electron? They say that its effects, its results, prove its existence.

The cause is subtle, the effect is gross. We cannot see the hand of God, but we can see His works. We believe in the existence of electrons because we see the results. Yet we deny the existence of God whose proof lies all around us. The flower opens; some hidden hand must make it bloom, or else how can it? The seed breaks but someone must break it; when the hard shell cracks the tender plant appears bearing delicate flowers.

Everywhere we see His handwriting, but the hand cannot be seen. The hand is not visible because there is a balance between the subtle and the gross. The cause is always subtle; the result is always gross. We cannot see the cause. God is the highest cause, but His handiwork is evident all around us.

So there are three types of people – the three types of horses according to Buddha. First are those who cannot even see His handiwork, they are so blind! They ask: "What is God? Who is the creator? What proof is there? If the vast creation all around us is not enough for them, if they cannot see His hand behind all creation, what else will make them understand?"

What greater proof is there than that life moves in a consecutive and balanced order? There is no disjunction anywhere within this enormous leela, this play. It is a continuous flow. Night and day the music of creation plays its enchanting melody. Everything happens as it should. The universe is not a chaos, but a cosmos; it is not happening by chance but by a well-determined law working all the time.

This law is referred to as dhamma or dharma. Lao Tzu calls it tao, the way; Nanak calls it hukum, divine order. When Nanak says hukum do not imagine that He is standing somewhere issuing orders. Hukum means the universe is an order, not a chaos. Things do not happen here haphazardly. An ordering hand is in everything, providing a purpose behind each event. All happenings are directed towards their ultimate development.

If you have no eyes for creation you are totally blind. There are many who cannot see the hand behind creation. When you see a small picture or statue and you ask who made this, you never for a moment think it may have been formed by chance. But such a vast painting hangs all around you, each leaf a work of His genius, and you cannot see Him behind all this? You must simply have made up your mind not to see Him; you have resolved to turn your back towards Him as if you feel there is some danger and you are afraid.

Certainly the fear is there. No sooner do you recognize His hand behind the canvas of this vast creation than you are a changed person; you cannot remain the same. Whoever hears even the faintest murmur of the divine music in creation has to alter his life, because once you begin to see His hand behind everything, you cannot continue to do what you have been doing; it all appears wrong.

As long as you pretend He doesn't exist you can sin, misbehave, mistreat others, and give yourself full freedom to indulge in any evil; as soon as His hand appears to you that freedom is lost. Then you have to think twice before you act and pay more attention to remembrance, to remembering God, because now you know that He sees, that He is present. He is in and around everyone, everything. Whatever you do to anyone, you do to Him. If you pick someone's pocket, it is His pocket you pick; if you steal, you steal from Him; if you kill, it is Him you kill.

Most human beings turn a blind eye towards Him. Once aware of His presence, you can no longer remain as you are; you will have to change at your very roots. This change is so sweeping that many prefer to avoid all the trouble, so they deny God and remain as they are.

A hundred years ago Nietzsche declared: "God is dead. Now man is totally free." It is exactly for this freedom that you deny God, because then you are at liberty to do as you please. There is no one to

decide for you. You are unrestrained, independent. He who is self-willed and independent persists in denying God no matter how much you try to convince him. It remains easy to deny Him because the gross handiwork can be seen, but the subtle hand remains invisible.

So people say: "Creation happens by itself; everything happens on its own." But this is the definition of God: He who happens on His own, who is swayambhu, the self-created.

The second type of man sees God's handiwork and also accepts the hand behind it, but his acceptance is only mental. He is intimidated and frightened, so you will find him in temples and mosques, in churches and gurudwaras. He goes there because he is frightened, having suffered the lashes of the whip of life. Out of fear he comes to pray, to beg protection and to seek solace in wealth, position, name. He has come to beg. Fear is always a beggar, always asking for something or other. He has an inkling of the hand behind creation and a slight feeling for the presence of God, but only because of his fear. He is totally oblivious to God's munificence, or else he would not beg.

The third type is what Nanak talks about, the devotee. He sees His handiwork all around; he also sees His bounty and His grace in everything. To see His grace is subtle, like seeing the shadow of the whip. The devotee can see at every moment that He showers us with His gifts. What is left to be desired? You can only thank Him, therefore the devotee goes to the temple in thanksgiving, not as a supplicant. He has nothing to ask for.

Were God to appear before him and say, "Ask whatever you wish," he will instead reply, "You have given everything. It is already more than enough, more than I deserve. To ask for anything would imply a complaint that You haven't given enough, but I have been filled to the brim. What more is there when you have been given life?"

But you attach no value to life. It is said that a great miser's life was coming to an end. As is usually the case his whole life had been spent gathering wealth which he was hoping to enjoy someday in the future. When death knocked at his door he was frightened that all his endeavors had been in vain. In working untiringly to gather enough wealth he had postponed living.

He told death, "I shall give you ten million rupees; give me just twenty-four hours, because I have not yet enjoyed life."

Death replied, "There can be no bargaining."

The man persisted, "I would give fifty million, a hundred million, just for one day." Ultimately he offered all his wealth for twenty-four hours more.

A whole lifetime lost amassing this fortune, and now he was begging to give it away for just one day more. He had never breathed freely; he had never sat beside the flowers; he had never seen the sun rising at the break of day, nor had he ever talked with the twinkling stars. He had never lain on the green grass and seen the clouds pass by nor heard the birds sing. He had had no time to see life as it passed by. All along he had deferred that moment. "Now I shall work, later I shall enjoy." That moment never came.

Death said to him, "This is no transaction. Your time is up. Get ready to leave."

The man said, "Give me a few moments. I ask not for myself but for those who come after. Let them know how I toiled all these years and let life pass me by in the hope of enjoying it someday. Let me tell them that day never came." He wanted this inscription put on his grave.

All graves bear this inscription. If you have the eyes, go and read them. And the same will be inscribed on your grave too, if you do not sit up and take notice. If only you could see – you would find that what life has given you is limitless and beyond comparison.

How do you value life? For a moment more of life you are willing to give up everything, but during the years you have lived you were not at all thankful to God. If you were dying of thirst in a desert, you would be ready to part with all you possess just for a mouthful of water, but have you ever looked with gratitude at the rivers that flow, the clouds that bring rain? If the sun were to become cold we would die this very moment, yet did you ever get up in the morning and thank the sun?

Actually man follows a strange logic: what is near him he cannot see, what is not there at all he sees. When a tooth falls out, the tongue goes time and again to the empty space in your mouth. When the tooth was there the tongue never once stopped in that spot. Now no matter how much you try to stop your tongue, it keeps exploring the empty place.

Man's mind always searches out empty places. He is blind towards all the filled places, but has eyes for all that is empty. Have you ever taken account of all you possess? Unless you do, you will never become aware of God's gifts; they are infinite.

God's bounty is infinite but try to be aware of what He has given you. All around His grace pours. Just as each handiwork bears His signature, so behind each handiwork His grace lies hidden. All existence blooms only for you, all existence is His gift – to you. When a person becomes capable of seeing this, a new kind of devotion is born.

There is the atheist, stiff with pride; there is the believer, trembling with fear. Both are irreligious. The really religious person dances and sings in utter gratefulness; he is filled with ecstasy.

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THE LORD IS GREAT. HIS PLACE IS HIGH,

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What does it mean for His name to be high? For travelers on the path, it is only through His name that we reach Him. His name is the bridge; if it got lost the bridge is gone. For us the path is more significant than the destination for the simple reason that the goal cannot be reached without the path.

Therefore, Nanak says, he who knows the name has found the key. The key is more important than the treasure-house. To look at, it is only a piece of iron; but this piece of iron will open the doors to infinite treasures.

His name, which Nanak refers to as Omkar, is the key. This key opens His gate. When this 'remembrance' begins to crystallize in you, you will also have cast the mould of this key inside. The key is not such as can be given to you; you have to cast it yourself; you have to become the key. Gradually you will find yourself turning into a key through the resonance of Omkar. Then you yourself will open His gates.

Man can find himself either in the state of thoughts or in the state of no-thought. In the first state, storms of thoughts are raging inside you; the mental skies are filled with clouds of argument, debate and discussion. It is as if there is always a crowd gathered in your head, as in the marketplace; it is a schizophrenic state.

The other state is of no-thoughts; the bazaar has cleared, the shops have closed; the market is deserted, there is silence and stillness all around. All thoughts have gone. As long as you are united with the thoughts, you are one with the world; as soon as your mind is freed of all thoughts, in this no-mind state, you are one with God. No sooner are you empty than the door opens.

The key that takes you from thoughts to no-thought is called the name, the resonance of omkar. The first stage is the japa, the repetition of Omkar. Get up in the morning or in the stillness of the night, sit in your room and repeat Om, Om, Om as loudly and quickly as you can, so that it resonates all around you. The Omkar has a very lovely melody. It is not music created by man, it is the rhythmic melody that resounds in existence. As you progress, taking the name louder and louder, its impression will begin to form on you. This is the state of japa, repetition.

Then, slowly slowly, close your lips and begin sounding Om within, as you did without. This time the resonance will be only in the mind. This is the intervening state between japa and a-japa.

Let the resonance increase deeper and deeper within. You must repeat the Omkar as well as hear it; articulate the name and be aware and listen to it also. Gradually you must decrease articulation of the name and concentrate on the resonance within. Then a moment comes when you will stop pronouncing the japa but the resonance continues. Then you only listen. This is the a-japa-jap, the unrepeated repetition.

When the resonance arises on its own, the Omkar has manifested. This is the sound of the stream of life that flows within you. The day you are capable of hearing it, you will discover you can hear it all day long. It is already there so you don't have to bring it about. You merely close your eyes and you will hear.

When anxiety, tension, restlessness or anger take hold of you, just shut your eyes for a moment and hear the resonance within. A moment's touch of Omkar and anger flees. A slight contact with the music within, a faint remembrance of the name, and the mind that made you so restless is no more.

Light a torch in a dark house; at the appearance of light darkness flees. Thus, a slight spark of Omkar and all darkness fades.

So it is that Nanak lays so much stress on Omkar – Ek Omkar satnam. All of his practice aims at attaining the resonance of the authentic Omkar. He refers to it as sabad, the word, or nam, the name.

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Nanak is saying: Greater than You is Your name. You are endless. For us the name is our only clue, through the name alone are we joined to You. Whether You are or You are not, we do not know. It is the name alone that brings tidings of You. Through the power of the name shall we be drawn gradually towards You. When the resonance sounds by itself you are drawn towards God.

Scientists speak of the force of gravitation. We remain on the ground because of gravitation. If the earth were to lose this power of gravitation we would be flung up into the skies.

Simone Weil, a leading thinker in our century, has written a book called Grace and Gravitation. She says, "Just as we cannot see the force of gravitation that pulls us to the earth, there is another force at work, which is called grace."

Only yesterday it appeared in the newspapers that scientists are worried because the force of gravitation is becoming less. Though it has decreased only minimally, if this continues the earth will disintegrate, because it is gravitation alone that holds things together. It is this invisible magnetic force of the earth that keeps the trees rooted in the soil, allows man to walk and birds to fly.

Simone Weil has asserted that the force of grace also exists, and it too is invisible. She is talking precisely about that which Nanak calls His gift – that is, His compassion or His grace. As gravitation binds us downwards to the earth, grace pulls us upwards – to Him. As the resonance of Omkar intensifies inside you, the pull of gravitation diminishes, and the pull of grace increases proportionately. Then a moment comes when you become absolutely weightless. Yogis often experience this.

Some people intensely practicing meditation here have experienced this sudden feeling of weightlessness. No one can perceive this phenomenon from the outside. If the meditator were to open his eyes, he would find himself seated on the ground just as before; but as soon as he closes his eyes and feels the resonance inside, he experiences a sense of weightlessness. The physical body remains on the ground but the inner body separates from the earth and rises. If you continue in meditation one day you experience two bodies, not one; the body that has risen can see the body sitting on the ground, a thin thread of light connecting them.

Therefore remember, if someone practicing Omkar is deeply lost in meditation, do not shake him or bring him back too suddenly. This can be dangerous, and cause an imbalance between his physical and subtle bodies, which can be irreparable because the balance is very delicate.

In a deep stage of meditation a person steps out of his body, then comes back. When you become perfectly fluent with this art of stepping in and out of your body, you will know how to enter into and emerge from God. Then you see no difference between the material world and God Himself. You stay in your body but your remembrance becomes uninterrupted; the thread of your thoughts is connected with Him.

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It is rather intricate and complicated. There are only two systems of sadhana – of spiritual practice. The basis of one system is resolve, and that of the other is surrender. Both lead to the same goal but they are diametrically the opposite of each other.

The methods of Mahavir and Patanjali and Gorakh are based on resolve, on effort. All life-energy is devoted to the effort. When there is absolutely no energy remaining outside that effort, when you have given yourself up to it wholly, that very day the event will occur; when you have left nothing for yourself, your resolve will be complete and perfect.

Nanak, Meera and Chaitanya have followed the second path, the way of surrender. It is entirely different; the seeker believes that nothing happens through one's own effort – only through His grace do we achieve. Now this does not mean you make no effort, but don't put too much faith in your prowess. Try you must, but remember that the outcome will happen only through His grace.

This is very, very important. If you rely only on your own labors, you will strengthen your ego. Therefore it is easy for a yogi to be proud, because he begins to believe that things are happening because of him.

Once this ego develops it is very difficult to be rid of it. It is easier to be rid of the arrogance of wealth, it is not difficult to renounce the pride of position, but it is very difficult to be rid of the ego of one's own endeavors. There is every possibility of the seeker feeling that whatever is happening is because of him; the I becomes primary and God secondary. Because of this danger, Mahavir, Patanjali, Gorakh and others who follow this path lay great stress on the annihilation of the ego.

Make the effort, put your all into it, but renounce your ego is what they stress so emphatically. If the ego functions along with the effort, it will get stronger and stronger. Then you feel in whatever you do, I am doing it: I have done japa, I have done penance, I have attained occult powers. And if this arrogance is not eradicated in good time, you will have opened many doors but not the last. All your efforts will have been in vain.

Therefore, Nanak says: Try with all your might, but remember, His grace alone can bring about the happening. With this precaution, the risk in the method of resolve is removed. But there is a different risk in the path of surrender, which arises at the very beginning.

The danger is in feeling that there is no need to do anything. If the happening occurs only through His grace, what can we do? It becomes an excuse for not doing anything. So you remain involved in all the useless daily activities of life. You may assume it is not yet His will that you should set out on this path – and so you wait. Meanwhile you indulge in all that is most contemptible in life; you wander in the maze of the material world. Thus the danger in the path of surrender lies at the very onset – you might become lost in laziness and inertia.

So try you must in the fullest measure, while remembering that the fruit of the endeavor is attained only through His grace. Therefore Nanak repeats over and over: His grace showers only on those within the gaze of His compassionate vision. On whom does this compassion descend but those who prepare themselves for it through their efforts?

Understand that in everyday life the meaning of a compassionate look is quite different. Does He too show partiality? Is He kind to His own but lets the rest be? Does He select a few to shower with His grace while He leaves others to suffer? We cannot associate God with such injustices. Things would become meaningless if a sinner might receive His grace while a saint is deprived of it. There would be no sense in doing anything.

No, this is not the meaning of the compassionate look. It is not that He chooses someone that suits His whim or fancy, or that He favors those who flatter and sing His praises. His grace showers on all, but there are some who have turned their pots upside down, so that they never get filled. If your pot is upright, it is bound to be filled. And don't imagine that your upright pot caused the grace to shower! Grace showers all the time.

Nanak says the filling takes place by His compassion, but some effort you have to make – by placing your vessel in the proper position to receive. And you will have to see that there are no cracks or holes in it, that it is not lying upside down or slanting so that the grace cannot reach the mouth of your vessel and enter it.

His grace pours on everyone incessantly. It is you who are not standing upright to receive it or in your twisting and turning, it slides off you.

There is an apparent contradiction: if you are deprived of grace you have only yourself to blame, but if you attain grace it is only because of Him. You attain through Him, lose through your own self.

When following the path of surrender it is imperative to remember that if I am losing, it is I who am wrong; if I am gaining, it is entirely by His grace. This way the ego cannot be fattened, because there is no space within for it to expand – or even to exist. He who has no ego finds that God is within him.

HIS COMPASSION IS BEYOND ALL DESCRIPTION.

THE LORD'S GIFTS ARE SO GREAT HE EXPECTS NOTHING IN RETURN.

Understand the meaning of dana, charity. You too give in charity, but behind your gift hides some desire. If you give two paise to a beggar you do so with the hope of a return in heaven – if not in heaven, at least your neighbors or your friends should be watching so that you rise in their esteem, or gain some respect from them.

There was a blind, deaf man who attended church regularly although he couldn't see what was going on, much less hear the hymns or sermons. What motivation could he have had but to show how deeply religious he was?

Now you may have eyes, but your reason for coming is just the same; you have ears, but your reason is no different. Going to the temple or church or gurudwara has become a social obligation, a duty to be performed. And when you give a single paise you expect a return. You know nothing of charity, everything is a business deal.

This is the difference between a charity and business. When you expect a return it involves bargaining, it is a business. Then it turns out you have never given in charity, you have only invested for future gains. And those who exploit you know very well that you are striking a bargain, so they explain to you: "Give one paise here, you will get a million there." Whatever you offer will be returned a millionfold, that is the promise. Every exploiter knows for certain that you are a businessman, a trader – that you cannot truly give as charity.

Will you ever donate to a temple when it is proclaimed that you will get nothing in return? It will be difficult to find a donor for such a temple; it will never last, nor even get constructed.

When you think of God's charity, do not think in terms of your charity. He does not give the way you do. Nanak says He gives but expects nothing in return. And what do you have that you can give Him? His charity is pure, unconditional.

What have we given in return for all that we have received? You were given life and in this life you found love; you had faint glimpses of well-being and health, of beauty and of truth, and what have you done in return? It is astonishing that we never think of repaying Him.

Once aware of all that you have received, you would dance in celebration forever, singing His praises not out of fear but out of gratitude. All that was given you was too much, and without any motive. We neither know the way nor have the ability to repay. We can repay the debt owed to our parents, but never can we repay God for all that He has given us, for His gift is unconditional.

HIS COMPASSION IS BEYOND ALL DESCRIPTION.

THE LORD'S GIFTS ARE SO GREAT HE EXPECTS NOTHING IN RETURN.

HOWEVER GREAT A HERO OR WARRIOR, MAN KEEPS ON BEGGING.

Not only beggars, even our warriors beg. There is not much difference between a beggar and a king, only a matter of degree. Remember, when your neediness ends you begin to see and experience His gifts. The smoke of your demands prevents you from seeing what you have already received. The need to beg hides the gratitude. The day your demands drop, the false form of prayer drops and the correct form of prayer takes shape.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO CONCEIVE THE COUNTLESS NUMBERS WHO GO ON ASKING.

THEY INDULGE THEMSELVES IN DESIRES AND DISSIPATE THEIR LIVES.

Nanak has made the important observation that your demands are so blind and thoughtless that if you attain them you destroy yourself. Your asking is for the wrong things. Nanak is right; observe your life carefully and you will see that all the ills you suffer are the result of your own desires.

If you wish to rise in status, it entails anxiety and sleepless nights and restless days. In the West they say that if you do not get a heart attack by the time you are forty you are not a successful man; if you do not have a stomach ulcer you are a poor man. These are the signs of success and prosperity.

After all, what does a successful man gain by desiring more success? Whatever a man wishes for, he attains something or other. It may be early, it may be late, but you will find that your desires are fulfilled. Therefore be very careful in what you ask for, so that you won't regret it later. First you waste time in asking, then in repenting and regretting.

Analyze your own life carefully and you will find that you alone have got yourself in the state you are in. You got enmeshed in your desires. You wanted riches, you got it; but along with it came all the worries and anxieties, because they are very much a part of wealth. With wealth comes a constriction of the soul; with wealth comes a thousand kinds of illness; with wealth come pride and arrogance. They are all very much a part of wealth and cannot be separated from it. Then you repent.

THEY INDULGE THEMSELVES IN DESIRES AND DISSIPATE THEIR LIVES.

AND OTHERS RECEIVE, YET DENY IT.

Some are destroying themselves through their desiring. Others receive and yet deny. They offer no gratitude.

Every morning at prayer time Mulla Nasruddin would call out loudly to God: "Remember one thing, I need a hundred rupees, not a paise less. Whenever you feel like giving, remember ninety-nine will not do."

Mulla's neighbor used to hear him every day. He decided to play a joke on Mulla. He filled a bag with ninety-nine rupees and dropped it from the roof into the room where Mulla was praying aloud as usual. He was sure Mulla would not accept the gift for one rupee was missing. As soon as Mulla saw the bag he forgot his prayers and began to count the coins. When he found there were ninety-nine he said, "Well done, Lord. You are a businessman all right: you deducted one rupee for the bag."

Man is not prepared even to acknowledge and offer thanks. He still finds room for complaint – one rupee deducted for the bag!

A wealthy man was returning home after a long sea voyage. A heavy storm overtook them and the ship was in danger of overturning at any moment. Everyone began to pray, including the rich man. At first his prayers were very vague, but when it became a question of life and death he called aloud to God and said, "If you save us today Lord, I shall sell my castle and distribute the proceeds to the poor." As it happened the storm abated and the ship reached shore safely. Then the rich man was filled with remorse. He thought the storm would have abated anyhow, and he had unnecessarily opened his loud mouth. Now that everyone had heard him, he would have to make good his pledge. This is why people pray silently, so that no one knows what bargains they strike with God.

Everyone on the boat had heard the rich man's prayer, and as soon as the ship landed the news spread like wildfire. He thought and thought, until finally he announced his decision to sell the castle. Many buyers came, because it was the largest in the area. Although it was valued at a million rupees, the owner had imposed a strange condition. He tied a cat before the house and said he would sell the cat for a million and the house for one rupee. Whoever buys must take both offers together.

At first people were surprised at such madness. Had anyone ever heard such a fantastic price for one cat – a million rupees? But buyers came all the same. What difference did it make to them about the price of the cat if they would be getting the property? So the deal was struck. The rich man pocketed his million rupees and distributed one rupee among the poor – that being the price of the house.

People establish a business or legal relationship even with God. Even there they are still trying to get off as cheaply as possible. So as Nanak says, there are many who have their wishes fulfilled, yet deny it outright. They say it was a coincidence, that it was about to happen anyhow. Many others don't even say that much; they coolly forget that they had asked for what was given, let alone are grateful.

There are many who keep asking and who keep receiving, who never rise above this tendency of asking and receiving. They keep enjoying, but it never leads anywhere; they only waste their time. Eat whatever you may, what will you get out of it? Wear whatever you want, what is the gain? Decorate yourself with gold and precious stones, how will that profit you? While you are doing this the priceless moments of life are slipping by, moments when you should have prayed and attained the wealth of meditation. Life is just passing you by, wasted in the gathering of pebbles and stones.

Nanak says there are many who are suffering from their hunger, yet do not take to remembrance. We suffer in desiring yet we do not awaken to the fact that we suffer because of our desires. Our woes are the fruits of desires and our hells arise from our longings, but we never connect the two. Always pleading for happiness, can't we see that the longing itself leads to suffering?

It is just as if a man were to walk with his back to the sun then wonder why he cannot see the sun. You could see the sun here and now, but your desire-ridden mind goes towards suffering. Then you color your prayers with the hues of those desires. In his prayers, the devotee offers up all his desires as a libation to be burned; whereas you dedicate your prayers to the service of your desires.

Nanak reminds us that many suffer and go on suffering and yet do not awaken. For how many births have you been bearing the weight of misfortune? Buddha said there are three types of horse. This is not correct. I say there are four. The fourth type do not stir an inch no matter how hard and how long you beat them; they are really obstinate creatures. The more you hit them the more stubborn they become.

In spite of your misfortunes you are oblivious to your sufferings. You have become used to them, so much so that you feel that is what life is. You have forgotten – no, you are unconscious of – the fact that life is supreme bliss, one long celebration; and if you are unhappy it is because of some error of your own.

O LORD, THESE TOO ARE YOUR GIFTS.

People keep asking, and the Lord keeps giving. Remember, you will get whatever you ask for. Existence does not discriminate or judge. Ask for the right things and you will get them; ask for the wrong things and you will get them. Existence gives unconditionally. God puts no obstacles to your freedom, He lets you choose whatever you like. You may wander in the maze of samsara, or you may set out to attain Him. He leaves you free to make your own choice.

This brings up a question: since God knows everything, what is right and what is wrong, why does He comply with our wishes that are wrong? If He were not to fulfill your desires you would lose your freedom. You would be no more than a puppet on strings. Then He would give you whatever He chooses and your wish would no longer matter. Then the whole dignity of man is lost; it lies in the fact of his freedom – freedom even to go wrong. There is the possibility of freedom, you are not entirely tied to chains. You have the opportunity to make a conscious choice. You can go whichever way you please. He does not oppose you or stand in your way; He leaves all paths open to you.

If you choose, you can fall into the deepest hell and He will not stop you. You can rise to the highest heaven, He will not obstruct you. You get His power under all conditions; His grace is unconditional. His gift does not make you dependent in any way. He gives – you may use His gift as you please. He does not question.

O LORD, THESE TOO ARE YOUR GIFTS.

YOUR ORDER ALONE GIVES FREEDOM OR BONDAGE.

But it is we who ask to be enslaved, and slavery results. The order is His, the command is His, the law is His, so also the rule.

For instance, if you jump from a high tree you are bound to break your bones. The same gravitational force that holds you to the earth becomes the cause of your fractured bones. If you walk straight this force helps you to walk, but if you sway and stagger you are bound to fall and hurt yourself. The force at work in both cases is the same.

Energy is neutral, impartial; God is absolutely impartial, unbiased. If you use the energy well you can attain the highest experience; use it ill and you can fall into life's deepest abyss. Says Nanak: "All comes through You – heaven as well as hell." But our desire is behind these. It is Your law that works, but it is we who ask and ask and exhaust ourselves.

A great politician died. When he reached the door of heaven he announced that he would first inspect both heaven and hell before deciding where he would stay. He was taken around heaven and found it too quiet and insipid for his liking. A politician used to living in Delhi with all its excitement is bound to find heaven rather dull. People are relaxed and peaceful; there is no noise, no tumult, no chaos; there is no fighting, no processions, no blockades; in fact, nothing is happening there.

He asked for a newspaper and was told there was none. A newspaper can only be printed when there is news. News requires disturbance and trouble. If you want to be in the news you have to cause some kind of commotion. If you sit under a tree like Buddha, no reporter will come your way.

He said he didn't enjoy such a dull atmosphere and he would like to pay a visit to hell. He reached hell and was immediately impressed. It was more lively and gay even than Delhi; there were lots of newspapers, lots of processions – everywhere there was noise and movement. There was gaiety and mirth all around, with hotels and bars and cinemas. He was very pleased and wondered why people on earth had the opposite impression of heaven and hell.

He asked Satan, who stood at the gate to welcome him, "Why is such a wrong account of hell given on earth? Had I accepted it without looking for myself I would have suffered in heaven. On earth when a person dies it is good manners to say he has left for his heavenly abode. Actually, this is the place to come. There is so much more life here."

Satan answered, "There is a reason for all this false propaganda. The opposition party has campaigned against me. They are always publicizing heaven and who listens to me? Whenever I try to tell someone the actual facts, they warn him, 'Beware of Satan!' See for yourself how unjust this is."

The politician went back to the gate to tell the escort from heaven to leave because he had made his decision to stay in hell. No sooner did he say this than the doors of hell closed suddenly and the conditions inside changed drastically – just like in the films. He found a crowd of people attacking and manhandling him. When he shouted in protest and demanded to know what was going on, Satan answered, "Before you were on a tourist visa. Now you are an immigrant. What you saw was meant for visitors only. Now you will get the real taste of hell."

People choose hell all the time, because the initial stage of every desire is 'for visitors only'. Every desire seduces in the beginning. It is the display window, not the real thing – only an advertisement. Once you choose a particular desire the real hell starts. You alone select your particular path to hell.

Heaven is dull at first glance. Bliss is bound to appear uninteresting, because it is the supreme peace. Suffering appears much more interesting and exciting in the beginning because it is provocative. And you choose excitement; you succumb to its provocation, and then suffer. Once you choose tranquillity you will attain bliss. Everything happens by His order, by His rule; but His order shapes to your desire. He is neutral. He does not impose His will on you. Even were He to do so, you would not be ready to accept His will.

If heaven were given to you by force, it would seem worse than hell; and if hell is chosen by your free will, it seems like heaven, because your independence is whole and challenged.

A subtle philosophical question is involved: how can man's freedom and God's independence exist together? On this basis Mahavir denied the existence of God, because if the will of God is supreme man cannot be independent. And if there is no independence, what value has the soul? Therefore Mahavir insists: There is no God, there is freedom! Others have disagreed: There is no freedom! Only destiny is, God is.

Nanak's concept is between these two. He says man is free and God also exists. Man has the freedom of choice; he can ask for whatever he desires. He can work towards attaining his desires, but he succeeds only through His compassion. Ask for joy or ask for sorrow – you will get it.

Now this is interesting. Why do you go on asking for suffering? The fact remains that if you do not ask for happiness, try as He may, God cannot give it to you.

Junaid, the fakir, used to say that you cannot give happiness by force, you cannot force tranquillity. He would say, "I am eager to give joy and peace to others, I have tried many times, but it is impossible. The more you urge upon a person, the more you startle him and he becomes suspicious. You cannot give bliss to anyone, because no one is ready to take it."

One of his devotees said he could not believe this and he would like to try an experiment. He chose a pauper as the subject, and told Junaid: "The king is your devotee. Ask the King to give him ten million asharfis, then let's see if he still remains a pauper." Junaid agreed. On the day fixed for the experiment the asharfis were placed in a pot which was placed in the middle of the bridge that the pauper crossed every afternoon. All traffic on the bridge was closed for that day. Junaid and his followers and the king stood on the other side and watched from their hiding place.

Now the man came along. The bridge was empty. There was not a soul to be seen and there was the open pot with the golden coins shimmering in the sun. But wonder of wonders, the man passed the vessel without so much as looking at it and crossed the bridge. Junaid and his followers ran up to him and asked, "Couldn't you see the pot filled with coins?"

"Which pot?" he asked. "For such a long time I wanted to cross the bridge with my eyes closed, but as there was always such heavy traffic I couldn't do so. Today when I saw the bridge empty the thought came to me that I should take this opportunity to try my skill. I succeeded in crossing the bridge with closed eyes. I am sorry. I didn't see the pot you are speaking about."

Junaid told his disciples, "Do you see this? He who is going to miss will fail by some means. He will create a thought that will make him fail. He who is bent on missing the opportunity cannot be helped under any circumstances."

Even God cannot give you what you are not ready to take. If you are ready for suffering you get suffering, if you are ready for happiness you get happiness – you get only that for which you are prepared. And you receive it only through His grace, whereas you attain through your own effort. His grace is forever showering on all but you are filled only when you are ready and eager to be filled.

O LORD, THESE TOO ARE YOUR GIFTS.

YOUR ORDER ALONE GIVES FREEDOM OR BONDAGE.

NOBODY CAN DEBATE THIS FACT.

HE WHO INDULGES IN USELESS BABBLE

REALIZES HIS FOLLY WHEN STRUCK IN THE FACE.

HE ALONE CAN KNOW HIMSELF,

AND ONLY THE RAREST CAN DESCRIBE HIM;

HE BEQUEATHS THE QUALITY OF HIS STATE TO WHOMEVER HE CHOOSES.

NANAK SAYS, HE IS THE KING OF KINGS.

There are many who indulge in this prattle in the sphere of religion. In no other field is it so easy to say whatever you please, because the whole field of religion is mysterious and there are no proofs, therefore anything passes.

Thus there are three hundred different religions. Could there have been so many otherwise? And in these three hundred religions there are three thousand sects – both big and small. A lot of useless junk has been introduced in the name of religion. Besides, there is no way to judge what is true and what is untrue. And the one who sermonizes is usually so glib!

Mahavir used to speak of seven hells. There was an opponent of Mahavir by the name of Makkhali Gosal. When his disciples asked him whether he knew about the seven hells that Mahavir spoke of, he said, "Mahavir doesn't really know. There are really seven hundred hells."

What are we to do now? Is Makkhali Gosal stating the truth or Mahavir? Who is right? What is the truth?

In the life of Makkhali Gosal it happened exactly as Nanak would predict. Having made far-fetched statements his whole life, he repented at the time of death. As death approached he began to tremble with fear. He called his disciples together and said to them, "Whatever I have told you is a lie. Drag my body along the road when I am dead and tell people to spit on my face, because with this mouth I have uttered nothing but falsity."

This man Makkhali Gosal must have been a man of courage and honesty, or else he would have kept quiet a few moments more. Having spoken lies his whole life, he could have remained silent and died quietly. Then perhaps there would have been a sect or a religion following after him, because there were many who believed in him. He was one of the greatest opponents of Mahavir, though he started as Mahavir's disciple. As soon as he learned something he began to create his own new order, because he was clever and able and a good orator.

When Mahavir came to the village where Makkhali Gosal was staying he insisted on meeting him. "He is my erstwhile disciple. I will ask him why he is indulging in this foolishness." When they met, Makkhali Gosal pretended he was seeing Mahavir for the first time. One can never trust a liar. Mahavir said to him, "Have you forgotten completely the years when you were with me?"

Makkhali replied, "You are mistaken. The soul that stayed with you left long ago. Now the soul of a Teerthankara has entered this body. This body may have been with you – I have heard so – but I am not the same one who was with you. He who was your disciple is long dead. Now don't ever say that Makkhali Gosal was your disciple."

Mahavir must have remained silent. What could be said to such a man? And he had a large following and was very influential. However, he must also have been a good man, because at the time of his death he owned up to his hypocrisy.

Nanak has spoken of just such examples. He who preaches false sermons will realize his foolishness when fate slaps him in the face, when death confronts him and life ebbs away. Then he realizes the utterly useless nonsense he spoke about heaven and hell, when in fact he knew nothing. Now life has passed out of his hands and he had laid no firm foundation. All life long he floated paper boats, now when the time has come to sink, alas, it is too late!

Beware! When it comes to religion, speak only if you know, or else hold your peace! For the mind endlessly investigates and makes discoveries; it is a skilled explorer. Once the mind begins to search and debate, a discussion begins and a web of thoughts and words is woven that expands on its own. Then you have nothing to do. Automatically one word gives rise to another, one theory expounded leads to another, and then another...

It once happened: A well-known priest came to a rest home. He tied his horse under a tree and went in to rest. Mulla Nasruddin happened to be looking on. The priest was known to be attached to his horse, which was a fine animal and very valuable. Everywhere he went to preach, he would go on his favorite horse.

The Mulla went up to the horse and began to rub its neck gently. At that moment a man came along and asked, "Is that your horse?"

Now such a fine animal – it was a shame to admit it did not belong to him. So the Mulla said, "Yes, it is mine."

"Do you want to sell him?" the man asked.

Things were now becoming complicated. "Have you the courage to buy him?" the Mulla asked. The horse was worth a thousand rupees, but Nasruddin was looking for a way out so he asked for two thousand, thinking it was too stiff a price and the man wouldn't pay. But the man agreed. Now the Mulla was in a fix. He could not go back on his word. Then he thought, "What is the harm? I'm making two thousand rupees, and besides, the priest is sleeping."

Just as he pocketed the money and the buyer had left with the horse, the priest came out. The Mulla thought fast. There was no time to run. He quickly tied the rope around his neck and shoved a bit of straw in his mouth.

The priest was frightened. He began to tremble. But he put up a brave front and asked the Mulla, "Where is my horse? And what are you doing here?"

"Your horse and myself are not two," replied the Mulla. "I am your horse."

"What? Are you mad or are you drunk?" demanded the priest.

"Neither," replied the Mulla. "Please hear me out. Twenty years ago I committed adultery. God was angry and he turned me into a horse – your horse. Now it seems my sentence is over and I have become a man again. My name is Nasruddin."

The priest now was really frightened. Such divine wrath – a man turns into a horse! He went down on his knees and implored God to forgive him for all his sins. So many sins had he committed, he pleaded for His compassion.

Then he spoke to Nasruddin. "Brother, it is all right. What has happened has happened. I have to go ahead to the next village. You go home, and I will go to the market and buy a new horse."

He went to a horse-dealer, and there he saw his horse. He was beside himself with fear. He went up to the horse and whispered in his ear, "Nasruddin, how come?... And so soon?"

Once the mind starts a lie, they sprout like leaves on a tree. One lie gives rise to four others, and these in turn produce more lies. To save one lie we have to tell a thousand more. Then the number of lies becomes so astronomical that you even forget they are lies. Frequent repetitions gives them the garb of truth, and these very falsities then hypnotize you.

Thousands of such untruths prevail that have no bearing on truth. With religion this is very easy because there is no way to test, no institute where one can investigate, no criterion by which to judge. Religion lives on faith; no scientific research can help.

Therefore remember: do not ever utter an untruth, or else you will repent. The habit of lying is very deep-seated in the mind.

People come to me and say, "I have been doing Vipassana meditation for the past ten years." When I ask if something has happened I see from their expression that nothing has changed, but they say, "Yes, a lot has happened."

Then I talk of other things and ask again, "Tell the truth, have you experienced anything? If something had been happening there would have been no need to come to talk to me in the first place, so make up your mind and say nothing has happened so that I can take your case in hand."

Then they admit it, "Nothing has happened."

Now a few minutes before, this very man was claiming so much success. The mind refuses to admit that ten year's effort has yielded no result. The mind is very deceitful. Beware of it. The more you fall into its trap the more you will regret. Life will pass away and death will stand at your head; then you will repent and wonder why you wasted yourself in all these lies.

God alone knows Himself. God alone gives. Knowing is His; giving is His. For us it is enough to be the recipient. Knowledge is His. Existence is His. We shall receive both when we are open and eager to receive them, when we have our gaze turned toward Him.

There is no need to fall into the mind's trap. The mind can give neither knowledge nor existence; it can only give untruth. He who listens to the mind falls into falsity.

In an old story, the gods were once so pleased by a man's devotion that they gave him a magic conch shell that would fulfill any wish expressed to it. You say a palace and immediately a palace appears. You say a banquet fit for a king and there is a great feast laid out before you. The man was very happy as he began to enjoy all the good things in life.

One day a priest who was passing through the town halted at this man's palace for a night's rest. He had heard about the magic shell and wanted to possess it. He too had a conch shell which he called Maha-shankha, great conch shell. He said to his host, "Your shell is nothing compared to mine. I too practiced many austerities and the gods favored me with this Maha-shankha. You ask one thing of it, it gives two."

Now as is human nature, the man's greed was awakened. He said, "Show me the magic of your conch shell."

The priest took out the Maha-shankha and placing it before him said, "Brother, make a palace."

The conch said, "Why one? Why not two?"

The host was impressed. He gave his conch to the priest and took his Maha-shankha in return. The priest then soon left. Almost immediately the man tried frantically to find him again, because the conch only spoke but did not perform. You say two and it will say, "Why not four?" You say four, it will say "Why not eight?" This was all it could do.

The mind is a Maha-shankha. Whatever God gives it says, "Why only this much, why not more?" The mind is only a babble of words. It is all lies. It can produce nothing. But we are such that we have let go of God and cling to the mind. For the mind talks in a duplicity that sets fire to our greed. Just think, has the mind ever given you anything? Have you ever attained anything through the mind?

HE ALONE CAN KNOW HIMSELF,

AND ONLY THE RAREST CAN DESCRIBE HIM;

HE BEQUEATHS THE QUALITY OF HIS STATE TO WHOMEVER HE CHOOSES.

NANAK SAYS, HE IS THE KING OF KINGS.

One last priceless thing in this sutra. Dhun-Nun was an Egyptian fakir. When he realized God he heard a voice in the skies which said, "Dhun Nun, before you set out in search of Me, I had already chosen you. Had I not, you would never have set out in search of Me."

Nanak says that He ordains the one He chooses with the quality to sing His praise. The fact is, you set out to seek Him only when He has knocked at your door. How can you set out on this tremendous quest all by yourself? How can you arrive at the idea of the quest, how can you acquire His remembrance, how can His praise be born within you, if He does not will it?

Then no matter how long it takes in the quest, the fact is that He has already chosen you. Your search has begun; He has already entered into your life. He has awakened the thirst within you and Nanak says: It is He alone who awakens the thirst for Him.

Nanak's method is: leave all to Him. Keep nothing in your hands because the arrogance of the ego can arise very subtly. You may begin to say, "I am a seeker, I am in quest of God." But Nanak, so that this I does not take root anywhere, says it is His grace that confers the quality to sing His praise. We can only sing Your praise if You will us to do so. How can we sing Your praise without Your direction? We cannot even raise our eyes towards You unless You give support to our vision. Our feet can never walk along Your path unless You direct them. We cannot think of You, or dream of You, or ponder over You, unless You have already chosen us.

Nanak plucks out all roots of the ego. Where ego is not, there His doors open to us; where ego is not, the resonance of Omkar starts on its own. Only because of the tumult and noise of your ego, can you not hear the faint resonance within.

CHAPTER 2

Steeped in the Wine of Love

2 December 1974 am in Chuang Tzu Auditorium

PRICELESS ARE HIS QUALITIES, AND HIS TRADING, TOO;

PRICELESS ARE HIS SALESMEN, AND HIS STOREHOUSES;

PRICELESS IS HE WHO COMES TO TAKE, AND WHAT HE TAKES;

PRICELESS HIS FEELINGS, AND HIS SAMADHI, TOO;

PRICELESS HIS DIVINE JUSTICE, AND HIS COURTS;

PRICELESS THE WEIGHTS AND BALANCE TO JUDGE MAN'S ACTIONS;

PRICELESS HIS BOUNTY, AND THE SYMBOLS WHICH DISTINGUISH IT;

PRICELESS HIS GRACE AND HIS ORDER, TOO;

HE IS THE PRICELESS OF THE PRICELESS; HE CANNOT BE DESCRIBED.

MANY FALL, LOST IN MEDITATION, EVEN WHILE RECITING HIS ATTRIBUTES.

THE VEDAS TALK OF HIM, AND puranas STUDY HIM;

AND LEARNED ONES DESCRIBE HIM; SO ALSO INDRA AND BRAHMA;

THE gopis AND KRISHNA SPEAK OF HIM, AND VISHNU AND THE SIDDHAS;

AND MANY, MANY BUDDHAS; AND DEMONS AND DEITIES TOO.

MEN AND SAGES AND THOSE WHO SERVE, THEY ALL SING HIS PRAISE.

MANY THERE ARE WHO CAN EXPRESS IT, AND MANY DIE BEFORE COMPLETING THE TASK.

HE WILL BRING EVEN MORE TO THIS EXISTENCE.

NO ONE CAN PREDICT HIS ACTIONS.

WHATEVER HE FEELS – SO IT HAPPENS.

WHOEVER KNOWS THIS, HE HIMSELF IS TRUTH.

IF SOMEONE BOASTS OF KNOWING HIM, THEN HE IS THE FOOL OF FOOLS.

Nanak speaks in praise of God not as a pundit, but as if inebriated. His words aren't those of a scholar, but rather they express a person completely steeped in the wine of love; therefore the repetitions. They are words spoken in a state of ecstasy, just as you see a drunkard going along the road repeating himself over and over and over again. Nanak is completely inebriated with some profound intoxicant, so he also indulges in repetition.

Babar, the Moghul, invaded India. Taking Nanak to be of doubtful character, he had him imprisoned along with others. But gradually the news began to reach Babar that there was a unique prisoner who created around him a strange atmosphere, a spirit of intoxication, and he kept singing happily all day. Babar thought such a man cannot be imprisoned who has an internal freedom that cannot be put in chains, so he sent Nanak a message to come and see him. Nanak replied, "You will have to come and visit, O king, for Nanak is in that realm from which visiting people is out of the question."

So Babar himself went to the prison to see. He was very impressed by Nanak's personality. He brought him to the palace and offered him the choicest wine. Nanak laughed and sang a song in which he told the king that Nanak has already tasted the wine of God, now no other wine can affect him. The king would do well to drink from Nanak's wine instead of the ordinary wine.

These are songs of a drunkard. Nanak sings away like a small child or like a drunkard. He is not guided by any rule or conditions, nor has he tried to beautify his language. His poems are like uncut stones. When a poet writes, he writes and rewrites and makes a thousand changes. He worries about the grammar, he worries about the rhythm, the meter, the words. He makes many changes. Even a poet the caliber of Rabindranath Tagore used to do this. His diaries are full of cuts and rewrites.

Nanak's words are different. They are not changed and arranged. They are just as Nanak uttered them. These are words that were spoken and not written; therefore no account is kept of the rhythm or the cadence or even the language. If it has a meter, it is the meter of the soul; if there is any grammar, it is not of man, but of God. If you find any rhythm in it, it is the rhythm of the ecstasy and

intoxication within. This is why whenever anyone asked Nanak a question he would say, "Listen!" then Mardana, his close disciple, would pick up his instrument and Nanak would sing.

Remember this, otherwise you will be confused at Nanak's constant repetition. You will wonder why he keeps saying His attributes are priceless, His worth is priceless... again and again. These are words spoken in ecstasy, not words repeated from somewhere; these are words that hummed within him. It did not matter if others heard. If you keep this in mind, Nanak's words will reveal countless depths.

PRICELESS ARE HIS QUALITIES, AND HIS TRADING, TOO;

PRICELESS ARE HIS SALESMEN, AND HIS STOREHOUSES;

PRICELESS IS HE WHO COMES TO TAKE, AND WHAT HE TAKES;

PRICELESS HIS FEELINGS, AND HIS SAMADHI, TOO

PRICELESS HIS DIVINE JUSTICE, AND HIS COURTS;

First, He is priceless, everything of Him is priceless. There is no way to evaluate, no scale by which to weigh Him, nor yardstick to measure Him. There is no way in which we can surmise how much He is, what He is, how far He extends.

Whoever sets out to measure Him finds that not only do all yardsticks fall short and break, but the mind that has set out to measure also breaks.

The Sanskrit word, *maya*, refers to illusion. This word is derived from the same root word as *mapa*, which means measure. The English words 'meter' and 'measure' also come from that same root.

Maya signifies that which can be measured or weighed. That which cannot be weighed is Brahma. Whatever you can measure, know it is *maya*; whatever can be evaluated or defined, know it is *maya*. When you approach that which cannot be defined, which defies all measures and cannot be weighed, when you come near to this immeasurable, that is the beginning of religion.

Science can never know God for the whole scientific method is based on measure. The weighing scales are the symbol of science; to measure is its way. Therefore science will never come anywhere near God and will always maintain that there is no God, because it only believes in that which can be measured, which can be investigated. Marx has said, "If God manifests in the research institute, then only shall I believe in His existence." But such a God cannot be God.

Do you not feel the presence of something that is immeasurable all around you? He is even within your measuring devices. Now, for instance, take a flower: you can analyze it in your institutes. You can weigh it, you can measure it, you can discover its chemistry; but one thing in the flower cannot be measured. When you will have completed your full analysis you will suddenly realize that the flower is no more. With all your investigations you could not locate the beauty of the flower. Therefore scientists do not accept beauty as such.

Isn't it strange? The very first response to looking at a flower involves its beauty, yet this is completely lost in scientific research. What is destroyed by the first stroke of science is the very thing that first affects you when you see the flower; the first feeling, the first ray of consciousness reflected on your mind at the sight of the flower, is of its beauty. The feeling is unspoken, unsung, but deep within a cloud of beauty encircles you. Science is unable to grasp this.

You see a child dancing, playing, laughing, and your first feeling is of life – energy flowing. If science is asked to analyze this child it will do it thoroughly. The scientists will list the percent of iron, phosphorus, calcium; how much water, how dense is the child's body; but that life will be no more.

Once a scientist was walking along the road with his friend. A beautiful girl passed by and the friend stood still, mouth agape. "Forget it," said the scientist. "She is ninety percent water." Man is ninety percent water and ten percent matter. It is said that the total value of the substance of a human body is not more than five rupees. That is all the minerals within the body are worth. Therefore the human body is burnt on death, for it has no more value.

Science will measure everything and then say that there is no such thing as a soul. How can they find the soul when it is immeasurable? When we cannot locate it through any means of measurement, then we claim that it doesn't exist. If we were wise we would say that all our ways of measuring take us only up to maya and no further. Therefore we must devise some other means than measurement to know Him.

The method of science is measuring, investigating, examining, defining. The method of religion is absolutely different; it is not to measure or examine or define – but to drown in it, be immersed in it. The scientist stands apart from his quest, the religious man becomes one with it; he drowns in the very thing he is seeking.

Nanak once went to Lahore. The town's richest man came and bowed at his feet. It was the custom in those days that a man who had ten million rupees could fly a flag over his house. Seth Dunichand, that was his name, had many flags flying. He touched his head to Nanak's feet, then with folded hands he said to him, "I wish to be of service. By His grace God has given me enough. Whatever you wish I will fulfill."

Nanak took out a sewing needle from his cloak, and giving it to Dunichand he said, "Keep this very carefully, and return it to me after your death."

Dunichand was so engrossed in the pride of his wealth that he did not realize what Nanak was saying. "As you wish," he said and left. Arrogance makes a person so blind at times that he does not realize some things are impossible. Finally, on the way home Dunichand thought about what he had been asked and realized he could not return the needle after his death.

So he went back to Nanak and said, "You have entrusted me with a difficult task. I thought nothing of it at the time, but now I feel that you might have been joking with me. What need is there to take care of a needle? Since I presume that the ways of a saint are mysterious, there must be a reason for it. Forgive me, but take back the needle for I shall not be able to clear the debt later. How could I take the needle with me beyond death?"

Nanak said, "You can give back the needle since it has served its purpose. That is the very question I was going to ask of you. If you cannot take such a small thing as this needle when you die, what will you take of the millions and millions of rupees you have amassed? If you cannot carry a puny little needle, what else do you have that you think you can take? You are really a poor man, Dunichand, for only he is rich who can take something with him after death."

Anything that can be measured cannot be taken beyond death; only the immeasurable can be taken.

There are two types of people in this world. One type is always anxious to measure, always searching for things to count and weigh. The other type is always looking for what is immeasurable. The first type are not religious but worldly; they belong to samsara, the world of illusion. The second type are the religious people, the sannyasins.

The search for the immeasurable is religion. He who has found the immeasurable conquers death; he has attained the nectar, the elixir. What can be measured is bound to disintegrate; whatever has a boundary is bound to rot. Whatever can be defined is here today and gone tomorrow. Mountains like the Himalayas will disappear one day; so also the moon, the sun and the stars. We call the mountains stable and immovable, but they too are movable and unstable. Everything is unstable, as far as measure goes; all things that can be measured are like individual waves. Where all measure ends, where all boundaries fade, that is the beginning of the Ocean of Brahma, the beginning of God.

Therefore, Nanak says, His qualities are invaluable, and His trading too. You cannot set value on Him – that is the difficulty. You can evaluate Napoleon and Alexander, for their wealth and kingdoms set their value. But how will you estimate the value of Buddha? What is the worth of Nanak and the likes of Him? We can judge the worth of those with wealth and position, for their possessions are their very souls: one man is worth a million rupees, another is worth ten million. But how can we gauge the value of someone who has nothing except God? Thus many a time we fail to see a Nanak. Many a time Buddha crosses our path but we have no eyes to see him, for we are only conversant with the art of measuring; it is only things that we see. If Buddha held a diamond in his hand we would have seen the diamond, but not Buddha – whereas the diamond is worthless and Buddha is beyond value, beyond price.

Our eyes, our vision, our way of thinking, our minds – take stock of these. Outside is the world of measure, inside is the mind. The mind and maya, the world of illusion are one. Outside lies the measure, inside is the measurer – the mind. The immeasurable that is outside is Brahma; it has no connection with the mind, but is related only to the soul, the atman; for the atman is also immeasurable. You can only relate yourself with that which you are within. The mind has its boundary, thus through it you can only know the limited. The soul has no boundary, so through it you can know the boundless. What is the worth of God? Nothing!

It is said that Judas sold Jesus to his enemies for thirty pieces of silver. We are shocked. A man like Jesus who comes only once on earth after hundreds of years, and Judas trades him off for a few pieces of silver? We find it hard to imagine. But you would have done the same. Perhaps you would have taken thirty thousand instead of thirty, but what is the difference? A measure is a measure. Note one thing: after staying with Jesus for years, Judas could not recognize Jesus, he could not see him. When someone bribed him with thirty pieces of silver, he promptly told him where Jesus could be found. The coins seemed more valuable than Jesus.

We see only what we can evaluate. We are trapped by the price of things. People come to me and ask what they will gain by meditation. How will they benefit by it? It is not that they do not know that meditation will lead them to God. They do know, but they see no profit in God. They know meditation leads to bliss, but bliss has no market value. If you try to sell it who will buy? In their own language people want to know the value, the price, of what can be attained through meditation.

They are not wrong in enquiring, for the economics of life is based on value. For one hour of meditation, how many rupees could you have earned in your shop? If you attain something of equal value or more, then meditation is worthwhile; otherwise it is poor business and useless.

Unfortunately, what you get in meditation has no value. As long as you ask the price of things you will be unable to begin meditation, for you are held in the grip of the world of values, samsara. Whereas God means to enter into pricelessness and non-value.

PRICELESS ARE HIS QUALITIES, AND HIS TRADING, TOO;

PRICELESS ARE HIS SALESMEN, AND HIS STOREHOUSES;

Who are His salesmen? Those whom we call saints, realized men, buddhas. They have come to sell you something that you have not the courage to buy. They want to give you something priceless, but you aren't ready to take it. You feel that which is given free is bound to be worthless. God is given free, so you aren't interested. If a price were set on Him, you would think twice. Buddha, Nanak, Kabir are His tradesmen, but their business is rather confusing and beyond your understanding. They do not appear as traders or salesmen to you.

Finding Nanak useless for any kind of work, his father began to worry what would happen to him. He exhorted him time and again to do something and not be so utterly useless. Nanak's father didn't have the eyes to see what was invaluable in his son. People came to tell him what a priceless son he had, but he would answer, "Priceless? My foot! He hasn't the sense to earn a paisa. He only knows how to lose money!" What is earning in this world is losing in the other.

Nanak's father told him that if he could do nothing else at least he should take the cattle to graze. If someone is angry with his son he tells him to go and graze cattle; it is considered the meanest of jobs for the dullest of people.

So Nanak's father said, "Go and take the cattle to graze. Sitting as you do the whole day long with your eyes glued to the skies, how else can you make a living?" The father was a totally worldly man who worried about his son's future.

Nanak agreed happily, but for different reasons: he found more peace and tranquillity in the company of animals than man, for at least animals aren't constantly talking about economics. They are not always hankering after wealth and possessions. So Nanak was happy to find that work. He loved to be with animals; having no ego, the animals would quietly leave him to himself.

Nanak went along with his cows and buffaloes. But such people always land in trouble. He let the animals loose and said, "Graze to your hearts' content, my friends," and he closed his eyes and was lost in his ecstasy. The animals moved into the adjoining field and destroyed it completely. The

farmer came shouting, "What have you done? You'll have to pay to the last paisa. My whole harvest has been destroyed by your animals."

Nanak opened his eyes and said, "Don't be disturbed, brother. The animals are His, the field is His. It is He who let them loose in your field. Don't worry. Good fortune will rain on you."

"Shut up!" raved the man. "Good fortune indeed! Stop your babbling. I am ruined."

He ran to Nanak's father and dragged him to the village head. He demanded the value of the full harvest. The village head was a Muslim by the name of Shah Bullar. He was a devotee of Nanak. He said, "Let's see what Nanak has to say." When Nanak was questioned he said, "All happens through His will. It is His order and all is well. It is He who sent the animals, it is He who grew the harvest. And if He has grown it once He will grow it a thousand times again. What is the need to panic? No loss was incurred."

The farmer said, "Come with me to the field to see for yourselves. My field is destroyed and this man says everything is all right."

As the story goes, all of them went to the field and what did they see? A golden harvest was swaying in the breeze! The adjoining fields paled in comparison. Such a harvest had never been seen before.

The story may be true or not, but it carries great meaning. What is one to say of the field of someone who leaves everything entirely in His hands? The harvest that bloomed in the life of Nanak has perhaps rarely been seen in anyone's life. But the courage to leave all to Him...!

The owner of the field could not believe his eyes. The greatest miracle in the world is to leave everything to God, then things begin to happen every day of your life for which you will have no rational explanation.

The moral of the story is that he who leaves everything to God finds such wonderful things happening for which there are no logical explanations. when the immeasurable enters your life, riddles begin. Mystery means only one thing: you have turned your eyes away from the world of measure and directed your vision towards the immeasurable, from limitations towards the unlimited, from the known to the unknown. As soon as you create a little place for the unknown in your life, the harvest of miracles begins to bloom.

Nanak is a salesman of the other world. This world has always treated such people very badly. Jesus was hung on the cross. Socrates was poisoned. Even when we did not maltreat them quite so drastically, we avoided listening to them. Whenever we worship it is only a device to keep ourselves as we are. We pray: You are great, O Lord, how can we attain You? We offer these flowers at your feet, but we shall remain as we are.

You offer worship to appease your soul – and stay the same. Your worshipping is false. If it were genuine there would be one sure test – you would be a changed person. If you truly revered Nanak, you would be transformed. But you remain the same even if you pretend to revere Nanak; then your reverence is only an escape device. You say, "You are great. All you say is absolutely right, but the time is not yet ripe for us. When the time comes we will set out on this path, but there are so many duties in life to be done first. What's the hurry?"

We keep postponing it. Our reverence is filled with such cunning. Remember, reverence can be a very cunning device. To poison someone is a straighter and simpler way to get rid of him; in Greece they poisoned Socrates, and the Jews crucified Christ. India is more cunning, for they are past masters at it. We neither poisoned nor crucified Buddha, Nanak, Mahavir or Krishna – we worshipped them.

Remember, the Jews haven't yet been able to shake off Jesus after crucifying him. Jesus still haunts them; the feelings of guilt and sin for his crucifixion continues to torment them. They cannot brush aside his memory.

But we Indians are clever; we have rid ourselves of them and are not tormented by thoughts of them. We are indeed very, very clever. We have fixed days to remember them: their birthdays, the anniversaries of their deaths. We remember them with full fervor, with drums and conch shells and flowers and processions – but only on these days. The rest of the year we beg them to leave us alone to carry on our work, our trade. We are not yet ready to deal with the other world. We didn't have to take the trouble to remove our great men bodily, because we know so many tricks to bypass them, so why take the trouble. And besides, killing them would mean we had taken them too seriously.

We shall worship you, give you the status of God, and call you guru, saint, whatever – but let us remain as we are! This is a non-violent device to be rid of them. We place them on the altar in the temples, and remain in the world of samsara ourselves. When we need something we call on them. We use them but we aren't prepared to change ourselves for their sake.

We are a clan of clever, cunning people with an old history. Old people are very clever, for life's experience has shown them ways and means of evasion. Why crucify or poison? Why all the plotting and planning? Put them on a pedestal and you are rid of them! Thus we have placed all our salesmen of the other world on the altar and settled the issue: "You are God, we are your devotees, your worshippers," and so the matter ends.

The real thing is to become Nanak yourself, and not to worship Nanak. The real thing is to become the Gurugranth, the Sikh holy book, so that your utterance starts the resonance of Omkar. But then you have to undergo a complete transformation.

PRICELESS ARE HIS SALESMEN...

Therefore, we cannot recognize them. We feel that whatever they say doesn't fit our sense of reason, doesn't touch our understanding. Then we raise a wall between them and ourselves, and we make separate compartments. When you are in the gurudwara you are a different man from when you are in your shop. In the temple you shed your tears of adoration and sway with emotion. In the mosque you are different from the marketplace. There seem to be two different persons, not one; it is also a skillful evasive trick.

We have made separate compartments in ourselves. Religion is our Sunday-corner. We go to church on Sunday morning, and as we come out, that corner is left behind in the church and we forget all about it for the next seven days. As if religion implies only going to church! What about the rest of the time? We spend that as we please. In churches and gurudwaras we hear the words of God's salesmen – but do we hear? We only pretend to listen as a social obligation.

Nanak says: His salesmen are priceless. If you want to move towards Him, try to understand His salesmen. You will be unable to gauge His tradesmen; your intellect will be sorely taxed in the attempt, for none of your yardsticks work here. Whatever way you try to measure them, they always turn out to be more.

PRICELESS IS HE WHO COMES TO TAKE, AND WHAT HE TAKES.

Here everything is dealing in the priceless, the immeasurable and the inestimable. Here the customer, he who buys the goods, is also priceless; for the only thing on sale here is: ek omkar satnam.

PRICELESS HIS FEELINGS, AND HIS SAMADHI, TOO

If the feeling of God is born within you, you enter a different realm. Then you are not here, you are somewhere else.

If anyone mentioned the name of God, Ramakrishna would stand up at once. His eyes would close and torrents of tears would begin to flow; his body became inert, and he was lost to the world. The mere mention of His name transported Ramakrishna to another world, which opens before you as the doors of this world close.

Nanak speaks of His feelings, mere remembrance, surati – the slightest recollection and you are transported elsewhere. When His feeling becomes total, samadhi results.

Understand the difference between feeling and samadhi; feeling means a glimpse, a ripple – being immersed in Him for a moment, but the you is present. You dived inside Him but you did not cease to exist. Like a person diving under water, how long can he remain under water? He has to come out in a moment. Besides, he was very much there as he dived.

Shaikh Farid was a siddha, an enlightened one. He lived almost at the time of Nanak. One day he was going to the river for a bath when a seeker questioned him, "How is God attained?" Farid said, "Come along with me. Let us bathe first. Then I will show you; and if I get the opportunity I shall show you while you bathe."

The seeker was rather frightened. He is asking about God and this man takes him for a bath, and offers to show him during the course of the bath! He was troubled, but having already asked he couldn't back down. And Farid was a well known saint, so there was the possibility of being shown something in the river. His curiosity was great as he stepped into the river. No sooner had he dived in than Farid jumped astride him. Tiny and thin though he was and Farid a hefty person, he mustered all his strength and succeeded in throwing Farid off of his back. When he came out he screamed, "You are not a saint but a criminal. What way is this? You must be mad. If you didn't know why didn't you tell me in the beginning?"

Farid replied, "Later we shall settle this problem of my sanity or unconsciousness. Now I have to ask you before your weak memory gives way, when I pressed you under water, how many thoughts were there in your mind?"

The seeker said, "What thoughts? Surely you are mad. How could there be any thought other than how to save my life? The only idea was to shake you off and get a breath of fresh air."

"That will do," said Farid. "You have understood. The day your mind is empty of all thoughts, and there is only the idea of God within you, you shall know all that is to be known. And remember, unless you risk your all in life, it is difficult to know God."

The word bhava is used for feeling or idea in the deepest sense, where there is no thought, only His remembrance. Had you been in place of the seeker, you too would have come out of the water.

Samadhi is the complete state of bhava, of feelings. Once you go you are gone! It is a point of no return. Then this feeling stays with you forever, you become one with it. It is not a dive, it is complete immersion, complete absorption. You also become water with the water. Now who is to come out? Who is to go in? It is as if you were a doll fashioned out of salt or sugar; you jumped into the water and were dissolved! Now whoever tastes the water also gets a taste of you. In bhava you are still separate; in samadhi you become one. The glimpse is now eternal.

PRICELESS HIS FEELINGS, AND HIS SAMADHI, TOO

PRICELESS HIS DIVINE JUSTICE, AND HIS COURTS;

PRICELESS THE WEIGHTS AND BALANCE TO JUDGE MAN'S ACTIONS;

PRICELESS HIS BOUNTY, AND THE SYMBOLS WHICH DISTINGUISH IT;

Try to understand the value of His symbols. There is such complexity and confusion associated with idols and images. Hindus have thousands of sacred places and carved images. They are all symbols.

The Muslim cannot understand what there is in the idol. He destroys them, and when they break he thinks that if the image could not protect itself, how could it protect its devotees? This also happened in the life of Swami Dayanand. He was at the temple of Shiva on the night of Shiv-Ratri, when Shiva is worshipped. As is natural all the devotees who were supposed to keep vigil fell asleep. Dayanand however, who was still only a child, happened to be awake. He saw a small rat climbing all over the Shivalinga and nibbling at the offerings. Then the thought came to him: What use is it worshipping this image which cannot even drive away a rat? The Muslims miss the point, and so did Dayananda, for a symbol is a symbol and not God.

It is with the aid of a symbol that you set out on a journey; it is not the end in itself. Suppose your beloved makes you a gift of a handkerchief worth four annas. If you try to sell it in the market you will not even get two annas for it. Who will buy an old hankie? Perhaps it might fetch a small price in a secondhand shop. But for you it bears a different significance; you couldn't set a price on it. You even keep it locked away in a favored place in your cupboard. For you it is not only a handkerchief, but a symbol. Through it you are connected with your beloved. So that no one may know, you use this insignificant article. For you, in a very deep sense, your beloved lies entwined in its threads. This very cloth has touched her hands, she has filled it with kisses and has given it to you. In a profound way your beloved has become one with it. For others it is just a piece of cloth; for you it has immeasurable value.

What is the difference? For you it is a symbol, for others it remains a mere handkerchief. The images of the Hindu are his symbols when he has filled them with his bhava; for the Muslim it is only a piece of stone. The image of Buddha is a symbol for the Buddhists, that of Mahavir is a symbol for the Jains; and for each, the other's symbol is of no value. A symbol has no general value. It is a very personal and private thing. Whoever knows this, knows; he is connected with it.

Therefore how could you ever criticize someone else's symbol? For you it may be ordinary – you are right! But for someone else it is extraordinary – and that, too, is true. You are right when you ask what is there in a mere handkerchief that you should hold it to your heart? And what if it is lost? There are so many more available in the market.

But for the right one it has great value, great meaning; it is a symbol, and, as such, cannot be replaced at any price. It is unique and personal.

Nanak says: Even His symbols are unique. He is unique – that goes without saying, but if you have attained a glimpse of Him through some medium, that medium also becomes priceless. Every symbol must be respected, for who knows which one will light the way to Him? And never make the mistake of branding a symbol wrong, for a symbol can never be wrong. A symbol is a symbol for some and not for others; there is no right or wrong.

The Muslim insistently believes that images are useless – but the stone of Kaaba? This stone he kisses! No stone in the world has been kissed so much – by millions and millions of people in the last 1400 years. The Muslim takes the Kaaba as a proper symbol and finds this stone worth kissing, but he thinks the Hindu's images fit only to be broken.

A religious person must understand enough to realize that what is not a symbol for him could be a symbol for someone else. There is no need to prove it to be a commonly held symbol, for it is a personal matter that deals with deep intrinsic feelings.

For some the fig tree is holy. Would you say, "Are you mad to worship a mere tree?" The question is not at all what you worship, but worship itself. Any excuse, any means, is good enough if it inspires worship. All means are correct and all means are wrong. If you see with a scientific eye, a Peepul tree is a Peepul tree, a stone is a stone, a handkerchief is a handkerchief; but what has science to do with religion? Religion is the kingdom of love and not of the intellect and logic. Isn't it strange that every man reveres and guards his symbols but creates a thousand difficulties around the symbols of others? If you can hold your beloved's hankie to your heart, let the others keep theirs also; they are the mementos of their beloved.

Let the hint come from anywhere. For instance, if a man is interested in the God of the Peepul Tree and he is lost in samadhi while dancing and entertaining his God, the real question has nothing to do with the tree, but his going into ecstasy. Wherever this dance occurs, whatever the means that brings His remembrance, that thing is priceless.

PRICELESS HIS BOUNTY, AND THE SYMBOLS WHICH DISTINGUISH IT;

PRICELESS HIS GRACE AND HIS ORDER, TOO;

HE IS THE PRICELESS OF THE PRICELESS; HE CANNOT BE DESCRIBED.

MANY FALL, LOST IN MEDITATION, EVEN WHILE RECITING HIS ATTRIBUTES.

This is the very intent of singing His praises – understand it! Again and again Nanak says one cannot describe Him, we cannot enumerate His attributes, for there is no way to do so. And yet Nanak keeps on recounting His attributes. What is he doing? If He can't be described what is the need for so many words? They do nothing but express His qualities. We are faced by a metaphysical riddle.

People come to me and ask if the Buddha says that nothing can be said about Him, then why does Buddha speak? They also tell me, "You say nothing can be expressed in words about Him, and here you are talking every day! It seems so inconsistent."

Try to understand. Nanak says he cannot speak about Him and he speaks constantly of Him; for while recounting His attributes, the speaker slips into samadhi. He is not done with praising Him, he cannot praise Him enough, but oh, it is so lovely to talk of Him! The talk is never complete; having said so much, nothing has been told. Everything seems unsaid. But it gives so much joy to talk about Him, that one slips into meditation recounting His ways. No amount of talking conveys anything, but in the course of speaking the speaker is lost.

MANY FALL, LOST IN MEDITATION, EVEN WHILE RECITING HIS ATTRIBUTES.

THE VEDAS TALK OF HIM, AND PURANAS STUDY HIM;

AND LEARNED ONES DESCRIBE HIM; SO ALSO INDRA AND BRAHMA;

THE GOPIS AND KRISHNA SPEAK OF HIM: AND VISHNU AND THE SIDDHAS;

AND MANY, MANY BUDDHAS; AND DEMONS AND DEITIES TOO.

MEN AND SAGES AND THOSE WHO SERVE, THEY ALL SING HIS PRAISE.

To speak of Him is not for the sake of speaking, but as a method of meditation. To discuss Him is a way to be lost in Him. To talk about Him is to be ready for Him. Even to sit where He is being discussed and listen – perhaps a drop of this rain may fall on you. Perhaps your parched throat may be relieved; perhaps some word may pierce your deaf ears and enter within; perhaps your blind eyes may get a ray of light; perhaps your thoughts may for a little while be soaked in the color and melody of His music; and perhaps you may fall silent for a while and your internal dialogue may be interrupted.

Nanak sings of Him, for while singing of Him he is lost in Him. Not only the singer, but even the listener is lost in Him. Therefore Nanak did not speak, he always sang. It is easier when you sing. He used singing so that the internal chord may be tuned. In the rhythm of the song you may perhaps touch the fringe of that profound silence; then you will never forget it.

Nanak also stresses the importance of associating with saints. Associate with people who talk of Him, sing of Him. By and by, with constant hearing, the color will begin to spread over you too. When you walk through a garden, your clothes pick up the fragrance of the flowers without your knowing

it. If you stand out in the morning sun the warm rays will cause the blood within you to flow faster. And if you lie beneath the starry sky and watch the moon, its cool light is bound to find a place within you.

Association with holy men and saints means to be where He is discussed, where He is being praised. The Hindus have said, "When He is criticized, close your ears. Where He is being talked about, listen with all attention; become all ears!" Therefore Nanak says time and time again, "Listen!" He talks about Him and He sings His praises. But he also reminds you again and again that however much you describe Him, you have made no headway, you have only just begun. No words can describe Him or enumerate His attributes. Don't think that whatever Nanak has said has become His measure. It is just a slight beginning, a feeble effort. Therefore Nanak praises Him while also saying He cannot be expressed.

THE VEDAS TALK OF HIM, AND PURANAS STUDY HIM;

AND LEARNED ONES DESCRIBE HIM; SO ALSO INDRA AND BRAHMA;

THE GOPIS AND KRISHNA SPEAK OF HIM, AND VISHNU AND THE SIDDHAS.

The gopis and Krishna never spoke of Him at all; they just danced. But in their dance they expressed Him. Krishna never sat down and talked of God to his milkmaids; he danced with them under the light of the full moon. Nanak says through dance they were expressing their praise of Him.

So many different ways there are: some sing, some dance, some keep silent – but all are expressions of Him. Whoever has realized Him expresses Him in each action, each indication, each gesture. If Buddha raises his hand, it is an indication towards Him. Whether Buddha opens his eyes, or keeps silent, he is still expressing Him.

Each person's way is different. Buddha could not dance. It was not in him. It would not have suited him. He would have looked very awkward dancing, but he looked so beautiful under the Bodhi tree. The posture he assumes as he sits is his dance. He does not move, there is not a tremble. Like a statue he sits; that is his way!

Buddha's image has been the reason for all statues or images being referred to as but. In Arabic and affiliated languages, but is the corrupted form of Buddha. Buddha sat so statue-like that had you seen him alive you would have thought it was a marble statue. There was a reason for this. Buddha used to be that way, so tranquil, so cool, so still. That was his way and that is how he expressed Him.

Krishna dances. His way is just the opposite of Buddha. You can never imagine Buddha with a crown of peacock feathers on his head. He would look so clumsy. But if you make Krishna sit cross-legged under a Bodhi tree, like Buddha, he would look equally comic. This is not in keeping with his nature. He looks right only with a crown of peacock feathers and the gopis surrounding him and music and dance happening.

Nanak is saying that the dance of Krishna and the gopis is another unique way to express Him. This is a lovely statement of Nanak. In a thousand ways the awakened ones have spoken of Him. There are thousands of indications, and He towards whom all fingers point is one – Ek Omkar Satnam.

AND LEARNED ONES DESCRIBE HIM; SO ALSO INDRA AND BRAHMA;

THE GOPIS AND KRISHNA SPEAK OF HIM, AND VISHNU AND THE SIDDHAS;

AND MANY, MANY BUDDHAS; AND DEMONS AND DEITIES TOO.

MEN AND SAGES AND THOSE WHO SERVE, THEY ALL SING HIS PRAISE.

MANY THERE ARE WHO CAN EXPRESS IT, AND MANY DIE BEFORE COMPLETING THE TASK.

HE WILL BRING EVEN MORE TO THIS EXISTENCE.

NO ONE CAN PREDICT HIS ACTIONS.

WHATEVER HE FEELS – SO IT HAPPENS.

These words are worth pondering over. He cannot be expressed fully, for God is not an event that is completed; if it is still in the process of completion you cannot give a full account of it.

A man's biography, to be fully written, must wait till he dies. Until then his story is incomplete, some chapters still remain. How can we write God's life story? He will never die nor grow old. He will never reach the point where you can say this is the end.

God keeps on happening. He is a constant occurrence, an eternal manifestation. He is a flower that is eternally blooming, but the petals of the flower will never reach the point where we can say it has fully grown. It has been blooming always, it is blooming now, and will keep on blooming always.

Because His power is infinite, all descriptions fall short of Him; all the images we have made of God and descriptions we have given of Him remain incomplete. It is just as when we make children's clothes, they soon outgrow them. Only when they reach an age when they stop growing and their measurements remain constant can the tailor take the measurements once and for all.

God always keeps growing, therefore all the clothes we make for Him soon become inadequate. All scriptures fall short and become old and outdated; therefore new religions manifest in the world, and new sages bring out new explanations. But these explanations remain valid for some time, then soon they begin to fall short and need to be replaced by new explanations, by newer sages who now sing His praises according to the needs of their times.

Every new song is popular and applicable only for a very brief time. Its relevance does not last even until we finish the song, for in that brief time God has gone even further ahead. Before we put the final touch to His image, He has become something else. Everything remains incomplete.

The Hindus are very wonderful people. Only they have made images of God that have no features. Everywhere else in the world the images have definite features. The Hindus pick up a stone, smear it with vermillion and lo! it becomes the image of Hanuman, the Monkey-God. It has no features; it is just a small boulder. The Hindus say: What is the sense of giving it any shape? By the time we give the image its features, God will have moved further on. This stone will do just as well.

The image of Shiva, the Shivalinga, is egg-shaped and has no features. It is an eternal symbol. Whatever form God takes, this symbol will not be affected, while others become outdated.

Nanak says: He has done so much up to now and He will keep on doing. Were He completely evolved, we would have been able to say something, we might have drawn some conclusions; but he keeps expanding further and further. He is unpredictable. We can make no inferences about what He will do next – neither about God nor the world – all is hidden in the unknowable.

HE WILL BRING EVEN MORE TO THIS EXISTENCE.

NO ONE CAN PREDICT HIS ACTIONS.

WHATEVER HE FEELS – SO IT HAPPENS.

His wish – and the happening occurs! For the Christians and Jews, God said "Be!" and the world came into existence.

With our limited energy, there is a distance between our feelings and our actions. If today the desire arises in you to build a house, the house will come into being in two years. This is because our energy is limited. If we had a little more energy, perhaps it could be constructed within a year; with yet a little more, perhaps in a day. And if your energy were total, as abundant as that of God, then there would be no gap between the wish and the action.

Therefore, time exists for us but not for God. It is an event in man's world because of his weakness.

If you but think back you will find that the weaker you were the longer time seemed to you. For instance, your wife has a fever of 104 degrees. You run to the doctor and are back with the medicine within five minutes, but your wife complains you took too long. Time seems so long in fever.

There is evidence that time seems longer in illness. Not only the patient, but those who sit by his side feel it. Sitting next to a dying man, the night never seems to end. When you are well and happy time seems to have wings; when you are unhappy it seems to drag. It all depends on your energy.

God is omnipotent. For Him time does not exist. Whatever He thinks, wishes, feels, becomes immediately a realized act. Nanak says, Whatever He wills or thinks, or feels, so it happens, and at that very instant, without a moment's hesitation. The willing and the happening are simultaneous. His desire is the act. Nanak says, HE WHO KNOWS THIS IS HIMSELF THE TRUTH. This utterance has two meanings:

WHATEVER HE FEELS – SO IT HAPPENS.

WHOEVER KNOWS THIS, HE HIMSELF IS TRUTH.

The first meaning is that he who realizes the truth of the omnipotence of God, that His idea and its realization are identical, becomes truth himself.

The second sense involves Nanak saying HE ALONE CAN KNOW HIMSELF. A man of truth can only know himself. We cannot know Him, for we know not His future nor His past and He will never

be complete. He goes from one completion to another – not an incomplete happening proceeding towards completion. His completion moves to further completion, to further perfection.

The first meaning sees the man of truth as he who recognizes God's all-pervading power. In the second meaning, the man of truth recognizes that he can only know himself, since God is never completed and can never be known completely.

IF SOMEONE BOASTS OF KNOWING HIM, THEN HE IS THE FOOL OF FOOLS.

To make a list of fools, the very first name is the man who boasts of knowing or describing God.

Nanak talks about Him, for to speak of Him is enchanting, it drowns us in ecstasy, it is meditation itself. Talking of His will, the heart begins to bloom, joy is born within and nectar begins to flow. But if someone thinks He can be described, he is the biggest of fools. He is a wise man who knows He cannot be described.

Nanak talks of Him for His very name is a source of bliss. He mentions Him at the slightest excuse, for it gives much joy. It seems he has nothing else to talk about. To introduce the subject is to knock at His door and when you talk of Him, the door opens. Have you ever noticed how a mother is always talking of her newborn child? Whether she talks to the neighbors, to her visitors, to the shopkeepers, the topic is always the child.

The lover constantly tells his beloved how much he loves her, how beautiful she is, how unique, unparalleled. He tells her again and again, that there will never be another like her. How lucky he is to have her! The beloved doesn't realize why he keeps repeating the same things over and over. Constant repetition increases love. Love intensifies by constant repetition. Like the buzz of a bee as it hovers around the flowers, love begins to hum around the beloved.

What happens in ordinary life is the same as in divine love, only on a different scale, but the substance remains the same. So Nanak goes on and on telling the same things about Him. If you have not loved, you will find this very jarring and foolish. The Japji can be told in three small words: Ek Omkar Satnam. Then why does he go on and on? There is so much pleasure, so much joy in talking about Him! And if the feeling takes birth within, you too will find how sweet, how tender is His name.

A child was taught to say his prayers before going to bed. One day his mother observed him closely to see whether he really prayed. The child muttered one word and pulling the blanket up, lay down on the pillow. "What is this?" she asked, "Are your prayers over so soon?"

The child answered, "Why should I waste my time saying the same things every day? So I say to God, 'Ditto!' and I'm sure He is intelligent enough to understand."

The intellect gives you such advice: Why repeat yourself? But the heart wants to repeat over and over. The heart has never heard the word ditto. And while the heart keeps repeating, it is immersed in the nectar of His name. The more the heart repeats, the more we are lost in ecstasy. This is like the humming of the bee, but it can only be understood if you have had the necessary feelings.

At the very end Nanak reminds us not to indulge in boasting of knowing Him or being able to describe His attributes, for that can only prove you to be the chief among fools. If by constantly singing His praises your ego is lost, you shall be the wise among the wise. If, however, talking of Him is strengthening your ego, if you think: Who else but I could know what I know? then you are the fool of fools!

CHAPTER 3

Birds Don't Go To College

3 December 1974 am in Chuang Tzu Auditorium

WHERE IS THAT DOOR? WHAT MANSION IS IT

WHERE YOU SIT AND OVERLOOK YOUR CREATION?

INFINITE SOUNDS ARE RINGING, AND INFINITE ARE THE PLAYERS;

INFINITE THE SINGERS, AND INFINITE THE MELODIES THEY SING.

WATER, FIRE AND WIND SING YOUR GLORY,

AND THE GOD OF DEATH SINGS AT YOUR DOOR;

CHITRAGUPTA, SHIVA, BRAHMA, DEVI – ALL SING YOUR GLORY;

AND INDRA ON HIS THRONE AND ALL THE DEITIES,

AND HOLY MEN IN MEDITATION, AND REALIZED BEINGS IN THEIR SAMADHI,

AND ASCETICS, CHASTE WOMEN, CONTENTED PEOPLE AND WARRIORS,

AND PANDITS, RISHIS, AND THEIR VEDAS THROUGH THE AGES,

AND BEAUTIFUL MAIDENS OF HEAVEN, AND FISHES THAT DWELL IN THE DEPTHS,

AND THE FOURTEEN GEMS CREATED BY YOU, AND THE SIXTY-EIGHT SACRED PLACES,
HEROES AND GREAT WARRIORS, AND CREATURES OF THE FOUR KINGDOMS SUSTAINED
BY YOU,

ALL CONTINENTS, ALL SPHERES, AND THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE,

THOSE IN YOUR FAVOR AND DEEPLY IMMersed IN YOU, SUCH DELIGHTFUL DEVOTEES,
THEY ALL SING YOUR PRAISES! AND HOW MANY MORE, I CANNOT CONCEIVE OR INFER.

HE AND ONLY HE IS THE TRUE LORD. HE IS TRUTH – SATNAM.

HE IS AND ALWAYS WILL BE. THOUGH ALL VANISH HIS REALITY WILL NEVER LEAVE.

HE CREATED MAYA – THINGS OF VARIOUS COLORS AND EMOTIONS AND DISPOSITIONS.

HE CREATES ALL THINGS AND WATCHING OVER THEM, HE ALSO GIVES THEM GREATNESS.

HE DOES WHAT PLEASES HIM. NONE CAN INTERFERE WITH HIS ORDER.

NANAK SAYS, HE IS THE KING OF KINGS. ABIDE BY HIS WILL.

There is a Sufi tale: Becoming angry with his prime minister, a king had him confined in a very high tower with no way to escape; if he tried to jump he would surely be killed. The king did not know it, but on his way to the tower the prime minister had whispered something in his wife's ear. On the very first night she came and left an ordinary insect on the tower wall. She applied a little honey to its antennae and the insect began to climb up the tower in search of the honey, but she had also tied a thin silk thread to its tail. Slowly the insect climbed the three hundred feet of the tower where the minister was waiting for it. He grabbed at the silk thread to which the wife had tied a string, and to the string she had tied a cord, and attached to the cord was a strong rope. The minister pulled till he had the rope in hand, and with its help he climbed down from the tower.

The story states that not only did the minister escape the prison, but he also discovered the means to escape from life's ultimate prison. If even the thinnest, weakest thread comes to hand, there is no difficulty in attaining liberation. The weakest thread can pave the way to beauty, but the thread must come to hand. A slight ray, once recognized, can lead to the sun.

All religions, all gurus, have reached God by catching hold of one thin thread or other. These threads are many, and can be tied to many kinds of insect. It isn't necessary to smear the insect's antennae with honey; you can apply anything that tempts the insect to climb to the prisoner. The thread becomes the bridge.

The thread that Nanak caught hold of is so crystal clear, but since we are both deaf and blind, we cannot hear him.

If you observe life closely, you will find that the most outstanding thing in existence is song. The birds have always been singing; each morning at the break of day they herald the coming of the sun

with their song. The wind brushes against the leaves of the trees, and there is music. The waterfall has a melody all its own. The clouds clash with tumultuous sounds. The sound of the rivers as they flow, and the waves as they lash against the shores, have a quality of their very own. Look at life all around and listen! Existence sings from every corner.

Nothing in existence is clearer than music. It stops at death when life has become silent. Life is full of resonance, but man is deaf; therefore, though the thread is clear and within our hands, we do not grasp it. If life is so full of song, then it is certain that God's hand is behind it. God is somewhere hidden behind the song. If we could sing, if we could lose ourselves in the rapture of His song, the thread will be grasped. To be absorbed in the song is the thread that leads to Him. Then it will not be long to escape the prison of samsara, this every day world, and reach liberation in God.

Nanak made his sadhana, his practice, out of song. Sometimes you must have felt the intoxication creeping up on you in the exhilaration and ecstasy of singing. But people are afraid to sing. Birds do not care whether their voices are sweet or not, but man is very careful. Only a few people sing, those with good voices; the rest sing only in the bathroom where no one can see and no one can hear. Singing makes you feel fresher than a bath, for bathing only touches the surface while the song sinks deep within. He who cannot hum has lost connection with God; he retreats further and further from existence, like a living corpse.

Kabir has said about this country: "This is the land of corpses, for the song of life does not play here. No one dances in celebration, no one sings with a full heart, and no one loses himself in song."

It doesn't matter whether your voice is sweet or not, for song isn't a commodity to be sold in the marketplace, but rather an expression of gratitude and happiness. A song is made meaningful and beautiful by you being enraptured by it, not by the quality of your voice. You can be so immersed in your song that you are no more, only the song is – the singer is lost, the song remains. It can happen so simply, and there is no easier thread. If birds can sing, plants hum, and the waterfall babble, are you so useless that you can't stand amongst them? Are you so incapable that you can't compete with the stream or with the birds and the trees?

The fact is that you are frightened since song has been made into a sellable commodity. As a result, it is no longer a natural act in life but a product for the market, and you worry about making time for it and whether your voice is adequately trained. No stream stops to learn music; it is as natural a flow as a river. Music is already within, so it needn't be learned.

All you require is the courage and daring to be a little mad, and then the song will spurt out of you. Birds don't go to college to learn music; they don't worry about who says what; they are not anxious whether their song will sell; they sing with joy and abandon. Why not you?

Since we started selling our songs in the bazaar another calamity took place; we stopped singing and became listeners. We are passive: if someone sings we listen, if someone dances we look. Think of how impoverished and wretched we have become. The time will come when someone will be happy and we will be the audience. What a difference between watching someone's happiness and being happy yourself! Imagine looking on while someone is making love, and you don't make love yourself. Do you see the difference? Can love be known by watching? No, it can only be known when you yourself love.

If you listen to a person singing, no matter how melodious the voice, and how great the artist, you will not know what it is to sing. This is borrowed pleasure; you sit like a corpse and listen, not connected with the music at all. You must actively enter into the music. Dance can only be known by dancing, not by watching. Watching is a mere substitute; it is false, inauthentic.

Slowly, slowly man is leaving everything to others. Some few perform, most watch; some dance, the rest watch; some sing and many gather to listen. If you neither sing nor play nor dance what is the purpose of being alive? Is life to be carried on by a few specialists?

Neither spectator nor performer gain anything from this, for the latter's attention is totally into making money. The dance comes not from the soul; it is merely superficial skill. The dancer is actually not dancing at all, since the dance doesn't penetrate enough for him to lose himself in it; his mind remains apart, involved with the money he is making.

It happened this way: The emperor Akbar told Tansen one day that he would like to meet and hear his guru. He said, "Last night when you left, a thought came to my mind that there has never been a singer greater than you, nor will there ever be. You are the ultimate in music. But then it occurred to me that you must have learned from somebody. You must have had a guru, and perhaps he is even better than you. So I would like to meet your guru and hear him."

Tansen replied, "That is very difficult. I do have a guru who is still alive, but you cannot call him to the court for he does not sing on request. His songs are like the songs of the birds. A cuckoo will never sing at your request. The more you plead the more silent he will become, for it will begin to wonder why the request. You can hear my guru only when he chooses to sing. If you are that eager we shall have to go and hide behind his hut and listen secretly. If we approach him directly he might stop singing."

Tansen's guru, a fakir named Haridas, stayed in a hut on the bank of the river Jamuna. At three o'clock every morning, before dawn, he would sit by the river and sing in ecstasy. His singing was like the song of the birds; his songs had nothing to do with anybody.

Akbar and Tansen reached the hut at two o'clock. At three the singing began. Akbar listened as if hypnotized, his eyes raining tears. When they rode back he could not utter a single word to Tansen. In fact he totally forgot that Tansen was there.

As he stepped down from the chariot he told Tansen, "I was under the impression that you had no equal, but today I see the your guru far surpasses you. Is there some reason for it?"

Tansen replied, "Is there really any need to ask? I sing for you, but my guru sings only for God. When I sing my eye is on the gift you will give me, for singing is my business. My guru doesn't sing to get anything. In fact, it is the other way around; he sings only when he receives, when he is so filled with the emotion of God from the grace he received from above, when his throat is full, when waves of ecstasy arise in his heart. When he is flooded with His grace he sings, he flows, he bursts into song. Singing is like His shadow to him. But for me, I sing first, then receive. My eyes are always on the fruits of my effort, therefore I am lowly. You are absolutely right: how can I stand next to my guru? No matter how skillful I become, however practiced my hands or competent my voice, my soul will never be able to enter into my song. I am a specialist, not so my guru. His song is like the song of the birds. I am nothing before him."

The singers you hear today are professionals. The listeners sit passively while they do their jobs, so far have we come from the song of God. Whoever is making love on the screen is a professional doing his job. He acts and viewers watch, nothing more, just glued to their chairs.

The realities of life can only be known actively; you must enter into these realities. Just to see a person swimming, how can you enjoy the pleasure? If seeing gives so much pleasure, how infinitely joyful must be the act of being and doing.

Sing, dance, but forget the world for it is the thought of the world that prevents you from singing and dancing. Dance, sing – and you stand in the footsteps of God. Nanak says it in such poetic words:

WHERE IS THAT DOOR? WHAT MANSION IS IT

WHERE YOU SIT AND OVERLOOK YOUR CREATION?

INFINITE SOUNDS ARE RINGING, AND INFINITE ARE THE PLAYERS;

INFINITE THE SINGERS, AND INFINITE THE MELODIES THEY SING.

WATER, FIRE AND WIND SING YOUR GLORY,

AND THE GOD OF DEATH SINGS AT YOUR DOOR;

CHITRAGUPTA, SHIVA, BRAHMA, DEVI – ALL SING YOUR GLORY;

AND INDRA ON HIS THRONE AND ALL THE DEITIES,

AND HOLY MEN IN MEDITATION, AND REALIZED BEINGS IN THEIR SAMADHI.

Nanak asks? Where is His door? Where is His abode? And He provides the answer that infinite melodies play and infinite are the players. Nanak is saying: There is your door, hidden in the sound. You are looking after the world, and Omkar is Your door.

If even a part of the song comes within your grasp, with the help of this thin thread you can reach to His door. When the music, the Omkar, begins to sound within you, when you lose yourself in the sounds, that very moment you find yourself before His door.

He says: So many ragas and their variations, so many melodies, so many sounds, you singers! They are all your door. From morning till evening, from evening till morning, infinite melodies play.

Begin to recognize these melodies in life. Man's music is derived entirely from existence. All his musical instruments, all his melodies are derived from sounds of nature: the song of the birds, the sound of the waterfall, the sighing of the wind.

Try to recognize the melody in the world. Early in the morning when you wake up direct your attention to the sounds around you. Once you catch these melodies you will keep hearing them all day long, for they are continuous; only you are deaf.

Sit in the silence of the night and listen to it. This sound of stillness is very close to the ego. When Omkar begins to sound within you, at first you will hear only the sound of stillness: its echo is like the chirping of a cricket in the silent night. You can hear it all day long, anywhere – in the market, at the office, in the shop. The resonance is everywhere. It may be faint or seem to get lost in the noise of the marketplace, but it is very much there. Once you grasp it you will recognize it more and more often. All day long there is a festival of melodies at His door.

Whoever has known Him has called Him 'Sachchidanand' – truth, consciousness and bliss. When a person is filled with joy he is filled with song. Joy and song are so close. Except in films no one sings in sorrow; tears flow, not song. Whatever you do in moments of happiness will be filled with song; even if tears flow it will have the tinkle of music in it. In your sitting and standing, in your gait, in your very breath, music will play; your heartbeats will lend rhythm to your song. Truly music is His door, for within resides the supreme bliss.

Ultimately the music stops, for it is only a door; once you pass through it the music stops. A moment comes when your music becomes a hindrance. Then only His music sounds. Infinite melodies play within you, but you have no music of your own; you are like an empty house.

Our temples are designed for sound to reverberate inside, their construction based on it. The temple is always absolutely empty. This signifies the ultimate state of a seeker; it is a symbol. When the Omkar sounds, we shall be empty within – absolutely empty. A bell is hung at the temple door; whoever comes first rings the bell, for the nada is at the door.

These are all symbols. No one should enter the temple through that door of doors without ringing the bell, for only through the sound itself can you enter. The uniqueness of a bell is that it keeps resounding long after you ring it, so the resonance keeps sounding as you enter the main entrance. In that sound alone is the key to your entry into the temple.

Through the sound, as it were, you enter into God's abode. The temple is a symbol of God's dwelling. When it is sounding constantly you need not ring the bell, but we have formulated a method with the symbol. When you return from the temple ring the bell again. You have to journey back amidst the reverberating sound. All worship, all prayers start with the ringing of the bell.

Nanak says infinite nadas are ringing and infinite are the players. He does not speak as an observer. He describes it as one standing at the door; therefore, his words are straightforward and simple. As if this is happening before his eyes he says:

WHERE IS THAT DOOR? WHAT MANSION IS IT

WHERE YOU SIT AND OVERLOOK YOUR CREATION?

INFINITE SOUNDS ARE RINGING, AND INFINITE ARE THE PLAYERS;

INFINITE THE SINGERS, AND INFINITE THE MELODIES THEY SING.

WATER, FIRE AND WIND SING YOUR GLORY,

AND THE GOD OF DEATH SINGS AT YOUR DOOR.

CHITRAGUPTA, SHIVA, BRAHMA, DEVI – ALL SING YOUR GLORY;

Understand that Dharmraj, the god of death, signifies the zenith, the climax; he is the deity of virtue and ethics. To investigate what is good and what is not good in its finest subtlety is the work of Dharmraj. Nanak says that even he sits at Your door and sings.

There can be no one of a more serious nature than Dharmraj. His very name implies one who has a very grave and weighty temperament, for he thinks in the minutest detail: what is right, what is wrong, what should be done and what should not, what is worth doing and what is not? Nanak also finds such a person singing in ecstasy.

Chitragupta's job is to note down and keep an account of the sins and virtues of people. What can he sing? Even high court judges are only minor Chitraguptas, and just visualize how they carry themselves, sitting stiffly in their chairs in black clothes and white wigs – such grave faces! Laughter is taboo – in contempt of court – and singing is out of the question. Imagine, this is the state in the lesser courts, and Chitragupta sits in the ultimate court!

Nanak says: I see even Chitragupta singing at Your door. All his seriousness has vanished, it would seem; His door is the door of celebration.

Understand that your attention should not be concentrated on keeping an account of good and bad deeds in your life, for in so doing your life becomes cold and heavy with solemnity. He who becomes grave, loses. Do not be lost. Do not become dry. Don't contract in the constant anxiety of what is good and what is bad, for there is no entry to His door for such dehydrated, unfeeling, long-faced people. Dejection and melancholy cannot gain entrance here. Only those who dance and sing have access. Therefore it invariably happens that your so-called 'holy men' remain distant from Him, for they have become so very grim.

Remember that gravity is a part of the ego. A solemn person can never be egoless, and an egoist is invariably conceited and arrogant. There is no sign of the simple, the childlike, the artless in him. Nanak's full name was Nanak Nirankari. The very name 'Nirankari' means egoless.

Mardana sits at Nanak's side, always ready with his instrument to play. Ask Nanak the most serious question and he answers with a song. To all solemnity he responds with cheerfulness. Ask him a profound question, his answer is filled with festivity and rejoicing. Do what you will, Nanak always sang in answer while Mardana played his instrument. There was a special reason why Nanak chose to do that: to bring home to us the fact that music plays at His door.

Rejoicing is characteristic of the truly religious man; whereas an ordinary so-called 'religious' man has just the opposite disposition: stiff with arrogance, his eyes filled with scorn and censure. The constant thought of good and bad reduces them to this state. They kill themselves this way. When do they have time to sing? They are forever worried: what to eat, what not to eat; whether to get up this time or that; whether to dress this way or that – or not to dress at all. All their time is taken up in the boredom and insensibility of rules and regulations.

It is true that rejoicing also has its regulation, but it is not superimposed, it arises from within, it is an inner discipline. Solemnity has its own rules that are superimposed: whatever is inside, wear

a solemn expression on your face! The body becomes lifeless. This is not the characteristic of a religious man. In fact, these are the ways of a frightened man. He is so frightened that he dare not laugh for he fears that laughter may lead him to some sin. So laughter has become sinful, and a grim, long face a symbol of virtue.

In Nanak's method there is song and festivity. Holding on to this sutra of celebration and festivity one can reach His gate.

AND HOLY MEN IN MEDITATION, AND REALIZED BEINGS IN THEIR SAMADHI,

AND ASCETICS, CHASTE WOMEN, CONTENTED PEOPLE AND WARRIORS,

AND PANDITS, rishis, AND THEIR VEDAS THROUGH THE AGES,

AND BEAUTIFUL MAIDENS OF HEAVEN, AND FISHES THAT DWELL IN THE DEPTHS,

AND THE FOURTEEN GEMS CREATED BY YOU, AND THE SIXTY-EIGHT SACRED PLACES,

HEROES AND GREAT WARRIORS, AND CREATURES OF THE FOUR KINGDOMS SUSTAINED BY YOU,

ALL CONTINENTS, ALL SPHERES, AND THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE,

THOSE IN YOUR FAVOR AND DEEPLY IMMERSSED IN YOU, SUCH DELIGHTFUL DEVOTEES,

THEY ALL SING YOUR PRAISES! AND HOW MANY MORE, I CANNOT CONCEIVE OR INFER.

Nanak never tires of saying that His song sounds in all of creation. From all sides existence is a celebration. God laughs; he does not cry, nor does He like crying faces. Melancholy has nothing to do with existence. In fact, to be grim and sad is to be cut off from existence, to be turned away from God.

If sadness and sorrow overtake you in life, you must have taken some wrong step; when you suffer, know that you have gone astray. The suffering is only a pointer, don't make it your life style; don't become masochist, for masochism is a disease from which many people suffer.

Sacher-Masoch was the writer after whom this illness is named. He described whippings, pricking with thorns till one bled; he described fixing nails to the soles of one's shoes so that they made wounds with each step. Such masochists are everywhere. You will also find them lying on beds of nails in Kashi. There are ill people who revel in self-torture. You will find them fasting, you will find them rotting, decaying in various temples and hermitages – and common people worship them!

Why? There is yet another parallel illness, sadism. The sadist revels in others' torment and agony. The sadist and masochist are paired; one loves to see the other in agony, and the other delights in having pain inflicted on him. Keep in mind whenever you revere a sad, suffering, self-tormenting individual, you suffer from the other's illness. Since these illnesses are complementary, sadists gather around masochists. They say, "How wonderful you are to lie on a bed of nails. Such self-sacrifice." Thus their egos are inflated and they are coaxed into tormenting themselves even more.

Keep it well in mind not to support a man who is in suffering or troubled, for that is a sin and equal to inflicting pain on him. It is a very subtle device. Should I want to pierce you with a dagger it would be a sin. But if you thrust a dagger into your chest and I say, "Wonderful! What a sacrifice! You have become a martyr!" it is sinful and I am partner to the act. A man lying on a bed of nails is a sinner all right, but those who come and offer flowers and coins at his feet are also partners in his sin. They are offering him encouragement by calling him a saint. These are two types of sick people; both suffer from a perverted state of mind. Beware of them both.

A healthy man troubles neither himself nor others. As a person becomes more and more healthy, he becomes more and more cheerful, and begins to share his joy with others. He always respects joy and cheer. When you see a man singing and dancing with joy, offer flowers at his feet. But you have never done this, or else the ashrams and temples in this world would have been quite different: they would have been filled with celebration.

Unfortunately, our ashrams and temples are filled with sick and diseased people, with people who are mentally ill, who should be treated by psychiatrists. And they are that way because of you. You have revered them and encouraged them. Have you ever honored a man who is cheerful?

Only yesterday a sannyasin told me of a strange event taking place. As her meditation is getting deeper and deeper, she experiences more and more joy. But with this, she is feeling that something wrong is happening, some transgression, as if she is following a wrong path. This is bound to happen to you when bliss enters, for we have all been groomed for suffering since childhood – not for happiness. If the child sits in the corner, dull and despondent, the parents say, "Good boy." But if the child dances and prances about with joy, the whole household gets after him, "Keep quiet! Don't make so much noise." Whenever he shouts in glee there is someone to reprimand him. He is made to feel that he has committed some error whenever he is happy, but that everything is all right when he is sad and dejected. Gradually the feeling penetrates the subconscious that it is wrong to be cheerful, but to be sad is a sign of virtue.

Whenever a person progresses in meditation the opposite process begins, he moves towards happiness and song. The closer he approaches the door of His abode, the more pronounced the celebration becomes. As the internal festivity begins, suppressed desires, the gaze of the outside world, and a sense of guilt raise their heads and stand in the way. The need to suppress it finds a thousand and one ways to thwart your happiness.

A friend comes and says he is making progress in his meditation but one thing plagues him: when all the world is plunged into suffering and sorrow, isn't it just plain selfishness to seek happiness for oneself?

Now he has devised a rational device to express the deep fear of his own joy. Six months earlier he came to me saying he was so unhappy, so miserable. All he wanted was to be happy. Then he wasn't concerned with God at all. Now that he is coming closer to joy, when the first chink has opened and the first tune has begun to play, he is seized with fright! He switched off his mind at once. He said, "I have stopped meditating. It seems too selfish." I told him, "Be sad and unhappy to your heart's content. To feel that way will be a great service to others. Cry aloud, beat your chest, torment your body, kill yourself – and you will deliver the world!"

Now how can your suffering deliver the world? Your misery will increase the suffering of others; it raises the ratio of suffering in the world. If you are happy you make suffering that much less in the world. One single person's happiness and joy raises currents strong enough to make those around him happy.

If a single house has a lamp, it helps make the neighbors conscious that their houses are in darkness. When one lamp is burning it is not difficult to light others with it. One lamp can light the lamps of the entire world.

But the mind is trained only for suffering. The whole world is divided into two kinds of unhappy people: there are those who wish to be made to suffer, and others who are always looking for someone else to oppress and torture. Neither group has any bearing on religion; for neither can ever hope to hear the music within. They are the two sides of the coin of sorrow, and sorrow has no relationship to God.

When your connections are broken you become unhappy and you suffer. Illness means your connection with nature is broken. Suffering means your connection with God is broken. When the body conducts itself against the principles of nature, illness results; when it flows along with nature, there is health and well-being. When the mind follows paths away from God, suffering is the result. When the soul moves in the footsteps of God, when it flows with the universal principle, there is bliss.

Nanak says there is music at His door. No, music is His door. Celebration, festivity are His practice. The whole of existence is filled with song. You are deaf. That's what the matter is. You cannot see, you cannot hear. On every leaf, on every flower this message is written. He has filled the universe with so many colors and it is His music that vibrates in the rainbow of infinite hues. All creation is always celebrating this festival.

THOSE IN YOUR FAVOR AND DEEPLY IMMersed IN YOU, SUCH DELIGHTFUL DEVOTEES,

THEY ALL SING YOUR PRAISES! AND HOW MANY MORE, I CANNOT CONCEIVE OR INFER.

HE AND ONLY HE IS THE TRUE LORD. HE IS TRUTH – SATNAM.

HE IS AND ALWAYS WILL BE. THOUGH ALL VANISH HIS REALITY WILL NEVER LEAVE.

HE CREATED MAYA...

Nanak has very skilfully removed the sting from the word maya. He has deleted the feeling of contempt that is associated with maya. The mystery that Shankara himself could not unfold, Nanak has revealed. Shankara was a very rational thinker who founded a whole philosophical school. His sole aim was to explain the whole universe through logic and reason. He found himself in great difficulty over maya and Brahma.

On the one hand, Shankara knows that maya is a myth; it does not exist, for maya means that which is not. Maya is visible to the eyes but does not exist in actuality; whereas, that which is not visible, but which is, is Brahma. Maya is forever changing, kaleidoscopic, like dreams. Brahma is forever, the eternal truth, the creator.

Shankara represents the Advaita-Vedanta theory that is non-dualistic. It faces the question: 'How is maya born?' If it is entirely nonexistent, then how could there be any problems? Then it would be foolish to tell a person: Why are you involved in the illusion of maya? How can a person be entangled in that which does not exist? Then it is mere nonsense to exhort people to shun maya – something that is nonexistent.

And if maya does exist how can it be without God? His support is absolutely necessary. The dream arises only when there is someone to see it. So Advaita-Vedanta is concerned with this problem: If it is God who has created maya, then all the mahatmas who preach against maya are preaching against God. And if God himself is holding on to maya, how are we expected to leave it? It is not within our power. When it is by His will, then His will is supreme and cannot be wrong.

Where does maya come from? If it arises out of Brahma, then how can that which is born out of truth be an untruth? What is born out of truth can only be truth. Or, if maya is an untruth, the Brahma from which it is born must be an untruth, too. They must both be of the same nature: either both are real or both are false. Shankara could not solve this problem.

But Nanak can resolve it. What philosophers cannot unlock devotees easily unravel. For Nanak, maya is the festival of colors and music that goes on at His gates continuously. The multitude of colors in the flowers and the trees, in the birds and the bees are all an expression of His bliss. He manifests Himself in so many forms; He blooms in so many flowers and delights in all the forms He assumes. It is all an expansion of His supreme energy. So maya and Brahma, the creation and the creator, are not the opposite of each other. All creation is a festival, a dance of Brahma, the creator – his song.

Shankara's concept of Brahma is very dry, for he eliminates maya entirely. His is a mathematical concept, devoid of all music and color, all joys and sorrows. It is like the void, an emptiness. How can you love the Brahma of Shankara? How can you make love to a mathematical theorem? That $2+2=4$ is correct, but why should one fall in love with such figures? Anything mathematical is dry and feelingless.

Nanak's Brahma is absolutely different. It is not the concept of a mathematician, but of a poet who adores beauty. Nanak is a poet, not a philosopher. And what a philosopher cannot solve, a poet can. The philosopher is caught in his logic, the poet doesn't concern himself about it. He can afford to be illogical. His imagination makes incongruous things become consistent. All conflicts and contradictions become harmonious in his love and his devotion.

Keep it well in mind that to Nanak maya is God's festivity. Therefore Nanak never advised his followers to leave the world. How is one to leave, and why should one shun anything that is His?

He would tell His disciples, "Stay right in the world and seek Him there, for the world also is His. Seek out your path from this very samsara, the material world that is part of the wheel of birth and death. Don't be afraid of maya, it is only His play."

One thing is certain and imperative: don't lose yourself in this play. Always keep your mind on the player – this is 'remembrance'. Don't get lost in the dance. Keep constantly in mind Him who directs the dance. Look at the trees, hear the song of the birds, but do not be so lost in them that you forget

the One who is behind them all! Maya means the manifest Brahma. Keep seeking the unmanifest within the manifest, the invisible within the visible.

THEY ALL SING YOUR PRAISES! AND HOW MANY MORE, I CANNOT CONCEIVE OR INFER.

HE AND ONLY HE IS THE TRUE LORD. HE IS TRUTH – SATNAM.

HE IS AND ALWAYS WILL BE. THOUGH ALL VANISH HIS REALITY WILL NEVER LEAVE.

HE CREATED MAYA – THINGS OF VARIOUS COLORS AND EMOTIONS AND DISPOSITIONS.

HE CREATES ALL THINGS AND WATCHING OVER THEM, HE ALSO GIVES THEM GREATNESS.

What a wonderful thing Nanak has said. He says God makes the creation, and having made it, He looks at it, just as a painter paints a picture, then steps back a little to view his work. He observes it closely, he steps to the right and looks, steps to the left and looks again. Then he views it from a distance, then he takes it up to the window to scrutinize it in the light and in shadow. He examines it in a thousand ways, as does a sculptor.

HE CREATES ALL THINGS AND WATCHING OVER THEM, HE ALSO GIVES THEM GREATNESS.

Thus He gives prominence and importance to His creation. So God is not against samsara or else why should He create it?

Nor is he maya's enemy, or why should He bother with it? So the difficulty encountered by logic had no ground with the devotee. Nanak says not only does He create but He admires His creation and looks at it exultantly, thus giving it honor and importance.

Remember, God has created you and having created you he has examined you from all sides, and He is still looking at you constantly as a part of His own handiwork, giving you dignity and importance; and on its own all sin will fade away from your life. If you remember this you will move about as a creation of His. You will speak and hear, fully conscious of the fact that you are His creation. In all your dealings you will be conscious of the fact that you are His and He is looking after you all the time.

He watches over you constantly. He provides you with comfort and care. He looks at you lovingly, again and again. He never tires of looking at you. He is pleased with you for it is He who has made you. He is neither disappointed nor disheartened by your ways or else He could destroy you so easily. No matter how bad and sinful you become, His flame of hope for you never burns out. No matter how far you wander away from Him, no matter how completely you forget Him and turn your back on Him, His loving gaze is still fixed on you. For He knows that if not today, tomorrow you are sure to return. Sooner or later the prodigal must return, his coming back is certain, for the further you go away from Him the more unhappy you will become, like a little child who has run away from home.

A little child, barely four years old, ran away from home. He took a small bundle of clothes and set out. A policeman found him going back and forth along the side of the road a number of times. He

approached him, thinking he needed help, and asked, "Where do you want to go? Where have you come from?"

The child said, "I have run away from home but Mother always said not to cross the road, but to stay on this side. Now I don't know what to do, since I can't cross over."

How far can a small child stray? Even if he does, Mommy has always set a limit and how can he disobey her?

How far will you wander from God? Even if you are angry with Him for some reason, you will keep shuttling between home and the road crossing. How far can you go and where will you go? Wherever you roam it is within His boundaries. Wherever you are will be within Him. Your anger is the anger of a little child; it is nothing but a part of love. He is never displeased by your displeasure.

Nanak says: He gives you importance and glorified you. What He has created He surveys, and He likes what He surveys.

HE DOES WHAT PLEASES HIM. NONE CAN INTERFERE WITH HIS ORDER.

NANAK SAYS, HE IS THE KING OF KINGS. ABIDE BY HIS WILL.

One must remain well within His order and abide by His will. If you go outside His rule, He will not be displeased or annoyed, only you will have suffered unnecessarily. The suffering is not a punishment by Him, but the direct result of going against His will.

If you try to pass through the wall instead of going through the door, and injure your head in the process, the wall cannot be blamed. You are totally responsible for not using the door.

That door is His will. When the door is available why should you want to pass through the wall? You will only break your head. Remember, too, God is not breaking your head. You suffer because of your own foolishness. Existence feels only compassion towards you even when you break your head; again and again existence tends to your wounds. No matter how much you wander, no matter how much you injure yourself, existence sets you right again and again, ad infinitum. For infinite births you have been knocking your head against the wall, and still you are well and whole! Nothing is broken in you. The soul cannot be broken. The only thing is that you have unnecessarily caused yourself suffering by your own hands.

Therefore, Nanak says, remain within His order and abide by His will.

How is one to know what He wills? How to be sure what His order is? Even great thinkers have not found an answer. Granted one should abide by His will, but what is His will? How will you be sure that in the medley of thousands of voices the voice you hear is His and not your own, or someone else's?

There is a way to know His wish, but not through the medium of thoughts. The way unfolds as you drown in His melody, as your ego disintegrates, as you are immersed in meditation and samadhi. At once His voice becomes audible. Usually the noise and tumult of your ego prevents you from

hearing His voice. As the ego abates and the tumult of thoughts dies out, you will be able to hear His voice. He is forever calling; His voice has never left you.

An inner self lies within man. Just as you see with your eyes and hear with your ears, so the soul is also the mechanism within you that catches the voice of God. The eyes catch the rays of light; how, the scientists don't as yet fully know. How the eye grasps the light from outside objects and reflects it in the mind is still a mystery. The hands touch, but how does the mind get word of the touch, whether the hand is rough or smooth, tender or velvety? The touch happens at the tip of the fingers, but how does the brain get the right message, and at that very instant?

As there are five sense organs to ally us to the world of objects, so also is there a sixth sense organ called the antah-karana, the 'inner voice'. This inner voice is not the conscience; it is not the sense of right and wrong you were taught in childhood. It is not the voice that punishes you for what you did or what you thought. It is the wordless voice of understanding – of consciousness – deep in the heart. It is the sense – deep, deep within – of knowing. It is tuned to God, tuned to the order in the universe. In that sense it knows what is right. But it only speaks to you when all other voices inside have been stilled.

But you are preoccupied with other things. The milling crowd of thoughts within suppresses the voice. When there is complete silence within, you suddenly experience the existence of this voice and realize that it was always there.

Nanak says abide by His will! But first you have to seek out His will, and this is not difficult. Right and wrong cannot be decided by your mind. Stop thinking, eradicate all thoughts, and you will hear what is right. Then there is no more anxiety, no more responsibility for which you are answerable. Everything is His will. You do His bidding.

'His will' is Nanak's path. Therefore he refers to the supreme thread of life as the divine order. And you have a device to relate to Him. You were born with it, but have never made use of it. Meditation leads you up to your antah-karana, which then joins you to God. It is the cord that keeps you connected with God, telling you at each moment what you should do and what you should not.

Nanak says, when you begin to hear the voice of consciousness, remain within its field. Then sorrow cannot touch you and life becomes one long downpour of festivity and celebration.

Kabir has described this moment: "When bliss is born, clouds thunder and nectar rains." As soon as you establish contact with your heart, with the voice within, you are directly joined to God. This contact always is – from God's side – but it is missing from your side. To be silent is the art of establishing this contact. Only silence is the way.

CHAPTER 4

Posture is a Template

4 December 1974 am in Chuang Tzu Auditorium

OH YOGI, ASSUME THE POSTURE OF CONTENTMENT AND MODESTY.

PICK UP THE CARRYING BAG OF DIGNITY AND HONOR,

AND APPLY THE SACRED ASH OF MEDITATION.

ESTABLISH DEATH AS YOUR BEDROLL; MAKE A MAIDEN OF YOUR BODY.

LET EXPERIENCE BE YOUR STAFF OF LIBERATION,

AND CONSIDER THE UNITY OF ALL AS YOUR FIRST PRINCIPLE.

TO CONQUER THE MIND IS TO CONQUER THE WORLD.

IF YOU MUST BOW, BOW TO HIM.

HE IS THE PRIMAL BEING, PURE, WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END.

HE IS THE UNSTRUCK SOUND.

HE IS IMMUTABLE THROUGH ALL TIME.

MAKE KNOWLEDGE YOUR PLEASURE AND COMPASSION YOUR STOREHOUSE.

MAKE A CONCH SHELL OF THE ETERNAL MUSIC PLAYING IN EVERY BEING.

HE ALONE IS A MASTER IN WHOM ALL BEINGS ARE INTERTWINED,

WHILE THE SEARCH FOR SUPERNATURAL POWERS IS A FALSE PATH.

THE LAW OF UNION AND SEPARATION GOVERNS ALL THINGS,

AND DESTINY DETERMINES OUR JUST INHERITANCE.

IF YOU MUST BOW, BOW TO HIM.

HE IS THE PRIMAL BEING, PURE, WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END;

HE IS THE UNSTRUCK SOUND.

HE IS IMMUTABLE THROUGH ALL TIME.

Try to understand on the deepest level every word of these incomparable verses:

OH YOGI, ASSUME THE POSTURE OF CONTENTMENT AND MODESTY.

PICK UP THE CARRYING BAG OF DIGNITY AND HONOR,

AND APPLY THE SACRED ASH OF MEDITATION.

There are certain fundamental errors of the human mind that are repeated again and again; it has always been so and will continue in the future. Whenever a religion is born many methods, many devices, and many experiments are conducted in the quest for God.

Close to the original source of a religion there are symbols and signposts that help. As that fundamental source recedes further and further away and the religion becomes a tradition, the symbols are no longer alive. They become inert and their meaning is lost. Then people drag the religion along like a dead body, with dead symbols. Religion becomes a duty to be performed, as a social obligation.

For instance, I give you sannyas and you put on the orange clothes. After a few days the meaning of the orange clothes will be lost. The further you go from me the more will the clothes become a mere external symbol. Dyeing your clothes orange doesn't change the soul within. The orange robe is only a signal for remembrance – now the soul has to be dyed.

When someone wants to remember something during the course of the day he might tie a knot in his handkerchief as a way of remembering. The knot itself isn't to be purchased, nor does it have any meaning in itself. However preoccupied he is all day, every time he touches the handkerchief he will be reminded that he has to buy something. Now maybe his son has noticed that he often leaves home with a knotted handkerchief. He is intrigued; there surely must be something to it. So when he goes to the market he knots his handkerchief, but he has no notion of the significance of

the knot. It has no further relationship to remembrance but has become an idle custom as the son does what he saw his father doing; and so the tradition can go on for thousands of years.

In this household then, tying a knot before setting out from home becomes a sacred custom. Whoever observes it honors his forefathers; whoever doesn't observe it will be branded a rebel, an irreligious person. But neither the one who ties the knot nor the one who doesn't is able to tell why the knot is there.

This sort of confusion is natural in all religions. The mind grasps what is shallow and superficial and forgets what is deep and profound; it has no depth, thus is unable to grasp the depth.

I give you orange robes, but only to remember constantly that you have been initiated into sannyas. Now you have to sit, stand, walk, talk as a sannyasin should. Your actions in the world should not be that of a slave but of a master, which is why I call you swami. Now show that you are a free person, not a captive. I agree that this cannot come about immediately, but you have to make a beginning somewhere. These clothes are like a knot for you. Their usefulness lies in constantly focusing your remembrance on the fact of being a sannyasin from the very beginning.

These words of Nanak are directed towards the holy men of the Nath-Sampradaya, an influential sect in those days. Their ashrams were spread throughout the country. Their founder, Gorakhnath, was a potent leader, but after his death the methods fell into the hands of ordinary people and they became shallow and useless. The sadhus of this sect pierce their ears, which is very useful in serving as a knot.

Acupuncture has been a science in China for centuries; now it is gaining recognition in the West. This science believes that there are seven hundred points in the human body from which the life energy flows. The earlobes are very important acupuncture points, very closely connected to remembrance. When the ear is pierced the energy within gets a severe jolt. In fact, piercing the ears was even a well known remedy for certain mental ailments. In China it was the only treatment to cure mental illness.

Because of the profound experience from that energy flow, the sadhus of this sect used to pierce their ears; one group even cut the lobes through and through instead of just piercing them. The energy flows more directly to the brain when an intermediary obstruction is removed. It was a significant device to awaken remembrance.

Try this experiment: when you are feeling sad, worried, downcast or angry, hold your ear lobes and rub them hard; there is no need to pierce the ears. You will find a change in your state of mind. But one thing is certain, merely cutting the lobes or piercing them does not make an enlightened being out of a seeker.

There is an ancient village custom in India that arose during the time of very high infant mortality. Even today you may come upon someone in a rural village whose name is Kanchchedi-lal, he whose ears are pierced, or Natthu-lal, he whose nose is pierced.

This tradition of piercing the ear or the nose came into vogue, and the children named accordingly, after a great deal of experience; finally it had been realized that it was more likely that the child

would not die when the ear or the nose was pierced. The method evolved through the experience of thousands of years, and is the result of a fundamental change in the life energy as a result of the piercing.

In Russia experiments with Kirlian photography have arrived at significant conclusions. The whole play of health, illness, birth and death of a human being involves the flow of electrical energy within. This flow of energy can be diverted at certain points and transformed. It can be made to flow in whatever direction is required, and it can also be stopped from flowing in a particular direction.

The art of acupuncture is based on this. When a person is ill, needles are inserted into particular places on the body. The prick of the needle changes the flow of energy, and alters the disease and effects a cure. China has been using this therapy for thousands of years, and now science has confirmed the existence of these points in the body. Russia has also introduced this form of therapy into their hospitals. They have devised an instrument like an x-ray machine, which can spot trouble-spots in the body by picking up changes in electrical currents in the body-part that has fallen sick. Having discovered the spot, an electric shock at this point reestablishes the energy flow and the illness is improved.

The yogis of Nath-Sampradaya had devised their own significant shock method. Many such techniques have evolved. For example, Jews and the Muslims follow their custom of circumcision, which is also an effective shock technique. The Jews circumcise the male child on the eighth day.

Research has tried to uncover the advantages of this technique. There is no community more intellectual, more brilliant than the Jews. Though small in number they have taken the greatest number of Nobel prizes. They are prominent in whatever field of work they engage in, the leaders of everything they do. People of great influence and power in this century have been Jews: Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, for example. In fact, it is they who have created this age. Among great thinkers or scientist no one can meet their calibre. So now scientists have tried to see whether circumcision in infancy has anything to do with the Jews' genius.

Since Muslims, who also circumcise their children, did not attain to this mark of genius, a suggested cause might be that they perform the circumcision rather late. Jews believe that the first shock the child receives should be directed at the sex organ where the life energy is accumulated. By cutting the foreskin the life energy gets a powerful jolt which sends it straight up to the head. This impact in the head proves very significant for him for all time to come. It changes the course of his life.

Kirlian photography confirms it and acupuncture had known it for ages. The sex organ is the most sensitive part of the human body. To cut the skin is a matter of great shock to the infant, which increases the life energy flow to the head. This method opens many possibilities.

Whenever these things are discovered they are put into use. Then gradually, as time passes, the meaning is lost. Then people go through these practices as a matter of custom, completely unaware of their significance.

Gorakhnath discovered many things. He was a unique researcher. People felt the impact of his genius and millions joined his sect for the results, which were very clear and evident. By the time of Nanak, Gorakhnath's teachings had become vague and foggy; people practiced them as ritual,

without meaning. So Nanak tells the yogi to assume the posture of contentment and effacement. He says this because Gorakhnath had evolved many postures, asanas, which were very effective.

You must also have discovered that certain body postures and positions relate to the state of your mind. When you are quiet and tranquil the expression of your face and the position of your limbs are quite different from when you are angry. When you are filled with compassion the body takes on a certain posture; even your hands are filled with compassion, with fearlessness, and a sense of giving. In compassion the hands cannot do anything but give. When you are filled with kindness, you do not clench your fist as if to fight someone; it would be incongruous. A closed fist is always to destroy someone; it is the sign of a shallow and niggardly heart. The fist opens of its own accord in moments of compassion – you are ready to give everything away.

There is an intrinsic connection between the mind and its moods, and the states of the body. So Gorakhnath devised many postures which when practiced, resulted in a change in the seeker's mind. For instance, if you assume the position of anger – clench your fists and fix your eyes as if ready to attack – you will find the rumblings of anger starting inside you.

There were two significant early psychologists in America, James and Lange, who together developed a theory in which they tried to disprove the idea that a man runs because of his fear; instead they claim that a man experiences fright because he runs away. Many scientists thus give credence to the theory that body position is of critical importance. We say a man runs when he is frightened. James and Lange say, when a man's body makes preparations to run away, then he experiences himself as being frightened. If he were to stop running or preparing to run, he would no longer feel frightened. When the posture is changed, the state within also changes.

With each different state of mind there is a specific posture or position of the body. This means that the mind and the body move in parallel lines. When you are happy your body is in a particular posture; when you are sad your body is in another position. Observe how in moments of joy your body expands and spreads out as if you have become more voluminous. When you are sad or unhappy, you feel yourself contracting, as if your insides are getting narrower and narrower, like a tree that would like to shut itself up in a seed. In studying body postures it was seen clearly that a suffering man appears contracted. By observing body positions alone you can tell the state of the mind. In joy the body is in a state of expansion; in sorrow it is contracted. In anger the lines of the forehead become more pronounced. When you are worried the facial contours change. When you are carefree there are no wrinkles on the forehead.

James and Lange were not the first to make this discovery; it has been known in India since ancient times. From early hatha yoga texts to Gorakhnath, millions of yogis have experimented. In fact, no one has experimented in greater detail with the mind and body of the human being, nobody has observed and investigated it in greater detail, than these yogis. They observed that for each state of mind, the body had a corresponding posture. Out of this arose a method: by changing the posture of the body in a particular way, the required change can be brought about in the state of mind. When you feel anger arising, change your body posture to the one you have when you are relaxed and peaceful. You will experience change, a transformation in the state of your energy: the energy that was about to become anger has become tranquility.

Posture is a framework, a template, a die. Energy is neutral. It assumes whatever shape you give it. It is like water. Pour it in a glass tumbler and it assumes the shape of the tumbler; pour it into a

pot and it takes the form of the pot. Energy does likewise; give it the form of anger and it becomes anger, give it the form of love and the very same energy becomes love. This is a most profound discovery. When you begin to understand the various postures of the body, you can begin to change the mind within.

But there is a danger: you can get so involved in the study of body postures that you forget that it has anything to do with changing the internal states of the mind. Then you become an adept in the science of body postures, but the mind within remains the same. Remember, this is only an aid; the actual transformation must occur within. Take as much outside help as possible, but concentrate on the internal change.

When a house is being constructed, first the scaffolding is put up. This is a necessary initial step, but if you don't build anything with this structure the house will never be constructed. The structure is not habitable, it was only a prop for an actual house, Once its purpose is served it must be discarded.

Asanas, postures and mudras are such aids. From Gorakhnath to Nanak people had begun to consider the scaffolding as the dwelling. The yogi would sit in the posture of compassion, but he has completely forgotten that something needs to be done internally, too. So the posture is of compassion, but he is seething with anger inside. He assumes the mudra of kind-protection, but look inside and there is a dangerous man who might harm you. He stands at your door apparently asking alms, but if you do not give to him he curses you. People were frightened by the nath-yogis. Their beggarly appearance was false.

Buddha and Gorakhnath had both directed their disciples to become beggars in order to inculcate humility in them. When the hand is held out to beg, what room is there for haughtiness? When I stand at someone's door with a beggar's bowl outstretched, how can the ego persist? When I am doing something for someone else, the ego is nourished, but to be a beggar is to accept the fact that I am nothing, I am worthless. The begging bowl is my only possession. If you give I shall be happy; if you do not I shall go away silently, for how can a beggar insist? The giver may give or not; it is his choice.

Buddha had told his bhikshus that they should beg, but they must just stand at the door and never ask. Asking also bears weight; perhaps it is coercing the giver, and that would be against the concept of begging, it is too aggressive. So the bhikshu was directed only to stand before the entrance where he went for alms. If the householder feels like giving, he will; otherwise the bhikshu leaves quietly. He was to make no effort lest a person give against his will. To this end, he was supposed to stand with his eyes closed while he begged. He would stand for a while then move on, thus relieving the householder of any embarrassment in refusing. The bhikshu had to practice humility. If the giver gives, it is his own will; if he does not, it is his will. In both cases the bhikshu was to bless him. His blessings had nothing to do with whether the man gave or not.

One of Buddha's bhikshus, by the name of Puran, gained knowledge and attained buddhahood. Buddha told him, "Go out into the world now and give others what I have given you. Many lamps are unlit, go and light them. You don't need to stay with me any more. You have attained the supreme knowledge."

Puran bowed his head and with folded hands said, "Allow me to go to the village, Sukha, in Bihar."

Buddha said, "It would be well if you do not go there, for the people are crude and heartless. They will abuse you and insult you."

Puran replied, "But master, shouldn't the doctor go where the sick are? Please give me permission to go there. Those people need me."

Buddha said, "Answer three questions before you go. First, if they insult and abuse you what will you feel?"

Puran answered, "I will feel what kind people they are! They only abuse me, they do not beat me. They could have beaten me if they liked."

Buddha said, "And if they were also beat you up? If they welcomed you with stones?"

Puran replied, "I would still feel kindly towards them, for they will only have beaten me, they haven't killed me. They could also have killed me."

"And," said Buddha, "what if they killed you? What would your feelings be at the time of death?"

"I would still feel how kind they were to have relieved me of life where I could have stumbled and erred so many times," Puran replied.

To this Buddha said, "Go forth, Puran. You are truly a perfect bhikshu. You may go wherever you please."

Only when there is total humility is the person a real bhikshu. But by the time Nanak appeared on the scene, the Gorakhnath bhikshu had become a terror. He would come before the door of a house and, instead of standing still, walk back and forth, shaking his staff and clanging his tongs. This invariably frightened people into giving. Looking at his straight back and angry eyes, people were afraid that not giving would surely lead to violence.

So people gave alms to the Nath-Sampradaya yogis out of fear. Otherwise their curse was certain. Such was the perverted state of affairs when Nanak came on the scene. The Nath-Sampradaya yogi never blessed anyone. That you gave him alms was of no consequence; rather you should feel grateful that he accepted your alms. He took it as his right.

Gorakh had also exhorted his followers to bless the house they begged from; whether they gave or not was not the criterion, but things had turned topsy-turvy with the passage of time. The postures were maintained but the meaning behind them was lost. There are such yogis in our time too. Certain Nath-yogis have stood for ten years without moving. This posture had significance at one time. If you stand erect while remembering within, the consciousness also stands up; if the body is absolutely still, the consciousness also becomes calm and steadfast; but, unless you remember, the body will become inert while the mind keeps on running until it has crossed a thousand worlds. Thoughts and dreams will continue. Postures will help but they are not an end in themselves.

By Nanak's time the postures had deteriorated and all the sects had become deformed. So Nanak says:

OH YOGI, ASSUME THE POSTURE OF CONTENTMENT AND MODESTY.

PICK UP THE CARRYING BAG OF DIGNITY AND HONOR.

Contentment is a significant word that unfortunately has been deformed and mutilated. When a person finds himself helpless he becomes contented. This contentment is only a consolation, not real at all. When he finds himself helpless after all efforts have failed him, and says its all right, this isn't the posture of contentment but a state of helplessness.

A man used to come to Sri Ramakrishna. Every year during the festival of Kali he would sacrifice goats to the goddess, hundreds of them. Suddenly, he gave up this practice. Ramakrishna had tried to dissuade him from doing it many times before, but to no avail. Now he stopped sacrificing the goats. Ramakrishna asked him what made him stop when all the former pleas had failed. He replied, "All this time it wasn't possible to heed your advice. Now I have lost my teeth and cannot eat meat, so I have given up killing goats. I am now quite content to do so."

So people become contented in old age or in poverty but this is pseudo-contentment. Contentment is really a power, not an outcome of weakness. It is a positive energy, not negative. It is not a state of helplessness, but a state of supreme helpfulness, a very high state of being. Contentment implies that you have much more than you require, more than what you need; you have both what you asked for and what you didn't ask for. Contentment includes gratitude: God, Your will is wonderful. How much You have given me.

Contentment is not the consolation grasped by a defeated mind in a state of helplessness; it is a victorious journey where there is no question of defeat. It is attained only by glorious victors; it is worthy of heroes. Mahavir says that only Jinas, those who have conquered everything, can attain contentment.

When Nanak says: OH YOGI, ASSUME THE POSTURE OF CONTENTMENT, accomplishing physical postures becomes an old story leading to nothing. Nanak means to leave it and practice the inner posture, of which contentment is the highest.

Why? To become contented is to have all anxieties fall away. Anxiety is born out of discontent, out of the feeling that you are lacking something, that you are not getting what you deserve or what you think yourself worthy of. The day you attain contentment, you will sleep like a log – like someone who has sold all his horses, as the saying goes. Then you have no worries, your sleep will be undisturbed by dreams arising out of the day-long anxieties.

Discontentment involves beggarliness whereas contentment leaves you the lord and master. It is the sign of a sannyasin who is happy and contented in every way. You cannot create a condition to make him discontented, for under all circumstances he will see the good. Whatever happens, he spies His hand. In the deepest moments of suffering you cannot take away his rays of joy. He knows that the darkest hour is a forerunner of the coming morn. When he is in utter darkness he laughs and welcomes with song the morning sun that is bound to rise soon. In every dark cloud he sees the silver lining. In the darkest moments of suffering and sorrow, he holds the thread of contentment well in his hand. He accepts all; he has assumed total acceptance.

This is what Nanak means when he says to attain the posture of contentment. By controlling hands and feet and their position, nothing is attained. Control of your consciousness begins with contentment; but do not forget the wrong type of contentment which is born out of helplessness.

Mulla Nasruddin was once travelling with his friend in a bullock cart. Their road led through a jungle where they were suddenly set upon by robbers. Just ahead of them stood the bandits with guns in hand, shouting, "Halt!" At that instant Mulla quickly drew five hundred rupees from his pocket and handed them to his friend, saying, "Here is the money I had borrowed from you. Now we are even."

Your contentment is born out of such moments – when you find there is nothing left to be done. When everything is lost, only then you release your hold on it. Actually you don't part with your possessions, they are snatched away from you. So where is the contentment? Only he who lets go of his own accord is contented; he whose things are grabbed from him may shout from the roof-tops that everything is all right, but you still hear the note of discontent.

The correct form of contentment requires, first and foremost, a feeling that you have received much more than you need. It requires gratitude, that behind all the apparent sorrow you see the hidden joy. Wherever you see thorns, somewhere there are roses, so why rest your eyes on the thorns.

If you hurl abuse at the contented person he thinks that perhaps it is right; he thanks you for telling him the truth. If it is wrong he thinks, "Poor man, he took all this trouble in vain, to think that he came so far." So there is either a feeling of gratitude or compassion, but never anger. He finds something good and worthwhile in every situation.

There is a story which I like very much of two fakirs: The two fakirs, the old guru and the young disciple, were returning to their hut in Japan for the rainy season. For eight months of the year they traveled from village to village singing the praises of the Lord, but in the rainy season they returned to their hut. When they reached the bank of the lake where the hut stood, they found the roof fallen to the ground by a violent storm that had struck just the night before. It was not only a very small hut, but on top of that, half the roof was on the ground. There were ominous clouds in the sky and darkness all around. Nothing could be done for they were far away from any other habitation.

The younger sannyasin couldn't contain himself. "Look at this. We kill ourselves singing His glories and this is how we are rewarded. What use is all that prayer and worship? What do we get in return? Rich sinners are lying blissfully in their mansions while the gale has carried away the roof of two poor fakirs. The storm is also His."

Having given vent to all his rage, he turned to the guru and what did he see? There knelt the guru with folded hands looking up at the sky, his eyes filled with tears of joy and supreme contentment. He was singing, "Oh Lord, Your compassion knows no bounds. The tempest could have blown the whole roof away and you must have stopped it half-way for us. Only You can be so thoughtful."

Then they both entered the hut. Though they seem to enter the same hut, they are different people: one is contented, the other dis-contented. They both slept. The younger fakir kept tossing and turning, grumbling and worrying about the rain, constantly complaining and filled with anger. But the guru slept very soundly. When he got up at 4 a.m. he wrote a song. He could see the moon above through the half-open roof. He said in his song, "Oh Lord, had we known before, we would not have

troubled Your tempest to rip off half the roof. We would have done it ourselves. We have been so foolish, but now we can see the wonderful work of the storm; we can watch the moon over the hut! How close is Your sky, and we shut it off with a roof! Your moon came and went so many times and we remained behind a roof. We did not know, please forgive us! Had we known we wouldn't have put the storm to so much trouble."

A man who can sing like this under the most direct circumstances is truly a contented person. But he who becomes contented out of helplessness follows the path of impotent and vigorless people; if only they could find contentment before having to lose everything then they wouldn't have to lose anything; for you cannot steal anything from a contented man. You may take away his belongings but not his contentment. His inner equilibrium cannot be disturbed. His true possessions are all within.

When Nanak says to ASSUME THE POSTURE OF CONTENTMENT AND MODESTY, and PICK UP THE CARRYING BAG OF DIGNITY AND HONOR, he is hinting at the inner state. In fact, Gorakhnath had said the same thing: all external suggestions were only meant for internal remembrance, but it was forgotten and only the knot in the handkerchief remained. They even forgot what they had come to buy, they even forgot that the knot was meant to remind them about something. Only the knot remained. Now they are left carrying this knot which is only an additional burden.

OH YOGI, ASSUME THE POSTURE OF CONTENTMENT AND MODESTY.

Modesty connotes a quality that is totally oriental, unique to the East. The word *lajja* also means shyness and shame. There is no comparable word in any Western language. It is considered the ultimate, supreme state of womanhood. A prostitute is called '*nirlajj*', shameless, for she sells her body, which is the temple of God and cannot be for sale. It is meant for worship, the first step to attain the ultimate wealth – not to sell for a few coins.

'Shameless' implies utilizing the body for anything other than the quest for God. There is no shame in such a person's life. We criticize the whore, but what about others? If you are selling your body to earn wealth or a name in the world, you are no better. The prostitute sells her body to earn wealth, so do you.

The state of shame or modesty insists that the body not be sold for money. Since it is the temple of God, some day He will be a guest there. The body has to be taught to wait for Him. This waiting is exactly like the waiting of a beloved for the lover. When the lover approaches she covers her face with a veil, trying to hide so that she does not reveal herself to her lover, for that would be rank shamelessness.

She invites the lover, she waits for him, but when he comes near, she hides herself, covers her face with the veil. To appear before the lover would be egoistic. The desire to reveal oneself is exhibitionism, ego. Would you want to show yourself before God? No, you will hide; you would rather the earth part and bury you. You cover yourself with a thousand veils. To appear before God would be egoistic. You approach Him like the love-lost maiden – not like a learned pundit – walking on tip-toe, lest he hear even your foot-steps. You try to hide as best you can, for what have you got to show him? Shyness implies that you have absolutely nothing to show, so you hide your face in shame.

That is why shyness and modesty are considered the highest quality for a woman in India. It explains a certain grace in oriental women which is lacking in the women of the West who were never taught to be shy. For her, shyness is considered a disqualification; she is trained to show, to exhibit, to attract – as if she is a marketable commodity. In the East, when a woman is taught shyness she learns to hide herself and cover herself, thus the custom of the veil. The veil was part of *lajja*. As the custom began to wane, *lajja* also began to fade, for the veil is the external expression of *lajja*. Now, as our women also move about openly and exhibit themselves, they too desire that people should look at them, and so they dress themselves with that in mind. When you desire to be seen like this, you are standing in the marketplace.

Nanak says our modesty before Him should be like the maiden's modesty before her lover: she hides, for she is embarrassed by his closeness. She has nothing worthy of his attention – so the shame, so the veil.

To many the more modest a woman is, the more attractive she is; the more she reveals, the less attractive she becomes. To many the woman of the West has lost her charm, for what is readily available in the market loses its drawing power.

We don't go and sell ourselves to God; what have we got to show Him? We approach Him like a maiden in love – in full modesty. Our feet tremble. Will He or will He not accept me? Am I worthy enough? Such embarrassment, such shyness – we have nothing to offer that is worthy of Him.

Modesty is a state of utter humility. Only when a person is so humble is he accepted. The more a devotee hides himself, the more attractive he becomes to God. The more a devotee reveals his devotion by proclaiming his worship, his prayers, his fasts and penance, the further removed he is from God. The union with God is effected only in an egoless consciousness.

OH YOGI, ASSUME THE POSTURE OF CONTENTMENT AND MODESTY.

PICK UP THE CARRYING BAG OF DIGNITY AND HONOR.

What is the dignity that Nanak talks about? As soon as a person begins to experience the soul and knows that he is not the body, he attains dignity. The feeling of the self is dignity. The body cannot be consecrated, for it is but a temporary resting-place. You tarry there a while, but you cannot make your home here. To be consecrated, to be dignified, means to attain the everlasting, to plant one's roots in that which is forever true.

You cannot be consecrated unless you stand with Him. You may sit on a throne but you will attain no dignity and honor. The honor of this world is no honor, for here is merely the play of the waves. Who is going to remember you when you are gone? And who really bothers about you while you are alive – even though you may be sitting on a throne?

Look at those who rule the land. Wherever they go they are received with thrown stones. You look for flowers but you get stones thrown at you. You look for respect and you are insulted. If you gain your place by force, there are always others to pull you down by your leg. Ask the politicians. Their names may appear in the papers and their every action becomes news, but they are equally criticized. In this world if you want to win, you are bound to lose; if you hanker after honor, you are bound to be insulted. Dignity exists only when you are with God.

So Nanak says to pick up the carrying-bag of dignity and honor, throw away the sack of arrogance and ego that you are carrying. Discover egolessness, shyness and contentment, and your roots will have begun to spread towards God.

AND APPLY THE SACRED ASH OF MEDITATION.

Merely smearing ash on the body is of no avail. Develop meditation within, Nanak exhorts, let that be your sacred ash; be smeared with meditation.

ESTABLISH DEATH AS YOUR BEDROLL... so that you are always reminded of Him. He who is constantly aware of death cannot forget God. He who forgets death, forgets God. We all have no awareness of death. We live as if we are never going to die, therefore we forget to remember God.

MAKE A MAIDEN OF YOUR BODY.

The Nath-Sampradaya as well as many tantric sects seek a virgin for their sadhana. Through a distinctive tantric sexual union meditation is attained. This is true, this is possible, and Tantra has found the method.

But man is dishonest. In the name of Tantra thousands of yogis began to roam about with young maidens. Millions of people used the screen of Tantra to indulge in all kinds of depravity. They had a ready explanation for the girls they kept with them, as also the path they followed. This immorality caused Buddhism to be driven out of the country. Also, a great Tantric tradition was lost as a result. Man is very clever; he is adept at finding means to satisfy his lust, and this was a ready-made solution for him. He could move about openly with young girls and masquerade as a Tantric seeker.

When Nanak says make your own body the virgin maiden, he is referring to the deepest thread of Tantra. It is your own body that should become your companion; your soul should be the male and your body the female. Intercourse can take place between these two, and that is the supreme union. It is through this intercourse alone that a person attains liberation. The tantric method had the same goal: through the external woman by and by you discover the woman within you.

There is a woman hidden within every man and a man hidden within every woman. When a union of the man or woman within and the woman or man without, takes place, the final state of samadhi is reached. Contemporary science has also accepted the fact that man is bi-sexual. This is natural, for each person is born out of the union of mother and father; so he is a part of his mother as well as a part of his father. Within you there is a man, within you is a woman; and when the two energies combine the result is an eternal intercourse, while physical union is only momentary.

So Nanak is speaking about a very profound theme of tantra. He says,

OH YOGI, MAKE EXPERIENCE YOUR STAFF OF LIBERATION,

AND CONSIDER THE UNITY OF ALL AS YOUR FIRST PRINCIPLE.

TO CONQUER THE MIND IS TO CONQUER THE WORLD.

IF YOU MUST BOW, BOW TO HIM.

HE IS THE PRIMAL BEING, PURE, WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END. HE IS THE UNSTRUCK SOUND.

HE IS IMMUTABLE THROUGH ALL TIME.

Bow unto Him who is forever the same, the unchanging one. You may break your back bowing in temples and mosques, but if your obeisance is not directed towards Him it is of no avail. Always remember, wherever you bow, let it always be at His feet, When you bow before the guru, it is Him you are worshipping through the guru and when you bow in the temple, you are bowing to Him. All homage is to Him. As a reminder the idol in the temple becomes helpful. Otherwise the temple idols pose a danger to you, as does the guru. If your reverence is not directed towards Him, whenever you bow you create shackles for yourself; all kinds of obstructions come your way. And if you learn to bow only to Him, each stone can become a door for you. Bow anywhere, in temple, mosque, gurudwara, church, but remember one thing, all homage is to Him, Him who was in the beginning, who is pure and perfect, who is everlasting, who is the primal sound, and who is always the same – forever and forever.

MAKE KNOWLEDGE YOUR PLEASURE AND COMPASSION YOUR STOREHOUSE.

MAKE A CONCH SHELL OF THE ETERNAL MUSIC PLAYING IN EVERY BEING.

HE ALONE IS A MASTER IN WHOM ALL BEINGS ARE INTERTWINED,

WHILE THE SEARCH FOR SUPERNATURAL POWERS IS A FALSE PATH.

THE LAW OF UNION AND SEPARATION GOVERNS ALL THINGS,

AND DESTINY DETERMINES OUR JUST INHERITANCE.

IF YOU MUST BOW, BOW TO HIM.

HE IS THE PRIMAL BEING, PURE, WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END; HE IS THE UNSTRUCK SOUND.

HE IS IMMUTABLE THROUGH ALL TIME.

Make knowledge your pleasure and compassion your storehouse. Knowledge and compassion are the two wings to be mastered in order to fly into the heavens of His abode – knowledge and wisdom for within, sympathy and compassion for without. If there is only knowledge within, but no sympathy and tenderness without, there is the danger of your not attaining perfection. You are incomplete. Who can fly with only one wing? If there is sympathy and tenderness without but no knowledge within, then too you are incomplete. Who can walk with one leg?

Knowledge ultimately refers to oneself; sympathy means to know others. Together the full happening can occur. For wisdom knows its own self; as soon as wisdom dawns, it knows that it resides in everyone. If knowledge is not conscious that it is there in each of us, it is no knowledge.

When the genuine lamp of knowledge is lighted, its light is bound to fall on all. The lamp does not merely illuminate itself, it lights all things around it. This light that falls on others is sympathy, tenderness. Unlimited compassion arises when wisdom is born. You will give freely, even allow yourself to be looted; you will give assistance of every kind to one and all – then do all in your power to help others to reach Him, for all are wandering and groping. You will not lose yourself in your knowledge, for that would be selfishness – maybe you are still tied to old attachments or that the ego is not yet conquered.

Some people are lost in their own knowledge, like the Jain munis. They are concerned only about themselves. They are so busy working for their own salvation, they have no interest in things outside. If they are kind it is only to further their own knowledge, therefore their kindness is false.

If a Jain muni take a step so carefully that no ant inadvertently die under his feet, don't think it is out of pity for the ant. Mahavir had done so out of his great compassion, but not so the Jain muni. He watches his step merely to guard against the sin of killing an ant. Understand his concern: if he commits sin he will have to wander in the cycle of birth and death; so his concern is for himself, not with the ant. If the ant's death were not a sin, he wouldn't bother at all. He even strains the water he drinks – not out of concern for the germs in the water, but for fear of the sin of swallowing the germ. Outwardly his actions are the same as Mahavir's, but he is only involved with his own salvation, trying to save himself from hell.

His kindness is false. It will be genuine only when he is prepared even to go to hell in order to set you on the right path, but his ethics is that of a business man: do only what profits you!

So it is no surprise that Mahavir's followers became the business community. Mahavir himself was from the kshatriya caste, the warrior caste, but his followers became shop-keepers. This is strange. All twenty-four Jain teerthankaras were kshatriyas, but those who followed them became traders. What happened? What calamity took place that a whole community became so timid as to restrict itself to working only in the shops? There is a secret in this: Mahavir's kindness was genuine compassion, whereas the kindness of the crafty people who followed him was calculated: they turned it into a business. They shunned all work that entailed sin. They left off farming because plants had to die for the harvest to be collected. They shunned the violence of the battlefield. All that was left was to be a shop-keeper, a tradesman.

It is noteworthy that 90

MAKE KNOWLEDGE YOUR PLEASURE AND COMPASSION YOUR STOREHOUSE.

Offering of food and feasts for the poor continue in the world, but they are only external expressions. Both the Nath-Sampradayas and the Sikhs have their own kind of feasts, but they are the same, mere outside happenings.

Nanak is saying to make kindness your food offering, your feast for the poor. Let there be kindness in every moment of your life. Think of others. Whatever you do, see that others also profit: let your actions serve their welfare and well-being. Seek knowledge for yourself, but be helpful to others on their quest. Let your feet travel towards liberation, but take others along with you. Remember that as you cultivate both compassion outside and knowledge within, your momentum increases towards the goal. These are the two wings necessary to fly to the destination.

Contrary to the Jains, the Christians are always busy serving others, opening schools and hospitals everywhere. No one can surpass them for service, they give no thought to knowledge. Like the Jains they are convinced that what they are doing is enough by itself. The Jains think it is enough to understand one's own self. The Christians think it enough to serve others, and that service leads to salvation. He is less concerned with the question whether the leper whose feet he washes, or the sick he takes care of, or the orphan he educates, profit by his services or not. He serves in order to attain his salvation. Man's selfishness is wonderfully strange. Even in seeking knowledge he ferrets out his own self-interest, and while serving others he manages to serve his own interests.

There is an old Chinese tale: A fair was taking place in a small village. There were large crowds and many shops selling different wares. A man fell into a small well nearby, and though he began to shout, no one could hear him above the din. Everyone was so involved in his own work – buying things, selling things. It was getting close to evening and people were in a hurry to reach home. Shop-keepers began closing their stalls. Who was to hear him? Fortunately a sannyasin who was a follower of Confucius came and sat near the well. He heard the man's shouts and he called down, "Hold your peace, brother. I shall go right away to plead your case, for it is against the law to build a well without a wall. You fell because there was no wall. Have faith in me. My colleagues and I will start a movement for you right away, so that not only this well but all the wells in the villages will have walls." And away he went. This was but natural for Confucius was a reformer who believed in society and its laws. He was a revolutionary.

The poor man called out to the sannyasin, "Of what use are future walls? I am drowning right now!"

The sannyasin answered, "It is not just your problem. It is a problem for everyone, for the whole of society, not just one person. If society is saved, the individual is saved." He stood up and began shouting, "Listen, brothers! We must see that each well be surrounded by a wall."

A Buddhist bhikshu came and sat near the well. He heard the shouting, bent down to look and saw the man in the well. "You are suffering from your actions during your past life," he said to the poor man. "Each of us has to reap the fruit of one's karma. Nothing can be done about it."

"Tell me about it later," said the man in the well. "First get me out of here."

"But I have renounced all actions," said the monk. "Actions lead to attachments, and attachments cause a man to wander in samsara. I want to free myself from the cycle of birth and death. I don't want to start another karmic cycle by pulling you out of the well. Who knows what you might do if I saved your life? If you kill someone I shall be a partner in your crime, for had I not saved you you wouldn't have committed the crime. Or if you set fire to someone's house? Why should I trap myself by your misdeeds? Besides, please be quiet, I have come here to meditate. You go through your experiences and I shall go through mine. No one can walk on another's path."

Since the drowning man was making so much noise the bhikshu got up and left to meditate. Meditation is a great thing. If one is to go around pulling people out of wells, imagine how many wells there are in the village; and there are so many people, so many fairs, you would never get around to meditate. So what can you do? It is better to take care of one's own meditation, then everything else is taken care of.

Soon after a Christian missionary happened along. Hearing the man's cries, he quickly pulled out a rope from his knapsack and threw it down the well. He pulled out the man, who fell at his feet and said, "Thank you. You are really a deeply religious man. A follower of Confucius heard me and went on his way, and a Buddhist monk abandoned me to my fate. They just ignored my cries."

The Christian said, "There is only one thing I ask of you: keep falling into wells so that we Christians can come to help you out. We always carry a rope. If you were not to fall in the well so that we could save you, how can we attain beatitude?"

No one is bothered about any one else. Man's selfishness is so deep-rooted; the one who helps you is only out for his own self-interest. This sort of service is worth nothing. So look at the God within you – that is knowledge; and don't ever forget the God in others – that is compassion.

MAKE KNOWLEDGE YOUR PLEASURE AND COMPASSION YOUR STOREHOUSE.

MAKE A CONCH SHELL OF THE ETERNAL MUSIC PLAYING IN EVERY BEING.

What is the sense in sounding conch-shells? Blow the conch-shell that sounds the unsounded sound within each living being. Play the music that happens without reason and which plays eternally.

HE ALONE IS A MASTER IN WHOM ALL BEINGS ARE INTERTWINED,

WHILE THE SEARCH FOR SUPERNATURAL POWERS IS A FALSE PATH.

You perform a miracle, you produce ashes out of your hand and become a Satya Sai Baba; you produce a talisman from nowhere – to what avail? Supernatural powers are second-rate products for they only nourish your ego. It strengthens your arrogance. You feel you are somebody special. The only power that applies to religion arises out of: "I am nobody, nothing!" He who realizes and knows that he is nothing becomes everything. He who annihilates himself completely on earth, becomes God Himself. Do not be satisfied with anything less; if you do then you have opted for the powers of lesser quality.

What will you gain by producing a few amulets? How will your magic help you? You help neither yourself nor others thereby. You may gain a little popularity in the world, but that is all. Is the honor of this world any real honor? What is the value of all this magic before God? Of what worth the ashes that you produce, or the talisman, before Him who has created the universe? Your tricks may fool people and satisfy your ego, but it will not lead anywhere towards self-realization. Therefore Nanak has said that attaining supernatural powers are second-rate results.

THE LAW OF UNION AND SEPARATION GOVERNS ALL THINGS.

Union and separations run the whole show of samsara. So there is only one power worth attaining – to be freed from union and separations. Things that unite must part; things that are formed are bound to disintegrate. He who is born must die. That which is obtained is also lost. That which is a possession today is a calamity tomorrow. Today's happiness is tomorrow's unhappiness. Each thing moves into its opposite. The wheel of samsara turns on uniting and parting. You meet today; you part tomorrow.

He who understands that truth – that the wheel of samsara turns with the help of union and separation, that it works according to the law of opposites, saves himself by going beyond both. He is neither made happy by unions nor unhappy by partings. This is the only siddhi, the only real power; master it!

AND DESTINY DETERMINES OUR JUST INHERITANCE.

Therefore be patient, be tranquil in whatever is given you, for it is a part of your destiny. Things had to happen this way and so they happen. And since only that happens which has to happen, why the discontent? Why the complaints, the weeping and wailing? Accept whatever fate ordains. Try to liberate yourself from unions and separations. This alone is the siddhi, all else is lesser quality stuff.

IF YOU MUST BOW, BOW TO HIM.

HE IS THE PRIMAL BEING, PURE, WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END;

HE IS THE UNSTRUCK SOUND.

HE IS IMMUTABLE THROUGH ALL TIME.

CHAPTER 5

One Becomes Three

5 December 1974 am in Chuang Tzu Auditorium

BY SKILLFUL MEANS ONE MAYA HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO THREE DISCIPLES:

BRAHMA, THE CREATOR; VISHNU, THE SUSTAINER; AND SHIVA, THE DESTROYER.

GOD DIRECTS THEM BY HIS WILL AND HIS ORDER.

HE WATCHES THEM BUT THEY CANNOT SEE HIM;

THAT IS THE WONDER OF WONDERS.

IF YOU MUST BOW, BOW TO HIM.

HE IS THE PRIMAL BEING, PURE WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END.

HE IS THE UNSTRUCK SOUND.

HE IS IMMUTABLE THROUGH ALL TIME.

ALL THE WORLDS ARE HIS ABODE, AND ALL WORLDS HIS STOREHOUSE.

HE HAS THEM FILLED FOR ALL TIME WITH ALL WORTH ATTAINING.

THE CREATOR CREATES, AND OVERSEES IT ALL.

SAYS NANAK, HE IS THE TRUE REALITY AND ALL HIS WORKS ARE TRUE.

IF YOU MUST BOW, BOW TO HIM.

HE IS THE PRIMAL BEING, PURE WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END.

HE IS THE UNSTRUCK SOUND.

HE IS IMMUTABLE THROUGH ALL TIME.

In the quest for God we have to travel along the same path by which God descended into the world. As God has become the creation, so we, His creation, have to work our way in the reverse direction and become God. The path is the same; only the direction changes.

You have come here from your house; while returning you will cover the same route. The road will be the same, you will be the same, your legs will be the same, the energy to walk is the same; only the direction will be different. When you arrived here, you had your back towards home; while returning you will be facing home.

You have to return to God along the same path as God descended into creation. While coming you had your back towards Him; while going you will be facing in His direction. Therefore, indifference is the way to enter into the world and eagerness towards God is the way to approach Him. The ladder is the same, the path is the same; only the direction changes.

In this sutra Nanak tells us how God became creation. Whoever has sought Him and found Him followed just the way that Nanak describes here. Not only religious seekers but also scientific researchers agree on this.

Religion looks at the creator; science looks at creations. Religion seeks from one end, science from another. Science conducts its search where man stands; religion conducts its search where man came from and returns to. Religion seeks your beginning and your end, whereas science probes into the middle.

One of the most valuable discoveries of science is that there is just one force, one energy, that is holding together the whole universe. All the world can be broken down into smaller and smaller bits and pieces, into atoms. The chair, the trees, the stones, the flowers are all made up of the same basic elements; and these atoms have a relationship to one another. Either they come together by attraction, what Nanak called unions, or they push apart, repulse one another; Nanak called it separations. What is pushing apart or pulling together is energy, and all is caused by electric charges, the same electricity that makes the lamp to burn, that makes everything move in our cities. The same energy is the force that holds the world together. Science calls it energy or electricity. Religion refers to it as God.

It is only a difference of words; but the difference in words creates a great deal of difference to us, for how is one to worship electricity? How can you make love to electricity? How will you call out to electricity? How can you build temples to it?

The word electricity remains only in the head; it cannot be related to the heart. But God is the name of this same energy. The name makes all the difference. At the very mention of the word God it becomes a matter of the heart; it has no longer anything to do with the head. In matters of the heart, relationships can be established. The intellect breaks things down; the heart joins them. It is through the intellect that we break away from people and things, for it is the mind that creates differences. At heart we are one, for the heart has the quality of undivided oneness. Here all boundaries and definitions fade away; they are not created.

As soon as religion declared this energy to be God, we gave it an individuality. Now relationships can be established with it, and everything depends upon this relationship. If you cannot become related you cannot bring about a transformation in your life. Science can make use of energy but it cannot worship it. It is this very energy that religion worships. A scientist can electrify villages, create atomic energy and discover new means of destruction, but will remain untouched by this energy; no flowers will ever bloom in his life. A religious man will not be able to carry electricity to the villages or make atom bombs, but he can illumine each and every heart; and this light is tremendous. He can fill each heart with song and dance, and thus fill life with brightness.

These two, science and religion, agree that it is only one energy working. They agree on another point also: when the One breaks, it splits into three. Science says that each atom breaks up into electrons, neutrons and protons. From these three elements the whole world is formed.

In the Hindu religion the One becomes the trimurti, what Christians call the trinity. The Hindus created Trimurti, one person having three faces. Each face attaches to the same body. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are the names of the three faces. When the One descends into creation, He becomes three.

Another very astonishing fact is that the meaning given to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva by the Hindus coincides with the meanings the scientists have given to electron, neutron and proton. In the whole process of creation, birth is necessary and also a giver of birth. Then the one who is born must die, so death is necessary and also a giver of death. Then there is bound to be a period of time between birth and death, so there should be a protector or guardian, also. So Brahma is the birth factor, the creator, Vishnu is the protector, and Shiva the destroyer. Electron, neutron and proton have the same qualities: one of them protects, through another there is birth and the third brings about destruction.

The One is divided into three, and then into infinity. Now if we wish to reach God, we shall first have to reduce infinity to three; and the three are then to be infused into One and ultimately become One. This is the reverse journey, like traveling the Ganges to Gangotri – towards the fundamental source.

So from the many we have to concentrate on the three. The three are the intermediary destination. After three the one remains.

The ordinary man wanders in the many. How many desires, how many expectations! Can you count them? And each desire is intertwined with so many other desires, like so many leaves on a tree. They are endless – man's hopes and dreams. There is no way to fulfill them. How many things he possesses! So many arrangements and so much equipment he gathers! And even if you obtain all that you desire, you are not satisfied. The more you attain the more you wander in the multifarious

objects of the world and the further you go from the One. And the further you go from the One, the greater becomes your suffering. It is as if, going further and further away from the source of light, darkness increases proportionally till ultimately you find yourself in total darkness.

To go into the many means that there is a great distance between you and the One. We are all in the many. He who has come into the three from the many, we call a seeker. He is in between. And he who has progressed from the three to the One, we say he has attained. He has reached the place where God originally was.

Let us try to understand this further. How will you reduce the many into the three? The method to do this is the method of witnessing. If you observe your desires and do not become the enjoyer of them, you are the witness. If you experience desires as the doer you will lose yourself in the many. By witnessing alone you can reduce the many into the three. Whatever you do, do not be involved in your actions. Observe everything in a detached manner, and one fine day you will suddenly discover that the three have arrived! One is the observer, the other is the multifarious world of objects, which now is like a gigantic screen on which everything moves. The many is no more. And between the two is seeing. So there is that which is seen, the observer or witness, and the seeing. You have reverted from the many to the three.

As soon as the witnessing is cultivated, you have become a seeker. This is the state of the sannyasin. To revert from the many to the three is sannyas. Whatever you do, keep the witness alert; when walking on the road, eating your meals, putting on your clothes. Even in illness or pain, or when you win the lottery – whatever the situation, keep the witness alert inside. Never lose sight of it within.

There are two ways of losing the witnessing state: if you become the enjoyer you lose it, or if you become the doer you lose it. At the moment you say, "I have done this," the witness is lost, and the drug of arrogance begins its work. You are no longer the same person.

One day I asked Mulla Nasruddin, "Mulla, every day I see your servant taking two glasses of wine on a tray to your room. Since you are always alone, for whom is the second glass?"

Nasruddin replied, "Once I take a glass of wine I am no longer the same person. I become a different person altogether. Don't you think it is my duty to offer my hospitality to this other person?"

As soon as you are intoxicated you become a different person; you can never be the same. Being under the influence of intoxicants is the only difference between a sannyasin and a worldly man, for what is the most potent intoxicant but the drug called the ego.

All other intoxicants wear off after a while, but the effect of the ego goes on from birth to birth. You try your best to get rid of it and still you find it standing right in front of you. You try to run away from it, but it follows you like a shadow. You devise a thousand tricks and yet you find it tagging along with you. You practice humility, but there it is stirring inside you.

The ego is the subtlest of all intoxicants. If witnessing is awakening, the ego means you are asleep. As soon as you become the doer, as soon as you become the enjoyer, you fall asleep slumber overtakes you. As soon as you become the witness, awakening occurs and consciousness returns.

As soon as consciousness dawns, the many are lost and only the three remain: that of which you are conscious, the one who is conscious, and the connection between the two. This the Hindus refer to as triputi. The one whose triputi is awakened is a sannyasin; he begins to delve into his spiritual practice. As you dwell more and more in the three your wanderings in the many diminish until you reach a stage when the many will no longer form, and there will be only the three; then you are permanently in the witness state. You suddenly find that the three have faded away when the mind becomes still. You discover that the observer, the observed, and their connection are all one and the same.

This is why Krishnamurti says again and again, "The observer is the observed."

But this is the ultimate state. First, through long practice all ways of forming the many are closed, the world is no more and only the three remain. Then gradually you come to realize that the three are one. When you know that, the one who sees is that which is seen. Then the connecting link is also lost, for the relationship between the observer and the observed exists only as long as they are separate. But when only one remains, how can there be any relation? The intermediary connection is thus broken.

This is the journey – the return journey to again become one. You become God. When you became many, you were the world. The trimurti stands in between. This is what Nanak means in these sutras.

BY SKILLFUL MEANS ONE MAYA HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO THREE DISCIPLES:

BRAHMA, THE CREATOR; VISHNU, THE SUSTAINER; AND SHIVA, THE DESTROYER.

GOD DIRECTS THEM BY HIS WILL AND HIS ORDER.

The descent is from one to three, and from three to many; but however far away you are from the One, you cannot step outside His edicts, His orders. No matter how much you disintegrate, how much divided you are in the many, He is present within you. If He is not, you cannot be. You may wander far, far away. You may go astray, but you cannot go so far that there is no point of return; there is no such point of no return.

Therefore no person is unredeemable. Even if a person has fallen into the lowermost depths of sin, he is not beyond cure. In terms of spiritual knowledge, there is no illness that is incurable, that cannot be remedied. All spiritual diseases can be cured. You cannot go so far that you cannot return.

Wherever you go, He is present. However far you go, it is He who takes you. Even in sin you need His help, because it is He who breathes within the sinner, it is He who beats within the sinner's heart. We can go far, very far. We can forget Him, but there is no way of losing Him.

So when you ask, "How are we to seek Him?" your question is not correct, for you have never lost Him. Even if you wish to, you cannot lose Him for He is your very nature. Were He apart from you, you could have lost him, forgotten Him somewhere, but you cannot do this even by mistake, because He is you.

Then what happens? You merely forget. There is also a way to forget oneself. Man can forget himself, forget his very nature. And yet his nature stands within him.

I have a friend. He is a lawyer, but a more forgetful person is hard to find. He forgets almost everything. On occasions he even forgets whom he was representing in court, who had engaged him to fight the case. But he is a very important lawyer. Once he had to go to another town to fight a case. When he reached there he found to his horror that he had forgotten the client's name. He sent a telegram to his secretary, "What is his name?" The secretary wired back the lawyer's name thinking he had forgotten that this time.

There is every possibility of forgetting one's own self also. The whole world is proof that one's own self can be forgotten. And what is the way to forget? The way to forget is the same as the way to remember.

How can forgetfulness be remedied? By meditation! When you become too much object-oriented, you forget yourself. For through concentration alone one remembers, and through concentration alone one forgets. Wherever you apply your attention, that is what comes to mind.

Whatever you remove your attention from is what you forget. When your attention is directed towards an object, your concentration shifts to the object and illuminates it. You begin to see the world and you forget your own self. You are so enrapt in what you see that you are lost to yourself. The only one way to get out of this and awaken is not be so absorbed in viewing. However beautiful or enchanting the object, shake yourself into remembering yourself.

But you are bound to forget reality. Even when you go to see a movie you forget the simple reality that it is only an empty screen in front of you, that the film is merely a play of light and shadow. People cry in the theater over the tragedy on stage. When you see them after the show you would imagine someone in their family had died. If it is an action film, they sit upright in their chairs, ready to fling themselves into the action, into the fray. And it is not only the simple-minded who forget themselves; even intellectuals get carried away.

There is just such an incident in the life of Ishmarchand, who was a great intellectual in his time. He was given the title of Vidyasagar, Ocean of Knowledge. Once he went to see a play in which there was a character who was supposed to be a rogue, a libertine. He harassed people in many different ways, like waylaying a woman and pestering her. Ismarchand was the honored guest, so he was seated in the front row. He became so angry he jumped onto the stage, took off his shoe and began beating the actor with it.

The actor turned out to be wiser than Ishmarchand. He took the shoe in his hand and holding it to his heart said, "I shall not return this shoe to you, for it is the highest prize I could ever receive for my acting. Never before has anyone been so overpowered by my skill." Vidyasagar later regretted his mistake. He could not understand how he got so involved with the play. He also never got his shoe back.

Whenever something seizes your attention so intensely, you commit this same mistake. In the course of time you forget the seer and the object begins to mean everything to you. When this happens you lose yourself in the mirage, you go astray. If this habit becomes deeply ingrained in you, everything you see becomes real for you.

This is why dreams seem true, just because of this habit. Whatever you see seems true to you. Dreams appear true when you sleep. In the morning you discover they were not. Again when you sleep, dreams look true again... and in the morning you realize they were false. This goes on and on. If someone comes to kill you in the dream you scream and your sleep is broken. You awaken and find your heart beating faster. If someone dies in a dream you cry. You wake up in the morning and find the pillow wet with your tears. How many times have you dreamed? Yet you forget that a dream is a dream in the course of the next twelve hours. How is it possible? It is because you have developed a habit of taking everything you see as true.

There is an old tantric method for this. Unless you know the dream to be false while it is in progress, you will never be able to know that the world is false. This is the reverse of what we know. We still believe samsara to be real; therefore even dreams appear real. Tantra says that unless you realize dreams to be false while they are happening you will never understand the ephemeral quality of maya. Tantra has evolved very subtle methods to know a dream to be a dream, and not reality.

You may experiment with this. Decide on something before you fall asleep: for example, decide to raise your left hand with a jerk. Or decide to put your palm over your eye as soon as you begin to dream. You will have to practice this auto-suggestion every night for three months before falling asleep. At the end of that time or sooner, if you do it very regularly, your remembrance will become so intense that it penetrates your unconscious. Then as soon as you begin to dream, your left arm will shoot up with a jerk, or your palm will cover your eyes – whatever you have practiced. As soon as this happens, it will come to you that this is a dream, for these two are connected in your auto-suggestion.

Another tantric method: whatever you see in your dream, concentrate your attention on one object. Let's say you see a marketplace. There are lines of shops loaded with various articles and many people are moving about. Now focus your attention on something, perhaps on one shop. You will be astonished to find that as soon as you fix your attention on this one shop, the shop disappears – because it was never there. Then fix your gaze on other things one by one and you will find them all disappearing in the same manner. If you become adept at watching dreams, dreams will be lost. As soon as dreams are lost, you go into meditation even in sleep; you reach samadhi.

Begin with dreams and you find that the whole world is a dream. The world is a dream seen with open eyes because our habits die hard – we get involved in the things we see. This involvement is so intense that we forget ourselves, forget the observer. Our consciousness works in only one direction.

Gurdjieff used to tell his disciples, "When the arrow of your consciousness becomes double-pointed, when your consciousness begins to flower at both ends, you will become an enlightened being." Gurdjieff's efforts in directing his disciples were all to this end. "When you look at someone, look at him, but also keep trying to look at your own self: 'I am looking, I am the observer.' Then you are sharpening the other edge of the arrow of your consciousness. One end is directed towards the object you see; the other points toward you, the seer."

Here you all sit listening to me, and you have lost yourselves in me while listening. You forget the listener entirely – but then you err. The listener should also be remembered while listening. So as I sit here talking to you and you sit there listening, you are also conscious of the fact that 'I am listening'. When you go beyond the listener, a transcendence occurs. The witness is born.

As soon as the witness is born, the person steps from the many into the three. You have reached the confluence of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Then it is easy to merge into the One from the three, for it is only one more step forward. Similarly, the confluence of great rivers is considered auspicious. Prayag is a unique pilgrimage place because of the confluence of three rivers. Two rivers can be seen, the Ganges and the Yamuna, but the third, Saraswati, lies underground and cannot be seen.

Whenever you focus your attention on something there are two elements: the subject, you, and the object, what you are observing. These are both apparent, but the connection between the two cannot be seen. This is symbolized by the river Saraswati at Prayag. However, all three rivers meet at Prayag, and they naturally become one.

BY SKILLFUL MEANS ONE MAYA HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO THREE DISCIPLES:

BRAHMA, THE CREATOR; VISHNU, THE SUSTAINER; AND SHIVA, THE DESTROYER.

There is only one temple dedicated to Brahma in all of India. Brahma is worldly. His only work is to give birth to samsara, the world, so he is not considered worthy of worship.

Shiva's temples are found everywhere. No other deity is worshipped as much as Shiva. In every village, in every lane you will find a Shiva temple. Under trees you will find stones that are revered as Shiva. This is because with Shiva the world comes to an end. He is the deity of death, and hence worthy of worship. Brahma gives birth to the world, Shiva destroys it. India's keenest desire was always how to be rid of samsara, how to attain liberation. Therefore we find Shiva temples abounding.

There are temples dedicated to Vishnu also. Many among us are afraid of annihilation. They worship Vishnu. The shopkeeper worships Vishnu for Vishnu is the treasurer, the keeper of the stores. He is in between Brahma and Shiva, and so he is the Lord of Laxmi, the deity of wealth. So those who lust for wealth worship Vishnu.

This is worth pondering over; if you want to approach a man it is best to go through his wife. Not only in ordinary matters of the world does this method apply, but even in matters of the spirit. The rule is: please the wife and the master is bound to be pleased. Please Laxmi and Vishnu is pleased.

Vishnu looks after the world; therefore, those who want to live in the world worship him. Shiva is the end. He is the supreme death. He is the deity of the sannyasins. Therefore there are so many temples of Shiva. The smallest village is not without its Shiva temple. And because it is the temple of the sannyasin it has to be made as cheaply as possible. You do not need great funds for a Shiva temple. Find a rounded stone and it becomes the Shivalinga, the symbol of Shiva. You do not even need flowers; a few leaves off the woodapple tree, that is all. Temples to Vishnu are elaborate affairs that a millionaire can afford, but who is to erect temples in honor of the lord of death? Certainly not those who cling to life and the world, so Shiva's temples had to be cheap constructions.

These three deities are the three threads of life: birth, life and death. Remember, birth has already taken place, so what need is there to worship Brahma? What has already happened is a closed chapter; there is nothing more to do about it. Life still is; therefore some are absorbed in the worship of Vishnu. But these are not very wise people, for life is ebbing away every moment. Unless the

knowledge of death descends into your life, sannyas cannot enter your life; you will remain a worldly man.

What is the difference between a sannyasin and a worldly man? A sannyasin understands that all life ends in death; all being ultimately ends up in nonbeing; that which is formed also decays and disintegrates; that which is decorated becomes desolate one day; the house that is built falls one day. A sannyasin is one who has become aware of death, who has begun to remember death. He is one who knows that this world is a campground where we pitch a tent for a short while. When the knowledge of death dawns a transformation takes place.

Except for man there is no religion, for among the birds and animals there is no knowledge of death. They also die, but they are not aware of that fact because consciousness is needed to see death; this they do not have.

Also, among human beings you are just an animal if you do not have a clear perception of death. As you become aware of the end, what you value in life changes. What was important until yesterday seems worthless today. What was meaningful up to now becomes meaningless as soon as awareness of death occurs. Many dreams were dreamt, many hopes were pinned on the rainbow of desires, but when death knocks at the door these fall like a house of cards.

Death gives the first knock the very day you are born. The day Brahma started his work, Shiva started his also, but we are not aware of it. If you do become conscious of this fact, the very awareness brings about a conversion within you: you turn back towards your source, your direction changes. Then you do not aim towards samsara for you see nothing but death there. Instead you turn towards yourself, and to proceed towards one's own self is to walk in the direction of God. The shock of death reminds you of God. God is forgotten to him who does not remember death. Many times you have died, many times you have been born, but you are still oblivious of death.

Remember death. Make it your focal point in life, for there is nothing more certain than death. Everything else in life is uncertain. Keeping this certainty at your core, set out on the journey of life and you will find that you have begun to proceed from the many to the three.

Nanak says that God directs the three according to His own will and order. Remember, whatever you do, good deeds or bad, sin or virtue, whether you go closer to God or further away, whether you follow the path or go astray, you cannot step outside His boundaries.

If this remembrance is with you then there is a way to step away from sin too. You also step out of the virtuous life for with this remembrance you come to understand that I am not the doer; He is the director. I am only the means, a medium. I do what He directs; nothing is of my doing. Then why the arrogance, and why the ego? It is He who gives birth, it is He who gives life, it is He who takes life. Then why should I strut about? Why should I be conceited and proud?

You must have heard the story of the fly that sat on the wheel of the chariot. The chariot was raising a lot of dust for it was drawn by many horses. The fly looked around and said, "Today I am raising a great deal of dust!" You too are sitting on a chariot wheel and thinking the same thought. There is the gigantic wheel of samsara but the dust raised is not on account of you. The day you understand this you will be filled with great peace. For all restlessness pertains to the ego and the ego has the

habit of taking everything upon itself; it even shoulders the burden of things you are not doing, things you have nothing to do with.

The day it dawns on you that you are no better than the fly on the wheel and the dust is raised by the enormous wheel of samsara, you will attain supreme peace. Then you will feel: I am nobody, nothing. Why should I be restless? Who is to be restless? As long as the illusion persists that I am, you will be restless.

People come to me and ask how to become tranquil. "Help me to find peace." I say to them: You cannot be tranquil as long as you are; as long as the you exists, you cannot be given peace. Your not being is peace. Put yourself aside; you are a falsity, a dream. If you understand fully, you will know that you are a dream within the dream.

You do not exist even in dream. You must sometimes have dreamed a dream within a dream. You dream that you are going to bed, you have fallen asleep and you are dreaming a dream.

There is an old Chinese story: A woodcutter was cutting wood in a jungle. He was tired, so he came down from the tree and fell asleep. He dreamed that nearby lay buried a great treasure of diamonds and gold in huge pots that were lightly covered with dirt. In his dream he thought that he would come at night and remove the treasure quietly. If he removed it in the daytime he might be caught. He was a poor man and the treasure was worth millions. When he awoke, he buried a stick to mark the place and returned home.

When it became dark, he went back to the spot. He found the stick in place but the pots had been removed. He went back and told his wife, "I don't understand whether I dreamed about the treasure or actually saw it. The stick is there all right, and there are holes where the pots were, so it is certainly not just a dream. But someone has removed the pots."

His wife replied, "It must be a dream. You must also have dreamed that you went out at night and saw the stick in the ground, and that there was an empty place where the pots were supposed to be. So go back to sleep and sleep in peace."

But it happened that another man also dreamed that he saw these very pots buried in the same place, and that a woodcutter had buried a stick to mark the place. When he got up from his sleep he ran to the place. He found the stick in the ground and also the vessels underneath! He removed the pots and brought them home. He told his wife, "I cannot understand whether I dreamed a dream or I actually saw a vision. Whatever it is, I have brought the pots home. They are proof that it is not just a dream. I must actually have seen the woodcutter burying the stick and therefore I knew where the treasure was."

His wife said, "The pots are here. That much is clear. But if you actually saw the woodcutter marking the spot, it isn't right that we should keep this treasure. Take the pots to the king and let him decide."

He was an honest man, so he took the pots to the king's court where the woodcutter had already lodged a complaint. The king was perplexed. Finally he told them, "It is very difficult to decide whether you were asleep or awake, so I shall divide the treasure equally between you both, for the pots are very much there." So he divided the treasure between them.

That night the king told his wife, "A very strange thing happened today: Two men dreamed the same dream. Now it is difficult to decide whether they dreamed or whether they really saw the treasure. But the pots of treasure were actually there, so I divided them equally between them." The queen said, "Go to sleep, you must be dreaming."

For thousands of years this was discussed in China – did they dream it or not? Who actually dreamed? But this is what happens by the time we reach the end of life. All of life seems like a dream. It is difficult to decide whether the stick was really there and whether the pots were really buried; whether the wife and children ever existed, or friends and foes; whether there was poverty or riches; whether there was conflict and competition; whether we really lost or won, were successful or unsuccessful. At the time of death all events pass before a man like a dream. Did we really live, or was it only a dream?

Those who have known say, "This is a dream dreamed with open eyes." It is a dream because it has no relation to that which is. This is an intermediary state of imagination; it is merely a thought. It makes no difference whether you saw it when asleep or when awake. The characteristic of a dream is that it is here one moment and gone the next. At the time of death all is lost.

Within this dream you see another dream that is called the ego. You consider yourself the doer, the author of the dreams. You are filled with conceit, which all the world can see; only you do not see it. Everyone else is in the same state, never seeing their own, but seeing everyone else's ego.

People come to me saying so-and-so is very egoistic. Then that very person tells me the same thing about others.

Mulla Nasruddin used to say, "I can eat ninety-nine cookies at a stretch." Once I told him, "Mulla, why don't you eat one more and complete the hundred?" He was very annoyed with me; "What do you think? Do I have a stomach or a warehouse?"

Through ninety-nine the Mulla has no sense of a warehouse, for that is all his. But if another person adds even one more, the warehouse suddenly appears – stark and clear! We are blind to ourselves. If the other were not there to make it clear we would be oblivious to everything. Therefore the others are a blessing.

And the seeker is very much aware that if the other is not present you cannot be aware of your ego, you will not recognize your ailment. Thus, in the last moments of his life, the seeker thanks all those who reminded him of his ego, all those who fractured his dreams. This is why Kabir says, "Bring the critic and keep him with you. Make a thatched cottage for him in your courtyard, for he can see your ego when you cannot."

As long as the witness is not awakened within you, you are stone-blind. It is a dream within a dream that I am. Samsara is maya. The object world is illusion. And within this illusion you have the feeling of I-ness. The dream also has a dream and that is the difficulty. The day you encounter death, the I is the first casualty.

How will you stand with regard to death? How will you save yourself? If the breath stops what will you do? All your power, your strength, fails before death. This is why we make such efforts not

to remember death. If we do remember death our conceit cannot stand up. It falls limp when we confront ourselves helpless before death. Our arrogance cannot accept it. I – a helpless person? I, who am so strong, so powerful; how can I be helpless? So it is best to suppress the fact of death, and then the ego is not hurt! The wise man remembers death.

In the face of death one is always defeated, even the greatest conquerors: not Hitler nor Alexander nor Napoleon has won against death. Therefore we try to hide the fact of death. We hold on to the ego, which is false, and forget death, which is a reality. If you are determined to go towards the one, remember death, for death is a very great truth, and the powerful effect of this truth is that the ego falls away.

Chuang-Tzu was returning home one night. His way led through the royal cemetery. The night was dark and his foot struck against a skull. Chuang-Tzu picked up the skull and said, "Forgive me, I did not mean to insult you. I must ask your forgiveness because this is just a matter of time. Had you been alive today I do not know what I would have done after this affront." He brought the skull home. The disciples pleaded with him and argued that it should be thrown away. Who keeps a skull in the house?

Why don't we keep a skull in the house? We should give it a place of prominence. What better relic can there be? Nothing is more effective than a skull to remind you of death. Keep it on your dressing table so that you can see your face in the mirror and the skull on the table.

Chuang-Tzu kept the skull with him all the time. He might forget everything else, but never the skull. People objected and asked why he kept such a morbid thing with him.

"Why does this skull bother you so much?" Chuang-Tzu would ask. "How does it harm you? I keep it with me to remind me that one day my skull will also be lying somewhere. Perhaps it too will be kicked about by beggars and no one will care even to ask forgiveness, and I shall be unable to do anything about it. The skull is very much there in my head. I keep this skull so that even if you beat me on the head with a shoe, I shall not look at you but at the skull. Then I shall smile, for I know this was to happen one day. This was bound to be. How long shall I save my skull?"

When death becomes an absolute fact the ego is dissolved. Remembrance of death is like poison to the ego. As long as ego persists you cannot awaken. No sooner does death become visible, the ego breaks, because then you understand that all happens according to His will, that you are not the doer.

BUT GOD DIRECTS THEM BY HIS WILL AND HIS ORDER.

HE WATCHES THEM BUT THEY CANNOT SEE HIM;

THAT IS THE WONDER OF WONDERS.

Nanak says God sees Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, but they are not capable of seeing Him. This is a choice statement. The seeker should keep it in mind. You see the whole world with your eyes. The observer within you can also see your eyes, but your eyes cannot see Him. You can touch the whole world with your hands; the observer within you can also see your hands, but your hands cannot touch Him.

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are the three eyes or the three faces of God. These faces can see the object world, but they cannot turn back and see God; for that which is hidden within is beyond their reach. Therefore you can see Him only when your external vision is completely closed off. Your physical eyes cannot see Him. With this face you cannot see Him; only when this face is completely forgotten will you recognize Him. If you wish to go within, all external modes of travel have to be discarded. They are useless for the inward journey. Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva are for the object world. The Trimurti is on the outside, and that which is hidden with the three is beyond their reach.

There is a delightful Indian story – and there are many such stories – in which, whenever a person attains buddhahood, Brahma himself comes and sits at his feet and begs him to impart knowledge.

Nanak is hinting at this idea, for a buddha is higher than Brahma; he is higher than all the deities. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are left far behind for they were merely faces of the three. He who has known the One becomes higher than those who know the three. Even Brahma himself comes and bows at his feet and asks for knowledge.

The fact is Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are still there, but through them the One cannot be known. Only when the three are dropped can the One be known. In this context, the Hindus have written wonderful stories that are unequalled to this day, but it is very difficult to understand and interpret these stories.

The story I was talking about begins when Brahma created the earth. The earth is thus Brahma's daughter, but as soon as he created her, he was enchanted by her beauty and began to run after her. She took various forms to save herself from him. Whatever form she took, Brahma assumed the corresponding form and ran after her. When she became a cow he became a bull.

When the West first read this story they were uncertain – what kind of a God runs after his own daughter? But these stories are wonderful, for Hindus believe that the deities are also worldly. They are also outward oriented. Thus Brahma can be enchanted by his daughter, meaning by his own creation.

Do we not do the same? Are we not enchanted by our own creations, our own dreams? And don't we run after them? We run after the very desires we create – this is the meaning of the story. The very desire becomes our lifelong involvement. We pursue our desires in many forms. The deities are as involved and as much captives as man. Therefore Brahma also came to Buddha in search of knowledge.

Nanak says that it is a wonder of wonders that God sees the three but He is invisible to them. It is a matter for wonder and yet not so surprising. The wonderment is if the One can see the three, why can't the three see the One? And it is also not so astonishing, since how can the three see the One unless they look back? But as soon as they look back into themselves they become One.

Understand it this way: I always keep telling you that you cannot meet God, for the day you meet Him you will no longer be you. You have to annihilate yourself before meeting Him. As long as the I in you is present, God cannot be. When you are not, God is. How can the meeting take place?

The same happens to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. When they turn inwards within themselves, the One remains, the three are no more. As long as the three remain as three, they cannot turn inwards. Therefore it is a wonder and also not a wonder.

Remember that this is not a discussion of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, but concerns you! The three are merely a symbol.

IF YOU MUST BOW, BOW TO HIM!

Nanak says: Why bow to Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva? They cannot even see Him. He alone can see them, so bow to Him if you must bow.

HE IS THE PRIMAL BEING, PURE WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END.

HE IS THE UNSTRUCK SOUND.

HE IS IMMUTABLE THROUGH ALL TIME.

Bow to Him, the everlasting one. Seek only Him who is the primal One; who is the beginning of everything, but who is Himself without a beginning; who is the very first, and before whom there is nobody and nothing; and who will be in the end and after whom there is no one! Bow to such a One only. If you bow to a lesser form you will wander.

But we cannot muster the courage to bow to the One, for we bow only to serve ourselves. We have to drop all self-interest in order to bow to the One.

If you want to satisfy your own ends, bow to the deities, for they are like you. You have desires, so have they. Ask them for gifts, they will gratify your wishes. There are comparable values between them and you. They may be more powerful than you but they are not different from you; as you have hopes and expectations so also have they. So sing their praises, worship them and all your worldly wants will be gratified; however, whatever you ask them will pertain only to the world. If this be your end, then you should worship Vishnu.

You can ask for the One only when you are prepared to leave the world. Remember, whatever is attainable is through the One; all else is mere wandering. Whoever has attained has attained through the One; all else is mere wandering. Whoever has attained has attained through the One. You see people toiling so hard to attain worldly gains and they gain nothing, yet your eyes do not open to this fact, yet your understanding is not awakened. There are so many who seek worldly wealth; some achieve it but find they have attained nothing. Those who lose are the losers, but here even the winners are losers.

Two men were sitting at a table in a restaurant. One was young, the other somewhat older. A beautiful woman came in. Seeing her the young man said, "Whenever I see her my heart misses a beat. I am so mad for this woman that I won't be happy until I have her. Without her I know no peace. I don't know what to do."

The older man said, "When you have succeeded in seducing her, let me know."

"What do you mean?" the lover asked.

The other man replied, "She happens to be my wife. I have lost all peace of mind since I married her and I shall regain my peace only if you manage to entice her away from me!"

Those who do not get, complain, and those who do get also complain. Complaint is the way to being in this world. You find the rich and the poor, the successful and the unsuccessful, the defeated and the victorious, all crying and complaining. In one respect there is a great similarity in all walks of life – all are unhappy.

Only by attaining the One can one attain something. This One has no temple. Brahma has one temple in his honor, Vishnu has many, and Shiva has innumerable. But there is no temple dedicated to the One; there cannot be.

The name Nanak gives to his temple is very beautiful – gurudwara. It is not a temple to God, but the entrance of the guru. Through it you can reach the One, but in itself it is only a door through which you have to pass. It is no place to tarry. He who terminates his journey in the gurudwara is a foolish man. We have to pass through the guru's door towards the One who resides beyond the door.

And, says Nanak, if the feeling of obeisance has really and truly arisen within you, then bow your head to the One. He is seated on the throne of the visible and the invisible and therefore there can be no temple to him.

ALL THE WORLDS ARE HIS ABODE, AND ALL WORLDS HIS STOREHOUSE.

HE HAS THEM FILLED FOR ALL TIME WITH ALL WORTH ATTAINING.

THE CREATOR CREATES, AND OVERSEES IT ALL.

SAYS NANAK, HE IS THE TRUE REALITY AND ALL HIS WORKS ARE TRUE.

All that is relevant to the Lord – whatever it be – is truth. Whatever is relevant to you is false, for your very being is false. Truth cannot grow from untruth. Whatever you create will be merely a house of cards – a slight wind, and it will fall. Whatever you make cannot be more than a paper boat that will sink as soon as it sets sail. You cannot travel in it. Whatever is created by the ego is false, for the ego itself is false. Whatever belongs to God is true.

The day this truth dawns on you, you will stop wasting your energy in creating untruths; instead you will begin to utilize it to know truth. Samsari involves a person who is busy creating untruths. You do not realize the falsity of the world for you are wrapped up in it. Stand a little away and observe your world – how frightening its falsity is!

A man hoards currency notes. He does not realize that these notes are mere bits of paper, only a means of transaction. If the government changes and the new government decides to cancel this currency, they become just paper! So this man is actually gambling on an assumption that cannot be relied on.

There is a hotel in America. During the depression of 1930 when the economy of America crashed, the owner pasted the walls with useless bonds that formerly had been worth tens of millions of dollars. Millions upon millions of dollars turned into useless paper.

On the other hand, there is this man amassing currency notes. He has no other interest but to hoard money. He fills his safe, but he does not know that for each banknote he is selling his own life, for

each moment is precious. The energy he could have utilized in attaining God he wastes in gathering the banknotes.

In Mexico pebbles and stones were once used as coins, for it is only a matter of general agreement; you use paper to represent money, but surely stones are more valuable than paper! Gold is gold for we have agreed to its value. If tomorrow the wind changes, iron will be valued in place of gold, and gold will lose all importance. Then jewels and ornaments will be made of iron.

There are tribes in Africa who value bones and not gold. They wear ornaments, necklaces, etc. of bones. Gold has no value for them. They will not exchange it for their bones.

It is all a game of values, and for these values you sacrifice your life. You are willing to sacrifice anything so that people may honor you. What is the meaning of this honor? Who are those people whose recognition you crave? They are the same ones hankering for your honor. What is the value of their respect? What do you gain by being honored by fools? And the crowds of the foolish in this world cannot be counted.

Winston Churchill went to America. He spoke at a meeting before a huge crowd; the hall was filled to capacity. After the meeting a woman came up to him and said, "You must be delighted to see so many people come to hear you. Whenever you speak the hall is packed."

Churchill replied, "Whenever I see a packed hall I say to myself, 'If it was my execution fifty times more people would have come.' How can one trust these people? They hear me and they clap. If I were being hanged, they would still clap. So whenever I see a hall filled with people I remind myself that these very same people would turn out in large numbers and enjoy the sight if I were executed."

The same people will acclaim you when you rise, and applaud even louder when you fall. Where do you want to reach by gathering this crowd and getting their votes? What companionship do you get when they are with you? And how high do you hope to rise by riding on their shoulders? But man wagers his life for these paltry gains – how to win acclaim from people, how to rise in their esteem.

Nanak says that whatever is born out of the ego is false; it cannot but be false. All this is a quest of the ego. The politician comes to your door, folds his hands, bows his head and asks for your vote. You give him the vote; he gets you the position. This is mutual ego gratification.

It happened once: There was a man who used to strike the hour in a clock tower in a town that also had a small telephone exchange. Every morning at nine o'clock the telephone exchange would get a call asking for the time. Now the exchange people would hear the clock tower strike nine and set their clocks by it. This went on for a long time until one day the operator asked the caller who he was and why he asked the hour at exactly nine every morning. The caller answered, "I am the man in charge of the clock tower." You can imagine the state of affairs: this man depends upon the exchange and the exchange depends on him – totally reciprocal!

This mutual interdependence exists in all our dealings. I look at you, you look at me; I respect you, you respect me; you nourish my ego, I nourish yours. Such is this vast network of falsity.

SAYS NANAK, HE IS THE TRUE REALITY AND ALL HIS WORKS ARE TRUE.

Seek truth first. Do nothing before that. For whatever you do before that is bound to be false. Only one thing is worth doing: recognize truth! Then you may do anything. For once you know truth, it begins to act from within you.

IF YOU MUST BOW, BOW TO HIM.

HE IS THE PRIMAL BEING, PURE WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END.

HE IS THE UNSTRUCK SOUND.

HE IS IMMUTABLE THROUGH ALL TIME.

Remember this: He is the changeless, always the same form. Whatever changes is maya, illusion; it is samsara, it is falsity, it is a dream. What is eternal, what never changes, is God. If you grasp well the meaning of this sutra, you will one day seek out the changeless One within you.

You may perhaps have observed, or perhaps not, that within you too there is a factor, an element that is changeless. Anger comes but it is not with you all day long. Anger is maya. Sometimes love comes but that too does not remain all the time. Love also is maya. Sometimes you are cheerful, sometimes sad; but all these are passing phases, therefore they are illusions.

Then what is with you all twenty-four hours? It is the witness within – whether you are aware of it or not. Who is it who sees the anger? Who is it who sees the greed? Who sees your love? Who watches your hate? Who knows you are sad? Who knows when you are cheerful? Who is it who tells you: I am ill, I am well? Who is it who knows that you did not sleep well last night, that dreams troubled you?

All day long there is one who knows you inside. He is forever awake, while all else comes and goes. Catch hold of this One, for in this alone can you get a glimpse of Him.

IF YOU MUST BOW, BOW TO HIM.

HE IS THE PRIMAL BEING, PURE WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END.

HE IS THE UNSTRUCK SOUND.

HE IS IMMUTABLE THROUGH ALL TIME.

CHAPTER 6

Your Boat is Useless on Land

6 December 1974 am in Chuang Tzu Auditorium

IF MY SINGLE TONGUE BECOMES A HUNDRED THOUSAND,
AND THIS HUNDRED THOUSAND BECOMES TWENTY TIMES MORE,
WITH EACH TONGUE WOULD I SING A HUNDRED THOUSAND TIMES
THE ONLY NAME OF THE MASTER OF THE WORLD.
THESE ARE THE STEPS OF THE NAME OF THE LORD.
BY FOLLOWING THEM DOES ONE BECOME TWENTY-ONE.
HEARING THEM SPEAK OF HEAVEN'S GLORY,
EVEN THOSE WHO ARE LIKE LOWLY WORMS BECOME AMBITIOUS TO EMULATE THEM.
NANAK SAYS, HE IS ATTAINED ONLY BY HIS GRACE.
BUT THE FALSE CLAIMANTS SPREAD THEIR BOASTFUL TALES.
THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN SPEAKING NOR IN SILENCE;
THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN ASKING NOR IN GIVING;

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN LIVING NOR IN DYING;

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN THE WEALTH OF KINGDOMS NOR THE RESOLVES OF THE MIND;

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN REMEMBRANCE NOR IN KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE;

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN THE WORLD NOR IN THE DEVICES TO BE RID OF samsara.

THE REAL POWER LIES IN HIS HANDS – WHO CREATES AND KEEPS ON WATCHING.

NANAK SAYS, NO ONE IS HIGH AND NO ONE IS LOW BEFORE HIM.

Before proceeding with the sutras, there are a few things we should understand.

Thousands upon thousands of ways have been devised to search for God. But whenever a person has attained, he has found that He could not be attained through any means. Attainment comes always by His grace, as His gift; only through His compassion does a seeker arrive.

But alas, things become very complex, because without effort on the part of the seeker grace does not descend. Understand this a little, for without prior understanding of this complicated puzzle you cannot progress on the path of realization.

For example, you forget someone's name. You try very hard to remember. You feel it is on the tip of your tongue and will come to you at any moment, yet it does not come. You try a thousand ways to remember; you get all worked up inside, for you are so sure the name is so close. Then you give up in exasperation. What can you do if it doesn't come to mind? You go to do something else – read the newspaper, go for a walk or visit a friend's house. You have forgotten all about the name when suddenly, over a cup of tea, the name comes to you like a flash when you least expect it. You are completely relaxed and making no effort.

When we put out a great deal of effort, it becomes a hindrance in itself. Great effort produces great tension in the mind. When we pursue something doggedly and obstinately, the insistence becomes an obstruction. When the mind is concentrated it becomes constricted and we become closed. The mind can become so constricted that not even a single word can find its way out.

Concentration means constriction. The concentrated mind must be closed to all except the object of your concentration. Only a small hole is left open for you to see; all else is closed. For instance, when a person's house is on fire his mind is concentrated on the fire. At that moment if his shoe pinches him, he would be unaware of it. He is oblivious to everything around him. Rushing madly to extinguish it, if his hands burn or his clothes, he is totally unaware. All his energy is directed towards putting out the fire; all else is forgotten. In the same way, when you struggle to remember a certain name, the name doesn't occur to you, because your mind has become so concentrated and constricted.

The complication is that God is so vast that a narrow mind cannot grasp Him. If a small word cannot be recalled how can God be remembered? And His name is not on the tongue, it is in the heart. It

does not come to mind until suddenly, when you are doing nothing and the mind is relaxed, its gates all open. When the constriction of concentration is gone, you open and God enters.

But the irony is that the second happening can take place only after you have truly tried. Without that initial effort nothing happens, for the happening is the ultimate outcome of the initial effort and struggle. The intense effort ends in apparent failure; but when you give up, this effort slips into the subconscious mind and continues with the same intensity. Then, when you are relaxed, the thought wells up.

So trying is of two kinds: the conscious effort you put in does not lead to God. When you give up and accept defeat all the effort you had put in now penetrates every pore of your body. It spreads with every beat of your heart, in every breath that you take. It becomes a part of your being that you cannot lose. Do what you will, it has gone deep within you as an internal current, a flow in which the advent of God takes place. Scientists would say it has now become an effort of the unconscious.

The conscious mind is a very small segment compared to the unconscious. The ratio is one to nine. It is just like a piece of ice floating on the water; one-tenth is above water and nine-tenths is below.

When you try with your conscious mind you never profit. The imperceptible gain will occur only when your conscious effort reaches its last gasp and you are completely worn out; you will give up but the effort will continue in the unconscious. Though you give up the unconscious never gives up.

This means that the conscious effort gradually becomes the unconscious effort. When this happens the japa, repetition, becomes the unpronounced repetition, ajapa. Now you needn't repeat the name consciously; it happens inside by itself. Wherever you are – running a shop, marketing, working in the office or even sleeping – the japa continues inside. Once the japa enters your unconscious, it permeates each atom of your being. You may not hear its music but it is sounding within you all right.

The conscious is useful inasmuch as it carries you up to the unconscious. One day the explosion takes place and suddenly you find God before you. Then you will feel that it is only His grace and compassion that have brought you so far. You had long since given up all effort and accepted defeat when suddenly the destination appeared; so it was not your effort. You had stopped traveling and the sacred place came before you. Since at that time you were making no effort, it is natural to feel that it is His grace.

Initially it is necessary to try your utmost through the conscious. Don't think that since your effort yields no result you should not try – that, since it happens only through His compassion, it will happen when it is to happen, so why should we bother? Then it will never happen.

Or if you think your endeavors alone will bring about the result and you keep on struggling consciously, then too it does not happen. Where your effort and His compassion meet, your efforts end, and only His grace remains.

You are restricted only by your conscious self. He is only in your unconscious. You are limited by the boundaries of your conscious mind, your thoughts. Below these, in your very depth, He resides. Although He is already there within you, the door between the conscious and the unconscious has to be broken down by your own effort. The experience of union happens only through His compassion.

Those who wish to seek must first explore thoroughly and entirely; then they have to let go of all searching. Only when they have tried totally should the search be given up, not before that, or else all goes in vain. When the search is complete, when you have staked your all without holding back a single thing, only then does the search slip from the conscious to the unconscious; for there you are not, your ego is no more.

In sleep where is your ego, your arrogance? In sleep there is no one to say I: that "I am a king" or "I am a millionaire". The I is completely lost. In the same manner there is not the faintest inkling of the ego within your unconscious. The I is a product of the conscious mind. With effort his I breaks; when you are exhausted the ego dissolves. As the ego dissolves, the door to the unconscious opens. And the door of the unconscious is the entrance to God. Those who have reached have all passed through this door. But then you are not there, there is no one to say I; therefore in the moment of attainment you will say, "His grace, His compassion."

This gives rise to an illusion, a doubt: you may wonder if His grace is more for some and less for others. If it is His grace alone, a few are attaining but the majority are not. Is this some rank injustice? Remember, through your own efforts alone you become worthy of His compassion. His grace showers on all, all the time, but you are not fit for it. Therefore it is your failure to accept what you are getting, not some discrimination on His part.

NANAK SAYS, NO ONE IS HIGH AND NO ONE IS LOW BEFORE HIM.

No one is worthy, no one unworthy. He gives, He showers on all alike. But if you are not ready to take, you will keep on missing. You are not ready to take His grace.

If you find a rough diamond by the wayside you will not pick it up, but if a jeweler passes that way, he will because he knows its value. To you it's only a piece of stone. The diamond was equally available to you and to the jeweler; it was there for anyone's taking. The diamond didn't differentiate between you and the jeweler; it hadn't refused you in favor of the jeweler. The fact remains, you did not recognize it; the jeweler did. He had the eyes, the capacity, to spot it.

God, similarly, lies before you, everywhere. Wherever your eyes reach He is there, but you do not have the eyes to see. Your eyes cannot see Him, your ears cannot hear Him, your hands cannot touch Him. You are deaf, dumb, lame! He calls you but you cannot run toward Him. He calls from all four sides but, alas, you are deaf. There is no differentiation, no discrimination from Him towards anyone. For all come from Him and ultimately merge into Him. How can there be any discrimination?

Do you differentiate between your right hand and your left hand – that when your right hand hurts it is worse than when your left hand is in pain? Both are yours, left and right, inside you are just one – yourself.

Does He differentiate between the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the good and the bad? If His gift were conditional, He would give only if you conform to His requirements. It would be a business deal, a bargain. No, God gives unconditionally. If you cannot receive His gift, it is you who are wanting. He knocks at your door, but you think it is the wind. You see His footsteps, but you begin to interpret and offer your comments, which only deepen the darkness in your eyes.

God comes to you from many directions. He does not spare Himself at all. He comes to you as much as He came to Buddha, as much as He came to Nanak. For Him you are not any different from Nanak. But Nanak recognizes Him; he is a jeweler. Buddha holds the hem of His robe while you keep missing Him again and again. When you are qualified, when you become an adept in the art of assaying, your blindness will vanish. After all your efforts cause your ego to fall, when through exhaustion you are no more, you find that He was always there before you. He was right at the tip of your nose; wherever your nose turned, there He was. You missed because of your own self.

Keep this well within your heart: if you miss you are the cause, if you attain it is through His grace. This is incomprehensible to those who have not known. Logic would assert: if I miss because of myself, I shall also attain because of myself. While the logic seems tight it is a mistake; you miss because of yourself, you attain because of Him, His grace.

What does this mean? It means that as long as you are, you cannot attain Him. Then how can you attain through yourself, since your very self is the obstruction? The stronger the I in you, the greater is the obstruction, the stronger is the wall. Once the walls fall, He stands directly before you. Conscious effort will break the wall and the door will open, but the light of God was always outside the door.

When you attain Him, many things become clear to you. One: I missed because of myself, I attained because of You. Two: You were near but I sought You in far off places, not where You were. Three: the supports I used in my search were those by which You can never be sought.

In all dimensions of life the mode of travel is different. You can cross an ocean with a boat, but you cannot use it to cross the land. No matter how good a sailor you are, no matter how many seas you may have crossed, or how great your knowledge of the ocean, you cannot sail your boat on the road. Now because of this boat your whole journey comes to a halt. You could even have walked and arrived one day on foot, but now you are stuck with this boat around your neck, so to say. You may try to apply your knowledge and experience of sailing to land, you may have crossed vast oceans, but this small bit of dry land will defeat you for your boat is useless on land, and you don't abandon it.

This is exactly what is happening. The boat of ego is a useful vehicle in the world of samsara, the world of objects. You cannot take a step without the ego. Trying to make your way in life without the ego leads to grief; for it is a race of egos. All striving is in the I. The greater the ego, the greater the success. That this success ultimately turns into defeat is a different matter. But in the material world arrogance wins; the psychosis of arrogance is always victorious for this is a world of maniacs.

If however you begin on the path of God with this ego, you shall err. You may have been successful in the material world, your ego may have made a Napoleon, an Alexander of you, but do not make the mistake of carrying the ego along with you on this journey towards God. It becomes a hindrance that you will be caught and bound by. Having boarded the boat, you will simply sit becalmed in it. It won't sail. The journey is impossible.

At the first glimpse of Him a person realizes that He missed Him all this time entirely because of himself, and that the attainment came by His grace. He realizes that all his efforts that had seemed so intense and exhausting were hardly worth the name compared to the gift of attainment. There is no relation between the two – his effort and His grace.

It is just as if a person travels with the help of a needle to realize the ocean. Really, what connection can a needle have with the ocean? All efforts of man are like the needle – small, very small. Until you meet God you cannot weigh your efforts or know what they mean. One man says he worships in the temple. What does he do? He sounds the bell, offers flowers to the image. Granted he is performing a worthy act, but has this anything to do with realizing God? Another man sits for an hour every day and repeats His name. He is mad if he thinks that by repeating His name over and over for an hour a day he can attain Him! How will his shouts and cries help? What value is his voice; how far will it reach?

When you arrive, you realize at once how childish, how insignificant were all your efforts. They will seem so trivial – all that going to temples, going to Kaaba or Kashi; all your worship, japa and penance; all the topsy-turvy postures, all the shouting and hollering. How much are they all worth? You undertake these puny efforts, these petty, feeble efforts to attain the invaluable, the priceless – that cannot be had at any price in the market of the world? You work for an hour and earn a rupee; you worship for an hour and you expect to attain God? It is understandable and logical that an hour's labor can earn you a rupee, but how can you earn God by one hour's meditation?

That which is realized is infinite. Our labor is insignificant. When you attain you will appreciate the fact that you had set out with a spoon and the ocean poured into it. In that hour you are bound to call out: "Your grace, my Lord, Your compassion!" Saints have exhausted themselves in their endeavors, and in the end declared against their own efforts. Yet they exhorted their disciples to keep on trying, never to stop trying. Their words seem so illogical.

Each time I say that you cannot attain by your effort, that very evening people come and say, "Why go through all the strain of meditation if He can be realized without trying? If as you yourself say, efforts yield no fruit, what is the sense in all of this?"

It happened: Early in this century physicists made a discovery beyond all logic. All their data showed that the ultimate particle of matter, the electron, was operating in a way that was beyond comprehension: it was behaving in two different ways at the same time. It was acting both as a particle of matter and as a wave, a current, a ripple. What conformed totally to the words of the saints was inconsistent in the scientists' laboratories.

If you have studied geometry you will know that a line is a line and a dot is a dot. The line can never look like a dot nor a dot like a line, for the simple reason that a dot is a dot whereas a line is a continuation of many dots. If you have a dot in your book which sometimes becomes a line and sometimes becomes a dot as you are looking, you will be alarmed. You will imagine all kinds of things – that it is black magic or that someone is playing a trick! For a dot is a dot and cannot become a line. One thing cannot be two different things.

In the same way a particle is a particle, and a wave is a wave. But physicists discovered at the beginning of this century that the electron acts as if it is both, it behaves in a dual manner simultaneously. This was a great calamity for science, for all its premises were nullified.

Science is governed by logic, it is not a play of the mysterious. It is not poetry. It is arithmetic where two plus two must equal four. Then what was to be done? The more they explored the atom, the more their troubles increased. Ultimately they had to accept the dual behavior of the electron.

People questioned the physicists: How can this be? Such a discovery nullified Euclid's geometry. It is against all mathematical laws.

The physicists replied: What are we to do if the electrons don't obey the laws of Euclidean geometry? We have verified every aspect of it and have to announce what we saw. If it doesn't conform to logic, let it not. We shall have to change our laws of science; we cannot tell the atoms to behave differently.

So a new geometry was born – non-Euclidean geometry. Geometry had to be changed, for the elements cannot be expected to change their nature and conform to man's theories.

For the first time in the history of science, Euclid was rendered useless and its definitions proclaimed defective. And all the doctrines of logic propounded by Aristotle were invalidated.

Saints face the same difficulty. They have tapped His door long before the scientists and they found that nothing is attained without a full-fledged effort; yet He is not attained through any amount of endeavor. The condition is such that there's nothing to do but try, though He is not to be attained by trying. If you really understand this, you will come to know the profound correlation between the two and you will risk your all in the effort. You will attain Him only through His grace, but you have to make yourself worthy of His grace by making an all-out, unsparing effort. This is the quintessence of this sutra.

IF MY SINGLE TONGUE BECOMES A HUNDRED THOUSAND,
AND THIS HUNDRED THOUSAND BECOMES TWENTY TIMES MORE,
WITH EACH TONGUE WOULD I SING A HUNDRED THOUSAND TIMES
THE ONLY NAME OF THE MASTER OF THE WORLD.

Only then will you be exhausted, not before! How many times have you repeated His name? How many meditations have you done? You have hardly begun! You haven't used your full strength. If your house caught fire you would really run. But you haven't run towards God with half that effort. If your wife were to die, how much you would weep! Have you cried for Him in your grief of separation? If your child is lost, you will run here and there like a madman, searching; have you looked for Him like this? Your quest is still lukewarm; it hasn't reached the boiling point.

Nanak is speaking of the boiling point when he says in this sutra: If my tongue becomes a hundred thousand, and if this hundred thousand turns into millions, with each tongue shall I repeat endlessly the name of God. Each hair on your body should fill with thirst for Him, each pore, every atom, yearning for Him. All else but 'I must attain Him!' should be meaningless in your life. God alone should be your only purpose. When you are ready to renounce all else, when your only goal is His attainment, only then is the concentration enough.

These are the steps of the name of the Lord: that one tongue becomes a million and then each tongue repeats His name millions of times. When traversed by the seeker, the names of the Lord are the very steps by which he becomes twenty-one – in other words, he attains God-realization.

The word twenty-one occurs in the reckoning of the Sankhya School of thought. Sankhya discusses the ways a seeker can become enlightened or twenty-one. The calculations of this philosophy are very valuable. The very word Sankhya means numbers, numerals. It is the first time man's existence was dealt with numerically; therefore the philosophy came to be known as Sankhya.

Sankhya says the five elements – earth, water, fire, air and ether – are born out of the One. But these elements are gross. There are also five subtle elements that cannot be seen by the eyes. Scientists also agree that the wall we can see with the naked eye is the gross wall; the subtle wall we are never able to see. Scientists have obtained only a bare glimpse of it. The wall that appears so static and immovable to us is not static; it contains a great deal of movement. Each particle moves at incredible speeds, approaching the speed of light; and the light ray travels at 186,000 feet per second. This is so fast, so subtle, that we cannot grasp it.

The microscopic particles that make up the wall revolve at such tremendous speeds. It is so far beyond what the physical eye can observe that the wall appears stationary. The fact is, however, that each thing is vibrating, everything is alive and moving. One day the wall will fall. If it was totally static and devoid of any movement, inside and out, it could not disintegrate; how could it fall? Activity brings about a struggle that results in destruction.

The wall is going through great activity, with tremendous friction between the particles of the wall and the external forces of wind and dust that ultimately causes the wall to break down.

Recent scientific experiments show that the human body can be kept alive for a great length of time if kept below a temperature of zero. It can thus be preserved for an indefinite period. The theory that applies is that the less the activity, the less the disintegration. This is what refrigeration is all about. Keep a fruit in the refrigerator and it can be preserved for a length of time. On a similar basis, we find that people mature sooner in tropical countries and appear to age sooner. The greater the heat, the quicker the movement and the quicker the maturation and eventual disintegration. Because of this increased activity and metabolism we feel restless in the hot season and enjoy the cold season. In winter you often feel healthier.

Sankhya says there are five subtle elements. These subtle elements are related to five gross elements. Together they make ten.

Then there are five organs of perception that are subtle, and five organs of action that are gross. The eye is your organ of action, while the capacity to see is your subtle organ of perception. If you do not have the power of seeing, you are blind in spite of the eye. It sometimes happens that the eye is in perfect condition yet cannot see; this is because the power of vision has shifted away from the eyes. The ears are the gross organs of hearing; but hearing, the power to hear, is the subtle organ of perception.

Therefore when Nanak tells us again and again, "Listen!" he is not referring to your ears. The external organ of hearing, the ear, is always open to sound, unlike the eyes, which can be closed or open. Then why does Nanak say, "Listen"? He is hinting at your subtle ear. He means come nearer to the ear, don't wander here and there because then the ears will hear but you will not listen.

These five gross sense organs and the five subtle organs of perception make ten. Together with the elements they make twenty. Nanak says that he who wagers his all becomes twenty-one, and this

is God. If you do not bet your all, you do not seek Him, even then you become twenty-one. But this twenty-one is your ego.

So there are two ways of becoming twenty-one. The first twenty are the states of being. Either you attain God or realize your own soul and you become twenty-one, or you visualize a false picture of yourself – that I am this or that, a millionaire, a hero, a renunciate, or a king. There too you will be twenty-one, but this would be the twenty-first lie.

Either you add one lie to the twenty and you have twenty-one lies, or add one truth to the twenty and you have twenty-one truths. In either case you become twenty-one. We are all twenty-one. Nanak is also twenty-one. No one can be more than this, but we have joined one lie to our twenty and we have never sought in the other direction.

You have never tried to know anything about your own self; you are under the illusion that you know yourself and there is no greater lie. You have never tried to know yourself, nor have you even a glimpse of your authentic self. Yet you say, "I am!" You haven't the slightest notion of who you are. You know only as much as the mirror tells you. And how much of you can the mirror show except the external appearance of your body? You can see your body, your clothes – that is all. The mirror cannot reflect the soul within you, your real self. Whatever the mirror shows, you accept as your own self, the I.

And this I you have taken to be the twenty-one. That is the whole trouble; it is hell. If your twenty-first is a falsity, you fall into suffering. The twenty in every case is constant; it is only the twenty-first that is the deciding factor. No sooner is the twenty-first the truth, you experience the bliss of supreme liberation. The twenty are an arrangement of life, they cause no confusion. Only if the twenty-first is inauthentic does it bring untold troubles.

Nothing causes as much pain and suffering as the ego. There is no synonym better suited to express the nature of the ego than suffering. Increase your ego, you increase your suffering. You can contain the whole of hell within your fist.

The more you desire joy, happiness, the less your ego will have to be. The day your ego is no more, the whole of heaven will be in your grasp. It will follow you like your own shadow. Then you cannot be sent to hell. Even if by chance you are sent to hell, you will create heaven there too, for he who has no ego finds heaven everywhere. And he who is filled with ego, will create a hell out of heaven if he happens to go there. Happiness and unhappiness are not connected with situations but with the twenty-one within you – whether it is false or true.

THESE ARE THE STEPS OF THE NAME OF THE LORD.

BY FOLLOWING THEM DOES ONE BECOME TWENTY-ONE.

Nanak says that he who gives his all is taking the steps to the Lord's name. If you keep investing your all, a moment comes when there is nothing left in you. Traveling on that path ultimately makes the seeker twenty-one. In other words, the seeker becomes enlightened.

HEARING THEM SPEAK OF HEAVEN'S GLORY,

EVEN THOSE WHO ARE LIKE LOWLY WORMS BECOME AMBITIOUS TO EMULATE THEM.

NANAK SAYS, HE IS ATTAINED ONLY BY HIS GRACE.

BUT THE FALSE CLAIMANTS SPREAD THEIR BOASTFUL TALES.

Here Nanak makes a valuable statement about how religion is altered and deformed. When His light enters a person, he cannot help talking about Him. How can a flower stop spreading its fragrance when it blooms? How can a lamp not spread light once it is illumined? Whenever divinity descends into a person he is bound to talk about it. He will sing His glories, what he has attained will ooze from each pore of his body and will be manifest like fragrance around him, like light. Even if he remains silent, by basking in Him his very being radiates news of Him.

Nanak says: seeing such a person and hearing him talk of divine things, inferior and worthless people, who are no more than worms in human form, feel a sense of competition. These people are filled with envy and jealousy and do their utmost to discount the attainment of such a one.

So the first thing that happens around a person when he attains is that people around him will deny him and his attainment. They will brand him a liar, a hoax. They will set out on a fault-finding mission. This is the kali yuga, the Age of Darkness, they will say, and who can attain in this era? The days of sat yuga, the Age of Truth, when so many beings were enlightened, are gone. They will ask for a thousand-and-one proofs and do their utmost to demonstrate that he has not attained.

There is no way to prove one's attainment, neither by one's behavior, one's clothes or one's food. But realization needs no proof; its light manifests all around the person.

Then what do these people do? Those among them whose ego is stronger than the rest proclaim to the world, I have attained! The ego first denies the attainment of a genuine seeker: how could anyone do such a thing before he – the egoist – has realized? When he finds that the man in question cannot be proved wrong, he lets it be known by the beat of a drum that he also has attained!

Nanak speaks of the mean and lowly – for nothing can be meaner or lower than the ego. They are like lowly worms or insects. They are filled with the spirit of competition. Then they give rise to false stories of achievements.

So if there is one sadguru in the world, for each perfect master there are ninety-nine pseudo-sadgurus. This is always the ratio: 1 to 99. And the joke lies in the fact that the pseudo-gurus are more successful in attracting you than the genuine guru, for they speak your language. The pseudo-guru knows you very well and does all that you wish of him deep within yourself. If you want him to produce ashes from his hands, he does go. If you want an amulet to fall from the skies, he gets one for you.

You see the wayside magician performing the same tricks, but you are not impressed. When a holy man or saint turns round and indulges in these same tricks, you go mad after him; you dance with joy that at last you have found the sadguru! Then you pour out your desires to him. You want to be rid of your ailment, he blesses you; you desire a son, he blesses you. He tries to satisfy all your desires. Therefore you find crowds of thousands, millions, around a pseudo-sadguru, for he is but a reflection of your own life.

It is difficult to recognize a sadguru, for it requires a transformation in your life: you must change! A pseudo-guru gives to you and tries to satisfy your desires; an authentic guru snatches away all you have.

And the most interesting part in this whole affair is if you were to light a fire and sit before it blessing whoever comes, it is certain that your blessing will be successful fifty percent of the time! These are significant odds. Whoever comes, bless him! You need do nothing more. If a man wants your blessings to win his law suit, bless him. Fifty percent of lawsuits are bound to be won – with or without your blessings! But now the focus of attention will be shifted to you and your blessing! The other fifty out of the hundred will go to some other pseudo-saint, for you were no good to them.

The fifty who win are now your confirmed followers; they will keep coming to you. Now this crowd of fifty will impress any newcomer with their stories of success; one won a lawsuit, another got back his wife, a third was lucky in love, someone was rid of an ailment, another's child was saved in an accident... and so on. Such is the crowd around the false saints; they are people whose wishes are fulfilled. The disappointed ones continue to move on and one day, when their wish is fulfilled, they will follow the guru they happened to be serving at that moment, presuming it to be the result of his blessings.

If you recognize the guru by your desires, you will err; what has the guru to do with your desires? The true guru is not there to gratify your desires; he is interested in awakening you. To accomplish this it is better for you to be rid of desires – as many as possible. The guru is not interested in your illness, in your court cases or your wife and children; he is interested in you and your God. And his path is not the path of desires, but of desirelessness. Therefore he will not be able to attract you to him.

Thus you usually find crowds around the pseudo-guru. Whenever you see such a crowd, beware! For a crowd is always of deluded people. You will find very few people in the right place, near a sadguru. And they are extremely hard to find. You will find only a selected few whose aim is to attain God. A crowd is always made up of desire-ridden people.

Nanak says that the false people then spread false tales. The irony is, the stories of such people often seem to be correct, for life is such that fifty percent of the people will be satisfied and convinced when their desires are fulfilled, and the other half will move further on in search of fresh gurus. When by chance their desire is fulfilled they will take it as the grace of the guru they are currently serving; if not near one Sai Baba, then another. Now each tells the other what he has gained from the guru, and so the crowd multiplies. Then when you see thousands of people have gathered...

You too have come there goaded by your desires. You also have put your faith in someone and many times your good luck is the result of your faith. Psychologists say that most illnesses are mental. If you have full faith that you will get well, you get well.

Many hospitals have experimented with this. Physicians call it the placebo effect. A group of patients with the same illness are divided into two groups. One group is given the regular treatment and the second group is treated with pills made only of plain sugar. The most interesting part is that about three out of five will recover independent of which group they come from, whether they got the regular treatment or the placebo. This is why there are so many 'pathies': allopathy, homeopathy,

naturopathy, and what-not. And all these 'pathies' work on people and they recover, or else the treatment would have vanished long ago.

It appears that people are cured more by faith than by medicine. If a doctor who has just started his practice, who has just graduated from medical college, prescribes a treatment, it will not work, for you have no faith in him. If he happens to be your son it is bound to fail. What father has ever trusted his son? If a well known doctor prescribes the same treatment it will work. The bigger the doctor and the higher the fees, the more effective the treatment. Half the work is done by your faith in him. A doctor in whom you have no faith can never cure you.

This is why we find a doctor's diplomas and certificates hung on the walls of his consulting room. These are medicines in themselves for his patients. In India if the doctor is 'foreign-returned', his cures are certain! Seeing the certificates the patient gets half cured. Have you noticed how many illnesses vanish when the doctor begins to examine you? He may have just taken your pulse, checked your blood pressure, he may just have applied the stethoscope to your chest and you feel the pain half gone.

A crowd gives confidence and faith, and faith yields results, while the phony person at the center of this crowd reaps the profits. You are engrossed in the play of your own mind.

HEARING THEM SPEAK OF HEAVEN'S GLORY,

EVEN THOSE WHO ARE LIKE LOWLY WORMS BECOME AMBITIOUS TO EMULATE THEM.

NANAK SAYS, HE IS ATTAINED ONLY BY HIS GRACE.

BUT THE FALSE CLAIMANTS SPREAD THEIR BOASTFUL TALES.

Here worms denote the egoists. The worms are filled with awe and terror. How is this possible? The word Nanak means small, wee. This wee man has reached and not we! This man who is way behind us in the world has reached? This illiterate village bum, this penniless farmhand without place, position, or family to boast of? Is anything known of his background; can you name one great man from his ancestors? That this man without heritage, wealth or property has reached while we have not is just impossible!

So Nanak says He can be attained only through His grace, not through your conceit. Who you are does not entitle you to attainment; what you are does not count in His attainment. He is attained only through His munificence. Your conceit and arrogance are only a hindrance in His path.

And yet, false people spread false stories. In the field of religion this is so easily done. Therefore we find the greatest amount of hypocrisy in the name of religion and the greatest amount of untruth.

This is so because the subject is the heavens. The subject is so wide and so far away, so splendid and so mysterious, that anyone can say anything and get away with it. If you set up a shop and begin to sell invisible cloth, how long will your shop last? It will be difficult to get even the first customer. In the marketplace your wares must be not only visible but well displayed and laid out if you want to sell them. How can you cheat now?

I have heard: A store in America began to sell invisible hair pins for women. You may take it as a story of the future. Women would love to have invisible hairpins! A woman came and asked for a box of them. When she was served she asked the salesman if they were selling well. He answered, "Madam, we were out of stock these last three days. Thousands have bought them." This was possible, for the primary quality advertised was their non-visibility. Once having advertised them this way, when you open the box and find it empty, whether there are hairpins in it or not is not questioned.

The business of God is just such a business of selling invisible hairpins. Since nothing is visible it is paradise for cheats; that is why we find that the more religions a country has, the greater the hypocrisy prevailing in it.

Our country is proof of this. You will not find more hypocrisy or more humbug anywhere else in the world. Nowhere else in the world has religion been studied as in India. This led to so many sadgurus in this country, but each sadguru led to ninety-nine pseudo-gurus. You get so tired of all the deceit and fraud, the tyranny and chaos, you come to feel that this whole business of God is one big swindle, a racket. Best to keep away from it all!

Nanak says false people spread false tales and tall stories. And as your faith in them gets stronger, the stories get taller still.

Mulla Nasruddin was telling his little nephew about his experiences. He said, "I was going through the jungle when ten hyenas surrounded me. I killed five at one stroke..."

"But," interrupted the nephew, "Three month ago you said you met five hyenas. Now you say ten."

The Mulla replied coldly, "Then you were smaller. You weren't ready to hear such a frightening and dangerous story. You could not have understood it properly and would have been so shaken with fear."

As your capacity to hear their lies increases, the claims of these hypocrites increases also. They keep watching you to see how much your faith has increased and expand their stories accordingly. Your faith nurtures God knows how many false gurus. When your faith develops you become blind to everything and believe almost anything.

Last night I was reading a discourse of a Christian padre who is well-known in the West. At the very outset he stated an outright lie. I wonder how anyone can believe such nonsense, yet there are people who believe him! He has a following of thousands. He writes in the foreword that very soon the advent of Jesus will take place. He will gather together all the millions of his followers and disappear. He promises that Jesus will not be long in coming now and even mentions the date and day. Tens of millions of Christians will vanish from this earth. Imagine! The rest of the world will look on amazed. And as soon as Jesus collects his devotees and disappears, all kinds of catastrophes will fall on this earth; it will become a veritable hell. He therefore exhorts all people not to waste a single moment, and start believing in Christ – join the flock. In the end he says, "There are only two alternatives before the people who read this book: if he is a sinner he will not believe in what is said in the following pages. If he is a man of good actions and virtue, he should tarry no longer and become his follower at once. He offers you only two alternatives. If you have the slightest sense and

if you are basically good, you will follow Jesus. If you don't like the book at all it is because you are a sinner.

There is nothing wrong in going along with Jesus, but this man is exploiting his name. Jesus is a beautiful person, very lovely, but this man – what he says is a brazen lie; yet how can you prove it? I can give you many instances where man's gullibility is exploited.

In 1930 a Christian priest announced that the end of the world would occur on the first of January. Some fifty-thousand of his followers sold all they had and spent the money in merrymaking. There was no sense in keeping the money when the world was coming to an end! They spent as much as they could and gave away the rest. It was a question of believing or not believing. Those who believed were virtuous people. Those who did not were sinners.

The day of resurrection arrived. In darkness they all went up the mountain. When the sun came out, they would be praying on top of the mountain while all the world was destroyed and Jesus would pull all his followers high up into the skies. Morning arrived, the sun came out – nothing happened! All the people of the village headed towards the mountain to question them. They were met halfway – by the followers coming down! When they were asked to explain, they said, "Everything is in order. Our prayers have been heard and accepted. God has postponed the annihilation of creation."

The sect is still very active in spite of this. It is astonishing how blind faith works. And we have no way to prove their falseness. People were prepared to take them to task for playing a hoax on them, but the priests were cleverer. They said it was an even greater proof of their prayers – God had put off the day of judgment because of their intervention!

Mulla Nasruddin sprinkled salt on his doorstep every evening. When someone asked what he was doing so religiously, he said, "It is to keep away wild animals."

"But there are no wild animals around!" people exclaimed.

"That is because I sprinkle the salt every day," Mulla answered.

What can you do to such a man? He leaves you no way out. The proof is before your eyes. Not only do wild animals never come to his doorstep, they do not dare come anywhere near the village!

Man is only too willing to be deceived, for deceit has its own logic. Fraud and deception have their own way of advertisement, their own logic; and they excite your desires. They persuade you in their own insidious way.

Nanak says false people spread empty boastful tales. But He is attained only by him who makes no untoward claims, whose I is completely annihilated. He is attained by him alone to whom He condescends to be gracious.

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN SPEAKING NOR IN SILENCE;

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN ASKING NOR IN GIVING;

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN LIVING NOR IN DYING;

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN THE WEALTH OF KINGDOMS NOR THE RESOLVES OF THE MIND;

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN REMEMBRANCE NOR IN KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE;

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN THE WORLD NOR IN THE DEVICES TO BE RID OF SAMARA.

THE REAL POWER LIES IN HIS HANDS – WHO CREATES AND KEEPS ON WATCHING.

NANAK SAYS, NO ONE IS HIGH AND NO ONE IS LOW BEFORE HIM.

These are revolutionary words. If there is one thing, and one thing alone that Nanak stresses in the whole of Japji – it is remembrance of His name; yet here in these lines Nanak declares that even remembrance has not the power. This is the last, the ultimate step coming into view. Nanak tries to snatch everything away from you – even remembrance. For if you have the slightest inkling that something has the power, you will protect yourself, your hold on yourself will be strengthened; all strength ultimately proves to be the strength of your ego.

So Nanak says there is no power even in the utterance – that you will take his name and somehow achieve. Then, in order that people not feel that if utterance has not the power perhaps silence does, Nanak says that even silence has no power. He is pulling everything out of your hands, anything he feels you might cling to. You may have thought: Right! Talking is so much babble; silence is the answer! So you become silent and go into meditation. But Nanak says that even silence has no power, for there is still the you in you; it is the you that had been talking that has now become silent. The quality of your being does not change. If the one who speaks is a sinner how can he become a saint merely by becoming silent?

Try to understand this business of qualities. If an evil person observes silence, he is still evil. How can his silence bring any change? A good man is a good man whether he speaks or is silent. A bad man is a bad man in both cases. An evil person will contrive some fresh device to harass others even while remaining silent.

Do you think merely by keeping quiet you can bring about a change in yourself or you will gain some power? What difference can there be? You were present in your words; you are present in your silence. You are still there. You will say, "I have become silent. I have entered into meditation." The same arrogance was there before, that you could speak well. Arrogance is blind – whether in silence or in speech.

I have heard: The ministry was being expanded and Mulla became a minister. He prided himself in his oratory and was confident he would impress and influence the public. Instead his speeches proved so long that the audience got bored. Because of the guards' instructions, nobody could leave the hall until the honored minister had finished his speech. He watched people yawning and stretching and squirming right before his eyes.

So he told his press agent to write shorter speeches, because people were getting bored. On the next occasion, Mulla started out hopefully to read the speech prepared for him. Yet the people still became bored; they were squirming in their seats. Mulla again rebuked his press agent: "Didn't I tell

you to write shorter speeches? Yet you wrote such a long one that people were thoroughly bored. If this continues I am going to lose all my following."

"But, sir!" said the press agent, "That speech was quite short. No one said you had to read all three copies!"

Intelligence cannot be borrowed. People get speeches prepared, but quality cannot be bought or borrowed. The quality of one's individuality can easily be obtained, for no one else can give it to you.

If you are a Satan at heart and you sit in silence, you are still a Satan. Until yesterday you prided yourself on your words; today you can pride yourself on your silence.

The Zen fakir, Bokoju, went to his guru and said, "Now I have become absolutely silent; the emptiness within is complete. Please speak now."

The guru said "Go out first and throw away this silence, then come in."

"Throw away silence?" asked Bokoju, "All this time you were saying become empty!"

"That was the first step," explained the guru. "Now this is the second: be silent first, then throw away the silence or else your silence will make you stiff with arrogance. Who is it now who says, 'I am empty'? This is the very thing that has to be dropped."

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN SPEAKING NOR IN SILENCE;

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN ASKING NOR IN GIVING.

What will you give? What do you have to give? The beggar and the giver stand in the same place. One asks God for wealth, while the other distributes wealth or builds temples or feeds the poor; but both have their eye only on wealth. And it is possible that the beggar is humble, but how can the benefactor be humble? He will say, "I am a benefactor." But there is only one true benefactor. How can you be a benefactor? What have you got to give? You can give only what you have: pebbles and stones, pieces of gold and silver, paper currency. These are all artificially given their value by man.

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN ASKING NOR IN GIVING;

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN LIVING NOR IN DYING.

You cannot achieve Him by living, so people think they should die. You see such people in ashrams everywhere. They don't have the courage to die in one stroke, so they do it gradually. This gradual dying is considered to be sannyas.

First they run away from the world, which cuts out ninety percent of their life. Then they stay in an ashram where they cut down their intake of food by eating only once a day. So one half of the remaining life is lost. Gradually they reduce their food even more; eventually they are walking around almost dead.

Nanak says that neither your living has the energy nor your dying. If you did not attain while alive, how can you attain after death? It is you who will die, is it not? And it is you again who will be born. You only shift positions, places; but you do not change.

What Nanak is saying is very significant.

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN LIVING NOR IN DYING;

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN THE WEALTH OF KINGDOMS NOR THE RESOLVES OF THE MIND;

Some people amass wealth, others collect meditation: they sit, they concentrate with great resolve, they do great penance. But Nanak says, even these do not have the power to attain.

And most significant of all, he says:

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN REMEMBRANCE NOR IN KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE;

Thoughts do not have the strength – and many people have said this – for thoughts are on the surface. Knowledge also has no strength, and many people have said it. Reading the scriptures, learning from the world or even from the guru – what power can they have? For it is always you at the center of the vortex.

Now this is interesting. Here all the paradox of the mystery manifests fully. All along Nanak has spoken of surati, His remembrance. And here he says: Even His remembrance has not the strength.

The first step is His remembrance, and the second step is what use is mere remembrance? For it is I who will remember. That remembrance will be my very own. It is I who will call out to Him, all my qualities will be contained in the remembrance; and what strength can that have?

The second phase is now at hand, when the seeker lets go of everything – but only after doing everything, remember! Don't be in a hurry to stop. If there is the slightest lack, there will be no results. This is only at the very end when nothing is left to be done. The fact is, you do not do it; things fall away by themselves. If you quit consciously, it means something still remains to be done. You strive and you strive and you strive, then the moment comes when you fall down exhausted. This falling is not of your own doing – you suddenly find yourself flat! Nanak refers to this when he says nothing has the strength, the power. For if there is even a little bit of strength left, you are bound to go further.

THE POWER LIES NEITHER IN THE WORLD NOR IN THE DEVICES TO BE RID OF SAMBARA.

THE REAL POWER LIES IN HIS HANDS – WHO CREATES AND KEEPS ON WATCHING.

Nanak says that none of the methods and tricks devised to be free of samsara have any strength in them either. The authentic power lies in the hands of Him who creates the world and, having created, admires it. It is all in His hands. All strength, all power lies in His hands. Become weak, helpless, you will get His support. If you are strong you need no support. God is the strength of the weak and helpless.

If you become helpless here, God awaits you there; but He belongs to the weak, not to the strong. The strong man does not need Him; he believes in helping himself. He denies God from all his endeavors, his arrogance is still strong. He does not feel the need of God's help.

Once it happened this way: there was a Christian saint, Saint Theresa. She was an exceptional woman. One day she went to the village church and announced that she was going to construct a big church. The village was small and the people were poor. They thought it was a worthy idea, but wondered where would they get the funds. Who will give the money? One of them asked her, "How much money do you have to start with?"

Theresa put her hand in her pocket and produced two paise. "I have this with me: two paise!" she said exultantly. "We can start with this."

The people laughed, "We already doubted your sanity. Two paise for such a gigantic project! You need tens of millions of rupees, Theresa!"

St. Theresa replied, "You see these two paise? That is all I have, but what about Him? He is with me. I have two paise plus God. How much does that make? And these two paise are only for beginning; later it will be He who has to see it through. How much can we poor mortals do? What is our capacity? It is worth not more than two paise; the rest is His. The two paise we have got, we shall go that far. He will see to the rest. Thy will be done! Let us make the beginning."

The church was completed and stands to this day. It is an enormous edifice. It could not have been completed by man's puny effort alone. His effort is worth only two paise. But you can set out to fulfill so grand a dream provided you remember that your own worth is so petty. Realizing your worth and taking shelter in the Lord's grace, you have infinite power and wealth to back you. You can move mountains provided you keep your trust in God and are fully conscious of your own insignificant strength.

No sooner do you become helpless than the fountain of the supreme strength begins to flow for you. As long as you rely on your own strength and give it importance, your power is not worth a penny.

Therefore Nanak keeps repeating again and again: neither this has the power nor that... he is depriving you of all your strength. Therefore, I say, the sadguru snatches things away from you; he does not give. He takes away your all, he makes you helpless, he makes you weak. He leaves you in the state of a man in the middle of a desert, dying of thirst and no water anywhere. At the moment of the thirst that arises out of this helplessness – that moment you shall attain. You will call out, "Oh helper of the helpless!" and there He will be! When you are completely helpless you get the supreme help.

And remember: there is no one high, no one low here.

Therefore do not worry about anything else. before Him, all are equal, all are the same. So do not fear that the strong will reach, or the virtuous will reach, or the benefactors, or those who meditate, will reach first. There is no one high and no one low here.

If you feel the difference of high and low, it is entirely your own doing; it is not because of Him. If you lose yourself entirely, you shall rise high; if you save yourself, you shall be low.

Jesus has said: He who loses himself will attain, and he who saves himself will lose forever.

Do not save yourself. This is one mistake that man can commit. Then he is left with two paise only; then he is really a pauper. Do not save yourself and you will find the two paise are nowhere – the whole of existence is at your disposal. The full energy of God is at your service. Then you become a king. You can be a beggar of your own making, but a king through His compassion.

CHAPTER 7

The Mines of Meditation

7 December 1974 am in Chuang Tzu Auditorium

HAVING MADE NIGHT AND DAY, THE SEASONS, AND THE DATES;

AND AIR, WATER, FIRE AND THE UNDERWORLDS;

HAVING MADE ALL OF THIS, HE ESTABLISHED THE EARTH AS A DHARMASHALA.

IN IT HE CREATED COUNTLESS CREATURES OF MANY COLORS AND FORMS.

THEIR NAMES ARE INFINITE.

EACH IS CONSIDERED ACCORDING TO HIS OWN DEEDS.

GOD IS TRUE, AND ALL HIS COURT IS TRUE.

ONLY BEFORE THE LORD IS EACH ONE TESTED;

EACH IS RANKED BY HIS GLANCE.

THERE THE RAW IS SIFTED FROM THE RIPE.

NANAK SAYS, ONE WHO IS RAW WILL DISSOLVE AWAY.

Some things have to be understood before going into these sutras.

He who takes life to be the goal wanders. Life is only an opportunity and not the goal. It is not the destination but a path; we have to reach somewhere by way of it. Do not assume that the very fact that you are alive means you have arrived. Life is not an accomplishment but only a process. If you pass through it well you arrive; if not, you go astray.

He is an atheist who takes life to be everything. He is a theist whose goal lies beyond life; for him life is a transient camp. Nanak calls the world a dharmashala, a traveler's bungalow. It is like an inn or rest place where you have to stop for a while before you proceed onward, but you shouldn't make your home in it. He who makes it his home denies himself the authentic home. You had set out to attain something, but if you took a way station as your abode how would you reach the destination? Who will continue to travel once he has made a home?

Samsara is not a home. Those who make a home of it we call householders. A sannyasin is one for whom samsara is a waiting room, not a house. Both stay in the same world – where else can they go? They stay in the same house, but their attitude towards the house is different. The worldly man thinks his home to be his haven; the sannyasin takes it to be a resting place. He has somewhere else to go, and he never forgets his destination – this is surati, remembrance.

One who keeps this remembrance alive, who does not lose the thread of remembrance, will stay in dharmashalas, but will keep moving on. No inn will lure him to stay on. He will stay in the world and out of it. You are what your destination is; where you go, that itself is you. You are not where you physically are, you are where your mind is. This has to be understood.

The majority of people – barring very few – take what they have obtained as the ultimate. Actually, it is not even the beginning, it is not even the door or even the steps leading to the door of your destination. You are still on the path; the steps are yet to come. When the steps begin to appear, know that religion has arrived within you. Those on the path are the worldly people. Those in whose lives the steps have appeared are the seekers; and he who has already entered the mansion of the Lord is an enlightened being. You are still on the path; the steps are far away, for you have not even begun your spiritual practice.

The deep-rooted cause for this illusion is that you are contented with what has been given to you. Remember, a religious man is absolutely contented in one sense; but in another sense it is difficult to find a more discontented person than he. He is contented in that he has no complaints against God. He is discontented in that he is very dissatisfied with himself.

An irreligious person has a thousand complaints against God: You have not given me this, You have not given me that. He has no complaints about himself. He is satisfied with his own self. That is his grave because how can you then develop, how can you progress? How will you open your wings to touch the skies? Instead you will remain a prisoner in your own nest, and will die in your cage.

You should feel contented with God and discontented with yourself, but things are reversed. We are deeply satisfied with ourselves and thoroughly dissatisfied with the world. Only we appear to be right, all the rest of the world is in the wrong. This attitude is the very thing that is wrong with us. Except for man, there is no mistake or miscalculation anywhere in existence. All the world flows in peace and joy except for man. There is no obstruction anywhere; only within you is there something clogged somewhere.

A religious man has a deep sense of dissatisfaction with himself. He feels as if he is not worthy of God, that he is not fit to worship or adore Him. He is apprehensive whether God will accept him as he is. One thought keeps hammering in his brain: I must make myself worthy of Him, I must be a worthy recipient of His acceptance. I must raise a throne within my heart that befits His majesty. I must be so qualified that He accepts being my guest.

So a religious person is critical of his own self. Gradually a moment comes when he evolves to such a degree, he has cleansed himself sufficiently, that he becomes a throne for the Lord. God is bound to knock at his door – if not today, then tomorrow. Then there will not be a moment's delay. No sooner are you ready than He knocks at your door. The delay lasts only as long as you are not prepared to receive Him. Screaming and shouting, weeping and wailing is of no avail. What is needed is your preparation.

And preparation means transformation. You will have to change yourself in many, many ways. If you search within yourself, you will find that not only God but you yourself would not be prepared to step inside you – as you are now. Had you to love a person just like yourself, you would refuse.

Therefore, deep down nobody loves his own self. You are not fit to love your own self, and that is why people are afraid to be alone. If you have to stay alone for an hour or two, you become restless. You look for a friend or go to a club or cinema or market, or play the radio, or watch the TV, or read a paper. How can one sit all by oneself doing nothing you ask. You are bored with yourself. You are not good company to your own self, and yet you desire the company of God? If you yourself are not prepared to stay with yourself, who else could be ready to stay with you?

God is a faraway prospect! To attain God means that the most profound peak of existence enters within you; but then you have to create a space for Him within yourself. You are so shallow that a small thing causes a storm within you. A slight movement and you tremble, a slight insult and you burn within, a little suffering and you feel all hell is let loose on you. You are affected by little, little things; there is no depth in you. Someone throws a pebble and a storm rages in you. You are not a deep ocean.

The ocean is so deep that even if the Himalayas fall into it, the waves will be blissfully oblivious of the happening. So many rivers pour into the sea, but the waters of the sea do not rise by even an inch. The ocean stays the same, whatever may happen.

You desire God. Have you ever thought what your state would be if He were suddenly to descend on you? You will be in a dilemma. Where will you seat Him? How will you welcome Him? You will be so shaken the only thing to do is run away from home.

You have no throne befitting Him. Were it to be made of gold and precious stones perhaps you could have had one made, but you have to make a peacock throne of your own heart. You have to fashion a throne of love. You can buy gold in the market, but where can you buy love?

Were a palace required to be made, that would be easy. Then God would already have descended to some king's palace. But you have to build a palace within, a palace of emptiness, a palace of meditation. That is a very difficult task; the journey is long.

If you take as your home the place where you find yourself, you are a worldly mortal. If you take this world as only a dharmashala where you rest for a while and then start again, then you are a sannyasin.

There is a very old Sufi story: A man went to a Sufi fakir asking the secret of attaining God. The fakir proceeded to recount the following tale:

A woodcutter went every day to the forest to cut wood. Each day he would gather wood, carry it to town and sell it. Whatever he got would be barely enough to give him a meal. Sometimes he managed to buy a little food; at other times he went to sleep hungry.

A fakir who used to stay in the same jungle watched him every day. He was filled with pity for this miserable man who barely managed to keep alive. One day he told him, "Every day for the last so many years I have been watching you. You are such a foolish fellow. Why don't you go still further into the jungle?" The wood-cutter asked, "How will that help?" The fakir replied, "Whoever went deeper within became wealthy. Go in, and you will find mines of copper."

The man went a little further and he found the copper mine. He began to sell copper. Once again he met the fakir who said, "Foolish fellow, go still further. There are mines of silver there." The man went and found the silver mines. He now began to sell silver and became very rich.

One day he met the fakir again who said to him, "Had you any sense you would have taken the hint by now. You have failed to understand. Go still further, you fool, for there are gold mines there!" The man penetrated deeper into the forest and found the gold, but he got totally involved in the gold.

He must have been a man like us, this woodcutter. Wherever we go we get involved. We don't think of getting up from where we sit. The fakir felt sorry for this man. One day he went to him again and said, "You really lack intelligence. So many times I goaded you to go onward to go still further, and you have not understood me. Now you are outwardly very rich, but within you are as miserable a wretch as before. Go still further, there are mines of diamonds." The man went further in.

Then, after some years, the fakir happened to meet him again. He rebuked him as before. Even though he was the owner of huge palaces and all that wealth could buy, the fakir was sorry for him. "You are as poor as ever within," said the fakir. "All this gold and silver and diamonds are on the outside. Go still further.

"Now where?" asked the man. "Why don't you leave me in peace? Why are you goading me on and on? Now what is left to be attained after getting these diamonds?"

The fakir replied, "Beyond that is my ashram and only I can give you the genuine diamonds. They are diamonds of meditation. Until now you sought the mines outside, now your search for the mines within must begin." And though the man had heard about the jewels within, he was not ready to seek them. Besides, he claimed that this talk was beyond him, so he begged to be allowed to stay where he was.

The fakir said, "As you wish. But remember, these mines within will not remain forever – today I am, tomorrow I may not be. The mines you dig now will remain. They always were, they always will be."

The mines of meditation manifest rarely – sometimes once in a thousand years. Sometimes some person discovers it and becomes an entrance to it. Such a person is the guru, and Nanak refers to his temple as gurudwara, guru's door – a beautiful name for a temple. He who comes upon the mine of meditation during his lifetime becomes an opening for others, but he does not live forever.

And you? You are so blind that you go past the door and do not see it! Your eyes are fixed on the visible wealth and not the true wealth that is invisible.

Remember this maxim: Still further. Until you reach God you should hold it always to your heart. If you halt before that, you will wander.

Therefore the thirst, the dissatisfaction of the sannyasin knows no bounds. His thirst is satisfied only when he drinks God. Lesser waters will not do for him. This is exactly why Nanak refers to this world as a dharmashala.

HAVING MADE NIGHT AND DAY, THE SEASONS, AND THE DATES;

AND AIR, WATER, FIRE AND THE UNDERWORLDS;

HAVING MADE ALL OF THIS, HE ESTABLISHED THE EARTH AS A DHARMASHALA.

IN IT HE CREATED COUNTLESS CREATURES OF MANY COLORS AND FORMS.

THEIR NAMES ARE INFINITE.

So the first thing is that the world is only a resting place. The deeper you take in this fact, the more useful will it prove that you must not stop where you are, that stagnation is death and that you have to go further and still further... till you reach His door. You may rest if you are tired, but do not make a home out of the inn.

You are bound to get tired, for the journey is long and the destination far away. You will also wander time and again, for it is not a path that is marked out, a highway! Man has to walk himself and carve out his route. Therefore the road to His abode is very long. As birds fly in the air and leave no trace behind, so the enlightened one walks in His path and reaches but leaves no marks behind. The space is as empty as ever.

When you set out, you cannot walk on the footprints of others. There is no loan system in the realm of truth. No one else can give you truth; others can merely suggest, give hints. Love you can get, also the guru's grace, but truth you will have to find yourself. His grace can lend strength to your feet to continue walking but cannot give you the path. His compassion can offer up confidence and encouragement, but not draw a map for you. His compassion can give you the strength to carry on and be persistent in your effort so that you do not waver, you do not give up. But you must walk the path alone.

And the path is such that it is formed only if you begin to walk. It is not a carved-out route marked on a map. There is no ready-made device to take you to God. Each person has to find his own way himself.

This is the difficulty, and this is the dignity of purpose. For if it were a well-beaten track that thousands had trodden before, the joy and fulfillment in reaching and attaining God would not have been so special.

Whenever a person attains God he finds Him new, fresh, and original – as if you are the first one He has met! As if this happening has never taken place before. It is not a stale affair, it is not as if others before you have met Him – that you find millions of footprints leading to His door. No, it is as if you are the very first person He meets. He is like a virgin waiting for you. God is always a virgin. Had He been married many times before there would be nothing of interest left in Him. His virginity is eternal; He is an eternal bachelor. Whoever reaches Him finds Him fresh, new and chaste, unspoiled as a virgin – just as the morning dew or the first rays of the rising sun.

There is no map that can be handed over to you, for life itself is a constant change. Everything changes every moment. The way I reached will be of no use to you; it was my special way. You will have to find yours.

For Nanak says God has made infinite creatures, infinite souls. He has cast in millions and millions of colors and forms. Each one is unique. If each person is unique, unparalleled, no one person's path can be of use to another. My understanding can be of use to you but not my path. My insight can help you to find your way but your way will be entirely your own personal way. It shall bear your imprint just as your thumbprint can be only yours. There are millions upon millions of people in this world, but never will your thumbprint be repeated. If existence has caused your thumb to be unique, how much more original will your soul be! Imagine it.

New research has involved itself in very deep issues. Science now declares that the internal organs of each individual are peculiar to that person. No two people have kidney, heart or liver exactly the same as another person. Not only the thumbprint but every cell of your body is specially made and designed for you, and you alone. You are incomparable. God creates you, makes each cell, each atom in your body just for you. He never creates another to match you. So your path of attainment will also be unique. This produces a sense of helplessness and many difficulties, but it is also the grandeur and dignity that you have reached by a route that is absolutely new, untrodden; it cannot be stale for you.

If this is understood well, you will know that we are talking of the soul, the atman. We can produce machines in tens and thousands. There are millions of Ford cars whose parts fit one another very easily. Sometimes it is impossible to distinguish between two cars, so much alike are they. Not so the soul; no two souls are alike. Each atman is unique.

This means, were we to use the language of poet, saint or devotee, the atman cannot be machine-made. It seems that God makes each and every atman with His very own hands. This is why He is called the creator. If you tell a painter to make another painting to match one he has already done, he will be unable to do so. He cannot make an exact copy of the original. There will be a difference. With the passage of time the painter himself changes; his moods change. He is no longer in the same state of heart and head as when he made the original.

A friend came to visit Picasso when he was making a picture. He was so lost in his work that the friend thought it best not to disturb him. When the painting was put up for sale the friend bought it; it

was worth millions of rupees. One day he took the painting along with him when he visited Picasso and asked him to authenticate it. Many fake copies were sold in the market as Picasso's own works, but this one the friend had seen him paint with his own eyes. Picasso replied, "I have made it all right, but it is not genuine." The friend was puzzled, for an authentic painting according to him was one that the painter paints himself. "It is authentic," explained Picasso, "in the sense that I have made it, but it is inauthentic insofar as it is only a reflection of my earlier paintings. I was copying my own style. The creator in me was not present at the time."

"What do you mean by the creator in you?" asked the friend.

"I am the creator when I make a unique painting, when I am totally original."

Therefore poets, painters, sculptors are closest to God when they produce something really original; they are as near God as a saint or devotee. A sculptor carving the images at the caves at Ajanta or Ellora was as close to God when he created these as even Buddha was.

Whenever you create something that is not a copy, not an imitation, there is no prayer that is greater. For you are nearest to God; in fact, in the moment of creation you are like Him! You too are a creator. Therefore creativity gives so much joy. How happy and satisfied you feel when you create something, however small, however insignificant.

A small child makes a house of cards and tells everybody, "I have built a house." Another builds a sand castle that he knows will be blown away by the breezes, but how happy he feels! He dances with joy. All moments of bliss in life are moments of creativity. Whenever you make something you get pleasure out of it. And those whose lives pass without any creativity find nothing but sorrow and suffering.

Why is it so? Why do you feel happy when you make something? Because in the act of creativity you get a glimpse of the creator. He is the creator but you too are a creator of sorts in that moment. You plant a seed in your garden. When the plant appears and bears leaves and flowers, how much pleasure it gives you. This joy is the same joy that God feels when He sees the earth bloom. There is only a difference of quantity, not quality.

Nanak says, He has created lives in many colors and forms; and their names are many, infinite. If you were only able to recognize this creativity, this expanse of creation that spread to eternity! But it is difficult to recognize God. He is forever hidden, but if you can recognize His visible performance then you have made the first acquaintance; the first step is taken. Look at the universe. It is filled with a deep and profound arrangement. The moon rises, so does the sun. The stars revolve, seasons come and go, the morning comes and flowers open, the birds sing. The brooks bubble down the rocks, rivers rush to meet the sea. Clouds gather and pour down the waters that rise by evaporation into the skies. The water goes back again to the stream. It is all a well-organized arrangement. The world is a cosmos, not a chaos... if you understand this significant arrangement of nature.

The more you begin to understand this order of things in the world, and the more you begin to perceive the flow of this order, to the same extent will you begin to remember the hand that directs all things in this world. For no arrangement works without a source of direction, and the hand that directs this vast arrangement must be infinitely vast and powerful. This is why the Hindus say: He

has a thousand hands. He has an infinite number of hands, for this is no small work. The infinite existence can be guided only by infinite hands.

Nanak says, He made the day, He made the night. He made the seasons, the air, the water, the fire, the earth and the netherworld. He has made all – All! And in the midst of it all He made the earth for you to rest awhile in your journey to the infinite.

This earth is a resting place only. Do not make your house in it. People make all kinds of houses, forgetting it is a resting place. Imagine if a man puts up in a traveler's bungalow for the night, and in the morning he forgets and takes the place as home, takes all its involvements upon himself, all its worries. Weighted down with sorrow and suffering, he goes about asking the way to peace and quiet.

If he is asked, "Why have you made a home of your dharmashala?" he replies, "It is difficult to leave so abruptly. I also understand having made a mistake, but it will take me time. I shall leave gradually."

The question is not of leaving gradually. The question is not of leaving at all. It only requires right perception, and that takes time. You can perceive in a moment if you are ready and willing. You can see clearly that where you stand is no more than a waiting room, for you were not always here. Where were you before birth? Where will you be after death? This is a fancy fete that lasts only a few days. In this short span you have clung so tightly to things that are and also to things that are not. A man clings to his wealth or possessions but he also clings to his desires, his dreams of the future.

Mulla Nasruddin built a house for himself. He took me to see it. He had laid out a big garden. As we walked along we came to an artificial pond. "This is the hot-water pond for us to bathe in in winter," he informed me. We went a little further and came upon another pond. "And this is the cold-water pond for us to bathe in in summer." Then pointing to a third pond which had no water he said, "This is for the days when we do not wish to bathe."

Man makes arrangements for bathing as well as non-bathing. He arranges for what he has and for what he does not have. You are already weighted down by the harassment of your possessions, and also obsessed with the anxiety of things that might have been or might come to be. Look into your mind: you will find it is filled with past anxieties that no longer exist. Some incident that took place twenty years ago is still revolving in your mind. Now this is long past and nothing remains of it. Or you are thinking of something that may happen twenty years from now. You increase your anxieties a thousand-fold this way.

And for whom do you worry? For an inn along the road? You begin to be anxious and worry about those who also happen to stay in this inn while you are there. There is the husband, the wife, the son, the father, the mother, and all of them you just happened to meet in the dharmashala. You have involved yourself completely in them, and taken upon yourself all sorts of anxiety for them, while you have completely forgotten that you have a destination to reach. You have all the concerns except the real one, to reach home!

IN IT HE CREATED COUNTLESS CREATURES OF MANY COLORS AND FORMS.

THEIR NAMES ARE INFINITE.

EACH IS CONSIDERED ACCORDING TO HIS OWN DEEDS.

Whatever you do in this world is very significant, for your ultimate destiny is based on your actions. The world is a rest-house where you tarry for a while and then move ahead. But you get involved in so many things. The inn is taken away from you one day but the web of your actions remains with you. You will die, the world will no longer be for you, but what you did in the world will follow you like a shadow. Your actions will hound you for infinite births, and the last judgment will be based on the sum total of all your actions.

Now this is worth pondering over. If the thought remains in your mind that this world is but a resting place where you have pitched a tent for a short while, then many actions will disappear immediately. Will you shout at your wife when you know that this togetherness is but for a short while? What meaning will your anger have? You consider your wife so much your own that you quarrel with her. But when death comes you go alone; she does not go with you. While she is left behind, your anger towards her, the pain you inflicted on her, the words you spoke in displeasure to her, they will go with you. Your dreams likewise will remain behind, but all that you did in your dreams goes with you. In this bargain things turn out to be expensive, for nothing comes to hand save loss and defeat. Man attains nothing from samsara, he only loses everything.

Nanak says that if you keep constantly in your mind that this world is only a resting place, almost all of your actions will stop by themselves. On a railway platform or in a waiting room, what is one's attitude? If someone steps on your toes you tend to overlook it, for you know that such things are inevitable in a crowd. You do not get angry.

Mulla Nasruddin didn't marry until late in life. When he reached fifty his friends asked him why he was afraid to marry. This is what Mulla said: "Once, while coming out of a cinema house, I happened to step on a woman's foot. She immediately whirled around and pounced on me. Her eyes were raining fire, her face was flushed. I tremble even now as I am narrating this. I was sure she would kill me, squeeze the very life out of me with her bare hands. But the next moment she cooled down. 'Sorry,' she said. 'I thought it was my husband.' That very moment I decided never to marry. A stranger she was ready to forgive. She was ready to concede it was a mistake only because it was a stranger.

We forgive others but fail to forgive our very own. Is it not astonishing? We forgive strangers but not those near and dear to us. What is the difference? A stranger is a stranger. He is a fellow traveler in the dharmashala. The one near you is no longer a stranger. We are under illusions about him; we create a homelike relationship with him.

He who considers the whole world as a temporary inn – for him, everyone is a stranger – and he is! Just because your wife has been with you for the past thirty years, do you think she is not a stranger? You are wrong; this is mere delusion. Long association is no criterion.

Nobody can be your very own in this world. There is no way to make someone your own – except God. God alone can be yours, yet you do not seek Him! You have taken strangers to be your own. Because a son is born to you, you take it for granted that he is no stranger to you. Life will prove otherwise. A father can do nothing regarding his son's life. You want him to be one thing; he becomes another. You want one thing; he wants something else. Your expectations are one thing;

his desires are something else. What father is ever satisfied and totally accepting with his son? The son is born to you, but he is still very much a stranger to you. No father can predict what turn his son's life will take. There is no way to find out. Husbands fail to reform their wives, and wives fail to change their husbands. Who can reform whom? We cause more harm, more damage than anything else.

We are all strangers, living according to our own actions, each traveling his own path. No one can reform us or change us. It can be that we meet for a while at the crossroads. We take this meeting so seriously. Can you make a woman your very own merely by walking around the fire seven times, as in the Hindu wedding ceremony? Seven rounds or seven thousand rounds make no difference. Nothing changes. You remain where you were.

In the mundane world no matter how hard you try, you cannot get rid of the other, who must remain the alien. No matter how close you get to a person, there is always a distance. This is the bane of all lovers. The lover wants to come so close to the beloved that there is no distance between them. But the closer he comes, the more he realizes that the differences still persist. When they were far apart there was the hope that closeness would make the separateness disappear, but on coming closer and closer he realizes that the distance can never be eradicated. There is no way to do so. You can sit very close to one another: your bodies will be close, but the distance between you remains the same. You are in your own thoughts, your beloved in hers. You have your own mind; your beloved has hers. How can the two ever meet?

All unions in this world are false meetings. Separation is true. Meeting is but a dream. Your only union can be with God. This is the only possible union; therefore Kabir, Nanak, Dadu kept singing, "I am Rama's bride!" Kabir says, "One thing I have understood, and that is enough – that one can only be the bride of Rama." Only there is the union complete; all distances fall away and there is no without and no within. There alone will your thirst be quenched, where all is one and there are no two. There alone shall we meet Him who is our very own, and then the anguish of separation will end. Before that the worry, the unrest will continue.

No matter how many wells you drink from, no matter how many shores you walk on, there is only one river that can actually quench your thirst, and we are not in the least worried about this. All that you do in your state of wandering, gathers around you. The collection of these actions determines your future... every day. If you get up in the morning and you are angry, an impression, an imprint is created. If again you get up the next morning and are angry, this impression becomes more pronounced. If you again are angry on the third day, this impression forms a deep furrow within you. Now there is every likelihood of your losing your temper on the fourth day, for man lives by his impressions till he attains buddhahood. Then habits no longer affect him; he lives in full consciousness. You live by your habits. What happened yesterday is repeated today. What is happening today is sure to happen again tomorrow. So all your actions create your habits.

The doctrine of karma is very scientific. It has nothing to do with philosophy. It is a straight and simple psychological fact that whatever you do and keep on doing, increases your tendency to do the same thing, again and again. Whatever you are not in the habit of doing, increases your tendency to not doing it. Doing becomes a habit. You do things mechanically. Go back into your own past and you shall find that your life is nothing but constant repetition. You do the same things every day.

People come and tell me, "I don't want to be angry, but anger happens." Then I ask them, "Then

what do you do after you are angry?" They say, "I feel terrible remorse and I repent. I know I should not have been angry and then I feel so miserable."

I tell them, "Forget about your anger, but stop the worrying. Give up repentance. This at least you can do. I know you cannot control the anger." They are nonplussed. "What kind of advice is this? If despite repenting the anger doesn't leave, how can you say not even to repent? How will I get rid of anger that way?"

I say to them, "Look back at your lives. You've repented a thousand times and yet your anger is unchanged. Just carry out this experiment and see! Do not repent! You must make an effort to break one half of your habit at least. Anger and repentance together make one complete habit. It is not so difficult to do. The need to get angry will be there, which you won't be able to give up, but the repentance is your personal affair. It has nothing to do with anybody else.

Anger always involves the other. If someone calls you names how can you not be angry? If you are not angry what will people think of you? If you let him go the news will spread around town like wildfire, and others may turn around and indulge in the same sport with you. Anger is a collective affair, whereas repentance is simple and doesn't concern anyone else. You repent in privacy. Please just give this up."

The man who had sought advice returned and said to me, "It is as difficult to give up repenting as it is to give up anger."

A lady comes to me whose husband is addicted to alcohol. They were married twenty years ago, and ever since then she has been after him to leave off drinking. He keeps drinking and she keeps reprimanding him. One day she said to me, "For heaven's sake, do something! This man of mine will not stop drinking. I've tried my best. Please make him see sense." I told her, "Stop nagging him! Say nothing to him about it for three months, then come back to me and I shall do whatever is necessary for him. Alcohol affects the chemistry of the system, so it won't be possible for him to give it up so soon. It has permeated his every cell. Anyway, do as I say and then I shall take care of him."

On the third day she returned. "It's impossible. I just can't do it! It's totally habitual to reproach him every time he fills his glass."

I said to her, "Now you can understand how hard it must be for your husband. You can't give up mere speaking, and what kick is there in only talking? For twenty years you have been telling him, now for three months give up saying anything to him about it. If you give me proof that you have broken your habit, I shall take your husband in hand." But she, poor thing, can't complete the three months! And I am adamant. "I won't say anything to your husband until you have completed three months," I tell her.

Now she understands what a difficult task it is. She can't keep quiet for even a day. Her husband drinks twice a day, and she taunts him ten times – that is her drug. All habits are drugs and when repeated they get into your system.

The doctrine of karma says only that when you do a thing, the possibility of your doing it again increases. When you do not do a thing, the possibility of your not doing it increases accordingly. If

you put up in a dharmashala and behave as if it is your house, you are forming a wrong habit. The rest-house will one day be no more for you, but what you do in it will stick to you even after death, for that is entirely yours. Nothing but your actions go with you when you leave the world. Remember this and act accordingly.

You picked up a diamond you found along the way. This diamond does not go along with you; it shall remain here, but your act of picking it up and pocketing it goes with you. Your actions are the only possessions you take along with you. If you do wrong, you give a wrong direction to your future; if you act right you give a right direction to your future.

And if you live in full awareness you are preparing for liberation. For the more a person develops his awareness the more his habits break. Then he does not live by habit but by awareness. In every situation he makes decisions in full consciousness and not by sheer past habits.

A man swears at you, you stand up at once, your fists clenched. During a plane flight, the pilot and a passenger got down to hot words. The situation got worse and they began to abuse each other. The other passengers said, "Hey, what are you doing? Can't you see there are ladies in the plane?" The angry passenger replied, "The ladies can leave the plane. I am determined to see this through." In his anger he doesn't even realize what he is saying, suggesting that the ladies can get off the plane in mid-air.

He is not in his right senses. He doesn't know what he is saying, but the fight has to take place because it is beyond his control. How can one who is not conscious be in his senses? And you are all like that. Whatever you do, you go on doing mechanically without ever pondering on what you are doing and why.

Wake up a little. First of all, wake up to the fact that this world is not so valuable that you should be so anxious and worried about it. If a man swears at you, remember, neither he nor his abusive words are so important that you should be so upset about it. Nor is your ego so important that you create an uproar for its sake. This is but a resting place; if someone treads on your feet, do not be upset.

Mulla Nasruddin was coming out of the auditorium during the intermission. He stepped on another man's foot. The man was almost writhing in pain, but considering that it was dark and the lights had just come on, he thought that Mulla just did not see his foot, so he did not say anything. Mulla reentered the hall and went up to the man. "Brother, was it you whose foot I stepped on?" The man thought he had come to apologize. He said, "Yes." Mulla looked back and called out to his wife, "Come this way. This is our row!" He had stamped on the man's foot just so he would be able to identify his own row.

The man who abuses you has his own reasons. There is no need for you to get upset about it. The world is a marketplace filled with crowds and crowds of people, and each is busy searching on his own. You have nothing to do with anyone, nor has anyone anything to do with you. As each one is playing his own game, you are bound to bump into one another at times. It is inevitable with so much traffic on the road.

If you can keep this in mind, your anger will disappear, and so will your hatred, jealousy, envy – and all the actions that spring from them. The day such actions disappear you will feel pity for people, for

each man is in a state of unconsciousness. The day before, anger invaded you, and on this day it is replaced by pity and kindness. Each man has gone astray. People live in darkness. It is nobody's fault that they are asleep. If in their sleep they jabber insults and abuses, would you say anything to them? You would note they are asleep and dismiss the incident.

If a drunk hurls abuse at you, you think he is not aware of what he is saying, but, alas, this is the state everybody is in. They have been drugged through infinite births, and are profoundly asleep. If your awareness has developed even to a slight degree, you will feel pity for them – how much they suffer, these people all around you! They have taken the rest-house as their ancestral home and fight in the courts over possession of it.

When you begin to feel pity for others, the shape of your actions will change accordingly. Where your deeds were evil, they will now be good; where you planned and contrived to harm others, you will go all out to help them. You won't even hesitate to help those who revile you, for you will be filled with compassion for them.

What is critical here is the relationship between knowledge and kindness. Knowledge means awakening. Kindness means the qualitative change in your actions due to this awakening. When there is ignorance within, there is violence without; when knowledge is within, compassion is without. They are associated with one another, but knowledge, discernment and intelligence must be based on actions.

This is a funny situation: you think of all the good things in the world and do all the bad. Your thoughts turn to the good, while your actions are bad. But what you think is of no account; only your actions will be your testimony, your measure. Even criminals think great and noble thoughts. Ask a murderer what he thinks and you will find his thoughts soaring into the skies. High thinking is a trick for committing evil deeds.

Understand this subtlety: when a man does evil he is always repentant within. When a man insults someone or is hard on someone, he is filled with remorse. He feels that this should not have happened, so he thinks good thoughts of kindness, of forgiveness, of pity. Next time, he promises himself, he will be kind and understanding. Thus he strikes a balance, enough good thoughts to match the evil deeds, to hide his bad deeds from himself. People who are evil, vile, always think great, noble things.

The reverse is also true. Those who do good deeds have bad thoughts. To the aware person, both these states are wrong. Thieves always think of doing charity; they are very generous. It is they who think of building temples, feeding the poor or clothing them, all because the sting of thieving is with them. They steal a million rupees and give a thousand in charity. In this way they strive to achieve a balance. A sinner bathes in the Ganges, distributes a little here and there to the destitute, and feels he has atoned for his misdeeds. He comes home relieved of his guilt. But what does he do now that he is unburdened of his sins? Exactly what he did before, but now he will do it with an easy mind. This is even more dangerous, this feeling of unconcern.

A woman visited a psychologist. She was in the habit of dropping things, which made her very nervous and restless. She felt herself to be in great trouble. After six months of treatment the doctor asked her how she felt. "I still drop things, but it no longer makes me feel nervous."

A man does a few good deeds and on the strength of these he is unperturbed about his actions. He feels he has balanced his bad deeds with the good, and now he is ready to indulge in more evil. Now he holds the key to the situation: whenever you do wrong, counteract it with good deeds.

No country is as sinful as India today. It happened when we discovered the device of good deeds. The Ganges flows in this country and it can wash away all sins. Commit a sin, then go and make an offering in the temple; or do evil, and offer a coconut to Hanuman, the Monkey-God. Poor Hanuman! He has nothing to do with your evil; it's not his fault that you sinned. He has no share in your misdeeds, and yet you make him a partner in it. Make your mistake here, atone for it there; and you are ready for fresh misconduct. Whenever you sin you negate it with a good deed so that the sting of misdeeds is eradicated. Thus you repair the harm done to your image of yourself as a good and righteous person.

What you think will hold no water. Your destiny is determined by your actions and not your thoughts. The astonishing fact is that you always put off a good deed, postpone it for tomorrow, but you never say the same when it comes to sin. Then you are eager for it this very moment. If you want to kill someone you kill immediately, for you know that a little delay and you will never be able to do it. When you want to be angry you become angry at once. Have you ever heard anyone say, "All right, I shall come tomorrow and be angry with you. Right now I'm busy." Abuse him and he will drop everything to retaliate, even if he were fetching medicine for his wife on her deathbed. In effect he is saying, "Let her die if she will. She has to die anyhow, but now I have to settle this score." You know very well you won't be able to settle it later.

When his father died Gurdjieff was nine years old. His father's last advice to him was, "Whenever you are incited to anger, let twenty-four hours pass before you retaliate." So whenever anyone abused him, he would say he would reply after twenty-four hours. He had promised his father when he was still a child and understood nothing, but he kept his word.

Because of this promise, Gurdjieff writes, his whole life changed. Can anyone still be angry a whole day later? In that time the futility of anger becomes obvious, the stupidity of the whole affair! And ninety-nine times out of a hundred, we come to realize that what the man said about us was correct: he didn't abuse me, he described what I am. If that man called you a thief, after a day's reflection you realize he is right – you are a thief! If he called you dishonest you will come to realize that you are dishonest. This is not abuse but an accurate description of what you are, an eye-opener!

Many a time Gurdjieff would go back to the person concerned and thank him, for what he said was absolutely true. As for his anger, he would say that was of no account. He was thankful for his pointing out the fault in him. "What I could not see, you have shown me." He who diagnoses your illness is a doctor; so he is no enemy.

Or, after twenty-four hours his attitude would be: "I have pondered all day over your words but I found they do not apply to me at all. And since they don't apply to me why should I be angry? I have nothing to do with them. Perhaps you were talking about someone else." Or if he found that the epithet applied to him he would thank the person. If it did not apply there would be no need to retaliate.

Whenever you are angry, you are angry because what someone has told you strikes a note of truth. Have you ever thought about this? If you are not a thief this accusation does not bother you.

But the reverse is the case: you are a thief, going about as a holy man. You go to the temple, tell your beads and practice all kinds of camouflage. Now this man has caught on to your authentic character and he calls you a thief. You feel the blow. Remember, truth always hurts, untruth never. For untruths have no strength, no power of their own.

We indulge in bad deeds immediately, and postpone the good ones for later. A Marwari was once sitting behind a vetiver screen, writing his accounts. It was a hot summer's day. A beggar came along and asked for a coin. The Marwari told him to move on; there was no money there.

The beggar said, "Then give me some bread." The Marwari said rudely, "There is no bread."

"Give me some old clothes," the beggar persisted, as beggars usually do. "Get lost!" shouted the Marwari, "There is nothing here."

"Then what are you doing here, sitting behind the screen?" the beggar asked. "Come with me, join me. Whatever we get we shall share between us."

If someone asks you even for two paise or a piece of bread you put him off. You postpone doing good, but you gird your loins that very instant when some evil has to be done; for that you are ready and waiting.

Stop the evil and don't defer the good, and your life will change for the better. To evil say, "Tomorrow," the good, do immediately, for who can trust the morrow? If this becomes the thread of your life, you will be incapable of doing evil. Now you act like the Marwari, postponing the good and doing the evil immediately. But then tomorrow never comes for you to do good, whereas evil happens through you every day! The whole chain of your actions becomes a chain of thorns; no flowers ever bloom there.

EACH IS CONSIDERED ACCORDING TO HIS OWN DEEDS.

GOD IS TRUE, AND ALL HIS COURT IS TRUE.

Remember, only if you are true can you gain entry to His court. You may deceive the whole world but can you deceive your own self? You know what you are. The whole world may hold you in awe and reverence, but you know for yourself what you actually are. The existence that is hidden within you is God Himself. How can you cheat Him? Before Him you stand in all your nakedness. Everything is open there, nothing is covered. Therefore, only if you are true can you enter His court.

People ask, "How is God to be attained?" I say they should ask, "How is one to be true?" They shouldn't say, "God cannot be seen," but should ask, "Why can't God be seen?"

False eyes cannot see God. True eyes are needed to see God. A true heart is required to experience truth; for only the like can recognize the like. As you stand now, you are absolutely false. False does not mean only that you do not speak the truth: your very being is false. Your appearance is false, your dealings are false. You say one thing, you think another; while what you do is contrary both to what you say and what you think. Your word, your being cannot be trusted. You yourself have no faith in what you do. Are you doing what you want to do? Are you thinking exactly what you say?

But then the the thought is very frightening! For if you begin to be authentic, the house you made within the resting place will begin to crumble. It is but a halt in your journey; that you have made it your permanent abode is the biggest lie. You have set out in a paper boat to sail across the sea of existence. How will you sail? You will have to remain sitting on the shore, for it is too dangerous to lower such a boat into the water. No sooner does it touch water than it will be no more; the paper will dissolve.

People come to me worrying that life will become difficult if they begin to be authentic. Yes, it will! Because you have based your lives on falsity. It will be really difficult in the beginning. If you do not change, then too it is difficult; for what happiness have you attained in your life, what flowers have bloomed in your life, what fragrance have you experienced? What is there in your life, on the strength of which you can say that your life has been worth living? There is nothing. And you know it.

Life as it is is no less difficult, but you have become addicted to it. When you turn towards truth, your old habits will break. Right now when a person you detest visits you say, "Welcome. I am so pleased that you have come." But inside yourself you curse the day for bringing such a person to your door. Now your day is ruined.

If he is even a little intelligent, a little aware, he will see the lie behind your words. No matter what your lips pronounce, your eyes give you away. Your face, your movements will be very different from your words. They will have nothing in common. When a person is truly happy he does not go about declaring his happiness; every pore of his body is filled with joy and cheer. You can make out a person who is really happy. But alas, the other man is also asleep. You think you really mean what you say. This is why flattery pays in the world. The listener can always detect the deception in your words if he listens carefully.

The English poet Yeats was given a Nobel Prize. He was a genuine person, simple and artless. His works were filled with his authenticity. When a meeting was held to congratulate him on winning this much coveted prize, the usual occurred for such a meeting: people began to praise him and his works very profusely. Even those who had criticized him before were now singing his praises. He was very disturbed and perplexed to see the sham, for he knew that all that was being said was never meant. He began to shrivel up in his chair.

When the speeches were over he was sitting in his chair, cowered and shrunken as if all this was beyond his endurance. The chairman shook him and said, "Are you asleep? Did you hear what I have just announced?" A purse of 25,000 pounds was offered him as a gift by his colleagues. Yeats replied, "I am not asleep, but had I known all this would happen I would not have come. To have to listen to such blatant lies for two full hours for the sake of a mere 25,000 pounds, I would never, never have come!"

If you have cultivated even the slightest awareness, no one will be able to flatter you, for you shall see the falsity in his expression. But you lack awareness; people all around you pronounce lies and you are not the least aware of it. You yourself are speaking untruths without any awareness of what you are doing. Then you get caught in a thousand difficulties. In your moment of unawareness you tell a woman, "You are so beautiful; I am in love with you." – and land in trouble. Perhaps at that very moment you know that it was a lie but now a whole series of problems begin. You regret it the very next day.

One day Mulla Nasruddin's wife complained to him, "It was you who was running after me and not I. And now look at you, and your ways! If this is how it was to be, why did you run after me?"

Mulla said, "What you say is one hundred percent correct. Have you ever seen a mousetrap run after a mouse? The mouse gets himself trapped. Your statement that I ran after you is absolutely correct."

Women are very clever in this respect. No husband can accuse his wife of running after him. No woman ever makes this mistake, for she knows this problem is bound to arise sooner or later. It is always the man who falls into the trap. The woman watches quietly; at most she nods her head. All the initiative is taken by the man. Nasruddin is right; men walk into the trap of their own free will.

Mulla Nasruddin was on his death bed. His son asked, "Tell me something of your experiences in life." Mulla said, "I have learned three things in life. One: if people are a little patient the fruits ripen by themselves and fall. You need not climb the tree in order to pluck them. Two: if people are patient people die by themselves. There is no need to wage wars in order to kill them. And three: if people are really patient women will run after men on their own accord; there will be no need to run after them." This is the quintessence of Mulla's life experiences. But who profits by the experience of life?

Do you know what you are saying? Do you know what you are doing? If you become aware, ninety-nine percent of your actions that you use to create a house will fall away. Only one percent will remain, which is enough for a dharmashala, and enough for the life of a sannyasin. What is inevitable is what will remain; all that is unnecessary will be cut out. It is the superfluous, the inessential, that causes problems in a householder's life. How many needless things you buy and keep in your house!

I was once a guest in a house so full of things that it was well nigh impossible to move about. They were rich people, but there would be more space to breathe in a poor man's hut. Anything new that came to market was promptly bought; whatever was advertised in the papers had to be in the house. It was so full, it was impossible to live in it. I asked my host, "Is this a house or a museum or some exhibition ground? Most of the things you have collected are useless. Get rid of them. It is space that makes a house. It is impossible to stay here. If this state of affairs continues, soon you will have to sleep outside."

You, too, gather junk in your home. You store useless things, hoping that one day they will be useful. Even things that are broken are stored away for future use.

Eskimos observe a rule that would bring great peace and happiness to the world if it were observed universally. Every New Year's Day they distribute all that they have and start life anew. Everything is got rid of until the house is literally bare. Nowhere are houses as clean as the Eskimo houses. As it is, Eskimos have very little. When they start anew there is a freshness to life. The Eskimo never collects useless stuff for he knows he has to give it away at the end of the year. Imagine, if you had to do likewise, how many non-essentials you would find in your house – things you should never have bought at all.

It is not only household articles that you collect, but also useless thoughts: someone says something and you keep on listening. You read the newspapers mechanically. Have you ever asked yourself

whether you want to store all this stuff in your head? Have you ever told someone, "I really have no use for such talk." Someone sits next to you and gossips about other people. Do you ever tell him, "Why are you filling my head with this junk?" It is easy to fill it up, but difficult to empty the head. Ask those who meditate. When they try to remove those thoughts they cannot do so easily; they have firmly struck root. Actions also are gathered like useless articles in the house. Gradually you become a dumping ground of rubbish. There is no difference between the ragman's shop and your life. Become a little more aware!

Nanak says that each action of yours sets the pattern of your life, so think a great deal before each act. Only a genuine person can gain entry to His court. The great, the best, the most authentic – only these can reach, and His compassionate eye will then cause such a person to see His hand in all things. As truth begins to enter your life, you will find proof of His benevolent eye. You will get a hint, a symbol of Him in each and every place. Right now you get no hint of Him. As yet you do not recognize Him. As soon as you begin to become authentic you will feel His commands coming in. Then, in every grain of sand, in every leaf and bud, you will begin to see Him.

He wants to lead you on the path. He wants to guide you in what you should do and what you should not, but you do not have the required emptiness within you. Your own tumult and noise is so much that you cannot hear His voice. Every day you find signs of His grace, His compassion. Right now you get no signs. You are living on your own supports, and is your own support worth the name? No sooner does your life begin to become authentic than you begin to live by Him. Then life takes on a new momentum, a new dimension.

Nanak says that the test begins only after having reached:

ONLY BEFORE THE LORD IS EACH ONE TESTED;

EACH IS RANKED BY HIS GLANCE.

THERE THE RAW IS SIFTED FROM THE RIPE.

NANAK SAYS ONE WHO IS RAW WILL DISSOLVE AWAY.

Each is examined to determine whether he is ripe or raw. What is meant by ripe and raw? He who disintegrates before God is raw; he who remains integrated before Him is ripe. Make this your touchstone: whatever you do, ask yourself, "Will I feel right to produce this act before God, or will I be afraid to show Him?" If you are afraid and want to hide, do not do it, for nothing can be hidden from Him. He can see you through and through. Nothing is hidden or can be hidden from that mirror.

Before doing any act weigh in your mind whether you can bring it before Him, just as a goldsmith tests the gold before he does anything with it. If it passes that test do it with an easy mind. If there is fear or doubt, don't do it!

Then you will ripen. The potter fires his pots. The raw ones dissolve in the rain; the fired ones hold the water. You go to the market and buy a water jug for two paise. You sound it in several places to be sure it is strong. The sound of a well baked, strong pot is very different.

So too, as you ripen, the music of your life begins to change so that you can hear the internal sound. You will get hints and signs of this internal music. Its indications are: you become more peaceful, you are happier, you find yourself filled with joy. A profound contentment envelops you from all sides and you feel grateful, for no apparent reason. Bliss dances softly in you.

Sahajobai was a well known mystic. She said, "There are no clouds and yet it rains." You are happy, cheerful, every hair on your body smiles, every pore overflows with joy – all for no reason. No treasure has been discovered and yet the heart is weighed down with gratitude. These are the signs.

As you begin to ripen more and more, as you get more and more established, the rainwater will fill you. His bliss is pouring, the showers fall every moment, but you are still raw; therefore you melt in it. Because you aren't ready, God's bounty becomes a curse for you. The moment you mature, the moment you are established, the moment you ripen, then what seemed a curse before is clearly seen as a blessing in disguise.

The final test takes place after reaching there. But don't wait until that time, because you are evolving, being constructed every moment. Start this very day and perhaps you will be able to stand before him; perhaps you will be able to reveal yourself to Him. You have lost enough time; don't waste another moment. Live always with God in your mind; for He is the destination, He is the abode. The world is but a resting place.

CHAPTER 8

There Is No End To It

8 December 1974 am in Chuang Tzu Auditorium

THE SUPREME LAW EXPRESSES THE REALM OF RELIGION.

NOW TO UNDERSTAND THE CONDITIONS OF THE REALM OF KNOWLEDGE:

SO MANY WINDS, WATERS, AND FIRES; SO MANY KRISHNAS AND SHIVAS;

SO MANY BRAHMAS, SO MANY OF HIS CREATIONS OF SO MANY COLORS AND FORMS;

SO MANY FIELDS OF ACTION AND SACRED MOUNTAINS; SO MANY POLAR STARS AND SO MANY SERMONS;

SO MANY INDRAS, AND MOONS AND SUNS, AND GALAXIES, AND CONTINENTS;

SO MANY ENLIGHTENED ONES, AND BUDDHAS, AND MASTERS, AND GODDESSES;

SO MANY GODS AND DEVILS, AND MUNIS; SO MANY JEWELS, SO MANY OCEANS;

SO MANY SPECIES AND TONGUES, SO MANY KINGS AND EMPERORS;

SO MANY REMEMBRANCES, SO MANY DEVOTEES;

NANAK SAYS, THERE IS NO END TO IT, NO END.

KNOWING IS THE EXPRESSION OF THE REALM OF KNOWLEDGE.

THERE IS MUSIC AND MIRTH AND FROLIC AND BLISS.

MODESTY IS THE EXPRESSION OF THE REALM OF SHAME.

THE EXPERIENCES THAT TAKE PLACE ARE BEAUTIFUL AND INCOMPARABLE.

HE CANNOT BE SPOKEN OF IN WORDS.

HE WHO TRIES REPENTS LATER.

MEMORY, MIND, UNDERSTANDING, AND INTELLIGENCE ARE ALL FORMULATED HERE;

AND THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF GODS AND ENLIGHTENED ONES.

Nanak has divided existence and its quest into four realms. The division is very scientific and worth understanding. He names the realms: Religion, Knowledge, Shame and Grace.

The section of religion deals with the expression of dharma, the law, the rule, that governs the whole of existence. The Vedas refer to it as rut, which means unchangeable law – what Lao Tzu calls Tao. From rut is derived rutu, the seasons. At the time of the Vedas, the seasons were so regular and clear-cut that there was not a moment's difference from one year to the next. Spring would come on the exact day, the rains would start the very day they were supposed to. Man has disturbed nature completely so that the seasons are no longer seasons. The word rutu was given specifically to the seasons for they worked exactly according to their timetable, following an unchangeable law. There was a system at work. Because of man's so-called knowledge, everything has gone haywire; even the seasons have gone off the rails, so to speak.

The West is now much more concerned about this state of affairs, giving rise to a movement around a new branch of science: ecology. Ecologists insist that nature be not tampered with. They believe that man should leave nature to God if he wishes to survive. Changes in nature bring about changes in the surroundings, which are being destroyed, and we are approaching a point that is dangerous for mankind.

The art of knowing the most intrinsic discipline of the supreme law of life is called dharma, religion. Buddha used the Pali word, dhamma, to mean the rule. When a Buddhist monk says, "Now I surrender myself to the law," he lets go of his self to seek shelter in the supreme law "through which I was born and in which I shall dissolve." To know truth is to know this rule.

To express this fundamental law of life, Nanak says, is the basis for the realm of religion. We live, but we live by our thoughts. We think a thousand times before we take a single step. And the more we think the more our steps fall in the wrong place. Whatever steps we take without the intrusion of thoughts invariably lead us right.

You eat your food but you do not think about digesting it. The rule digests the food. Try this experiment: after meals concentrate on the stomach and the process of digestion – you will end with an upset stomach. As soon as you interfere with the unconscious law you create chaos within. Every night you sleep. One night ponder at length on how you fall asleep, how sleep comes, and

what happens – you will pass a sleepless night. It isn't strange that people who think a great deal suffer from insomnia.

Life goes on! The trees never think about when they should let the flowers bloom. The tree knows from its very roots. It does not think, for all its mechanisms are built in. The rivers flow towards the sea. Do they have any sense of direction? Do they have any maps? An unconscious rule guides their waters towards the ocean.

This gigantic universe works without thoughts; and nowhere do we find a single mistake or mishappening. Everything works according to the rule – except man. Man has gone wrong for he does not obey the rule; instead he is guided by his thoughts. He thinks: Should I do this or not? Is this right or wrong? What would be the outcome if I...? Will I gain something? What will people say? In the haze of smoke created by a thousand-and-one such thoughts, the straight line of life gets hidden and lost. He who works in a state of no-thought is an enlightened being.

So religion is not wisdom, nor a decision of your intellect. Religion is a quest by a man who is tired of his intelligence, who is harassed by it, who has tried every direction and finds himself a helpless failure in the end. Such a man lets go of his intelligence and then says, "Your will, not mine, O Lord! Take me where You will." This Nanak refers to as the divine order.

Don't imagine this to mean that there is a huge person sitting somewhere issuing orders, that there is a supreme father, the Supreme God! The rule works without the orderer, the rule is God Himself. We have to use words that people can understand; so also we have to make use of symbols, signs. Foolish people often cling to symbols; so they think God has hands, mouth, limbs, that he sits on a throne and dispenses justice and gives orders. If we do not obey his orders, we are irreligious; if we do, we are religious. If we don't obey, He will be displeased and angry and then punish us. If we obey He will reward us.

This is all useless nonsense! You are attaching too much importance to mere symbols.

Only the law exists. There is no one sitting there on high who works the rule. When you move in harmony with the rule all wrong actions stop on their own, for the rule knows no wrong. Then when the right actions accumulate through you, the melody of joy begins to play. When your actions are right they will spread a fragrance of happiness and joy all around. This fragrance signals that your actions are correct.

When something wrong happens through you the shadow of sorrow will surround you. The greater the wrong, the greater the anxiety and worry and suffering. Don't look upon suffering as a punishment, but rather as the outcome of wrong action.

If a man leaves the straight road and wanders into a jungle and then thorns prick him, he understands that he has gone off the track. Not being on the road, there are bound to be thorns. The man looks for the right track and gets back to the road; now no thorns prick him because there are none. When you hit against a wall and hurt your head, the wall is not punishing you. What has the wall to do with you? When you find the door you can go out easily without hurting your head.

It is just like this. The day you begin to recognize the law, you will have found the door. As long as you are oblivious of the rule you will keep knocking your head against the wall. How many times

have you hurt yourself, how many wounds do you bear on your head? These are wounds you have gathered over millions of births that are oozing, festering, and causing endless pain. And you think someone is punishing you.

No one is punishing you; you are reaping your own harvest. Always bear in mind whenever you are unhappy you have gone against nature; whenever you are ill you are out of harmony with nature. Illness is a warning, a hint to you; as such it is helpful and for your own good. If there were no illness you would never know when you have left nature's path, or when you have gone against the eternal arrangement of life. Then you will keep wandering with no way for you to come back. Suffering and sorrow turns you back to God. This is why you remember Him when you are in pain and sorrow. In joy you never think of Him.

The saint prays: "Oh Lord, let there always be a little suffering as a reminder, so that we remain constantly in prayer, always calling out to you. If there is no pain or sorrow, we shall have no excuse to call You. In happiness we forget you; we shall be lost!"

Suffering means just one thing: you have wavered in religion somewhere, somehow. Do not blame others, nor your fortune, nor be angry with God. Take it as a hint, a warning, and try to find out where you have slipped. Where have you gone against nature? Then try to fall in line with nature – for that is religion.

Nanak calls the second division the realm of knowledge. Religion exists. The day you recognize this you attain knowledge. Religion is – only you have closed your eyes to it. The sun is shining, only you have closed your eyes to it. The sun is shining, only you have closed your doors and windows; the lamp burns, but you stand with your back to it. It is pouring outside, but you are afraid to get wet, so you hide yourself in some dark cave. Religion is going on all the time but you have kept yourself away – somewhere far away.

To come back, to return and retrace your steps, is called Knowledge. Every man will have to come back. Man is capable of going far. The animals, the plants, the birds have no religion, for they do not have the ability to go outside of nature. Whatever they do is within nature's law. They do not have the sense even to wander. Wandering requires a little intelligence. You need at least a little courage to go wrong; and you need some awareness to step off the path. This much man has, but then to come back to the path you need more awareness.

So the animals are in their right place, for they cannot wander. This is not a very laudable state of being; it is actually a helplessness. The average man has a little intelligence. He can wander; therefore, he has gone astray. Then there are those who attain buddhahood, like Nanak and Kabir. They have the highest awareness at their command; they have come back. What the animals have naturally you have to attain through your sadhana, through your spiritual practice. Buddha also returns to the point where the plants always are. The same supreme bliss that the plants enjoy is attained by Buddha but there is a basic difference between the two: Buddha is completely aware of the bliss that rains on him, whereas the plant has no awareness of the bliss that rains on it.

Nature is unconscious, whereas the buddha-purusha is naturally in full awareness. We are between these two. Nature is not conscious; in nature happiness and joy are natural but the knower, the enjoyer of this happiness is absent. It is just as if you are unconscious while jewels are raining all

over you. It makes no difference to you whether it is raining stones or raining jewels. Then if you open your eyes you become aware of the endless bounty that has rained on you.

Buddha has attained only what was so readily available to the stones; he returns to the same place. But this coming back is an absolutely new happening. The place is the same, the rocks are the same; the very tree under which Buddha attained enlightenment is also where Buddha is. And this is bound to be, for God is hidden in every grain, every particle.

But what is the difference between the Bodhi Tree and Buddha? There is a vast difference. The place is one, but the difference is infinite! The difference is that Buddha is experiencing this bliss in full consciousness; in full wakefulness he feels the infinite glory. The same glory pours on the tree but the tree is oblivious of it. The same glory rains on you also, but you have chosen to stand with your back to it. The trees face towards Him but they cannot know Him. You can know Him but you have turned in the opposite direction! The day you take a full turn, the day your eyes rest on His glory, you shall know. This knowing Nanak refers to as knowledge.

The realm of knowledge is man's attainment. Religion will be even if there is no man left on earth, but knowledge cannot be. Existence has tried to seek knowledge through man; therefore, man is the peak of creation. You do not know how many possibilities of glory are readily available to you. God wishes to become awake through you; He wishes to awaken from within you.

In nature God is dormant. In man he has stirred. He wants to awaken in man. In nature there is the dark, moonless night and deep slumber. In man the moment of dawn has arrived. If you miss, you will remain in the dark night. If you open your eyes and see, you will also be like Buddha, Nanak, Kabir; until then you will suffer. Understand the eternal principle: if you do not become what you could become, you will suffer; if you become what you should have become, your life will be filled with bliss.

Bliss means fulfillment – the attainment of that which you had the power to attain. Until the tree that lies dormant in the seed attains its full growth and bears flowers and fruit, a tension always remains inside.

If you die without singing the song you were born to sing, you will die in sorrow. You shall have to be born again and again in order to sing this song for nature does not accept things in halves. The day you are complete, total, you will be accepted.

Therefore, the Hindus say, "He who is perfect is not born again." He has sung his song and attained his bliss. The stream has met the ocean and there is no reason for him to come back. You return again and again because you fail every time. Nature sends you back again and again, for nature is in no hurry. It has infinite time at its disposal.

I have heard: Two people were traveling in a train. One was from Bombay and the other from rural Bihar. The Bihari gentleman asked, "What is your name, kind sir?"

"Veenu," replied the Bombayite. "And what is yours?"

"Sri Sri Satyadev Narayan-Prasad Sinha."

The Bombayite's eyes almost popped out of their sockets. "Such a long name!" he exclaimed.

"Well, you see," explained the Bihari, "we are not Bombayites. We have enough time at our disposal for such names."

God is not a resident of Bombay. He has plenty of time. Nature is in no hurry. You may fall a thousand times; you may prove worthless endless times, and nature will patiently push you back here. But you will suffer endlessly until you succeed. Unless and until you have sung your song, unless and until you have fulfilled your destiny, you will not be accepted. There is only one sorrow, one anguish, that this existence does not accept you but turns you back again and again. Once you are accepted, you are immersed in it and then there is no return.

Nanak calls the second division the realm of knowledge – to know what is with full awareness.

Third is the realm of shame. When a person knows what is to be known, then only does he realize his own ignorance, hence the shame. The ignorant man swaggers about in arrogance. Without modesty the ignorant are totally unaware of the ignorance that fills them. An ignorant person struts about as a wise man. Only the wise knows how vast is his ignorance. He feels: What do I know? Hardly anything!

Socrates said, "When I became enlightened the one thing I knew for certain was that I knew nothing." When knowledge becomes complete this is what you know – that you know nothing, that you are nothing. You become a zero. This zero Nanak calls the realm of shame. Then you are filled with shame: What am I? Nothing worthy of the name, and how I prided myself on my knowledge – swollen like a bubble! How I exaggerated the little I knew.

Mulla Nasruddin had just returned from a journey. He was telling his father, "There was such a storm on the river as was never experienced before. The waves rose fifty feet high."

His father said, "You are exaggerating a bit too much. I have spent fifty years going up and down this river and I have never seen waves like you describe. The river never rises that high."

Mulla said, "Be sensible, father. Everything is increasing. Just look at how the price of grain has gone up."

Man finds ways and means to support his exaggeration. And on this stands his greatest exaggeration – that I am. It is the biggest lie in this world. If the existence of God is the greatest truth, the existence of the I is the greatest lie, for two I's cannot exist at the same time. Existence is one. If all existence is one, it can have only one center. But each man, each individual person constantly proclaims 'I am'.

The enlightened person is filled with shame at the excesses and exaggerations he formerly engaged in. What proclamations he made over mere nothings! There was only a large bubble that burst at the slightest touch; there were paper boats that disintegrated as soon as they touched the water; there was a house of cards that fell in the slightest breeze. But how many exaggerations he indulged himself in for them!

Mulla Nasruddin was arrested and brought before the court for using foul language about a well-known politician. When the magistrate asked him why he called him a big ass, Mulla said, "Your Honor, it was not my fault. I know the high position this gentleman holds. He is our minister. But what could I do when he himself asked me, 'Do you know who I am?' I had to tell him."

Your eyes ask the same question of others: Do you know who I am? If someone's feet trips you, or you are pushed by someone, you turn back as if to say, "Don't you see who I am?" The fact is that you do not know who you are. Who knows himself? Those who really know, their egos are annihilated. As long as you do not know, the I exists. Next time a person asks you, "Do you know who I am?" please ask him in return, "Do you?"

It is all arrogant talk when a man asks, "Do you know how rich I am? Don't you know my status, my position?" He implies that he can get you in trouble, that he is a dangerous man. It is a proclamation of violence. You say that, only when you want to convey your power to destroy the other person.

All your arrogance is violence. Ego is the thread of violence. The one who knows is not even aware of his being; he does not know who he is, he is lost. The ignorant remains arrogant and proclaims, "I am." He who is enlightened stops this language.

So Nanak calls this third part the realm of shame. He says, when the enlightened one is asked to speak he does not know what to say, and to whom. He has nothing to say, he makes no claims. Even before God he is filled with shame, for in his heart he is aware of the endless false claims he has made before. God in His compassion graced him with enlightenment! If, as he stood before Him and conveyed: Here I am! Accept me! it would be total arrogance. If he prayed it was only that he might be accepted by Him. If he did a good act, if he built a temple or mosque or gurudwara, it was only to show Him that he was something.

The wise man becomes overcome with shame; with what face will he stand before Him? All your appearances are false, made up to show the world. Just think, if today you were to stand before God which of your faces would you show Him? The one you show to your wife, your boss, or your servant? Will you show Him the face that you take to your sweetheart or the one you assume before the lowly and poor? Which of these masks will you put on?

Before those who are powerful your tail keeps wagging and you try to please in every little way. Your appearance bears the expression of flattery and wily charm. And how stiff is your posture before a lowly person! From him you expect the same flattery and attention as you give to those who are higher than you. You expect him to wag his tail and appreciate every word that comes out of you. Remember, he who demands flattery has had to flatter someone somewhere, and is actually taking revenge. But the person who has seen himself correctly, never praises anyone nor expects praise from others. There is one God. If He is praised that is enough. From whom is he to ask praise? For everywhere it is He.

Nanak says, one dies of dreadful shame when one stands before truth; for one finds that not a single appearance is worth the name. All are dirty, all are false.

Zen masters tell their disciples: "When you have discovered your original face your search is over." They exhort them to find the face they had before they were born, to look for the face that will be with them after death. All intervening faces are false.

Psychologists say that if a person tries to go back into his past by reawakening his memory he can only go up to the age of five or four, or at the most to three. He cannot go beyond that. The first three years of life cast no imprint on the mind. Why? Because till then you are so artless and simple that you have no mask. To have a memory one has to claim something.

The ego creates memory. All remembrances are the ego, which remembers everything and keeps account of every moment of your life. For the first three years you are so innocent, so guileless, you do not know who you are. You have no claim to anything. A three-year-old comes jumping and prancing and laughing aloud as he tells his mother, "I was last in the class today." He has no idea what it is to be first or to be last. The ego is not yet formed. He has no idea of caste or creed, of his house and home, high caste or low caste. He is blissfully unaware whether he is a brahmin or untouchable. He knows nothing yet. His face is without blemish. Only such a face can you present before God.

But the parents begin their vicious training very early in life. They begin to impose the false masks from the very first day. The mother, at the very outset, expects the child to smile when she looks at him. If he does not she feels hurt. The child may not feel like smiling, but soon he learns that he must smile at his mother's glance, whether he likes it or not. The lying has started. The child gets his first mask. Then many, many more masks are added as the child grows up.

It becomes most embarrassing to stand before Him with these false faces, says Nanak. Whenever anybody becomes aware of this fact he is filled with shame. Then he looks and looks and cannot discover which one is authentic. The more he seeks, the more he is faced with other appearances, just as when you remove one layer of an onion another one appears; for the false is deposited on the mind in layer upon layer from infinite births. That is all that you have done in your infinite births, but when you remove them layer by layer, you find nothing remains – except emptiness! Nanak says that when the emptiness emerges one is drowned in shame. One feels: What was I? I was nothing and yet I claimed to be this, and that. This is the shame that Nanak refers to as the third realm.

The fourth division is the realm of grace. He says, when you are filled with shame His grace pours on you. When you become zero, emptiness, then perfection descends on you – not before that. Your stiff-backed arrogance is the obstruction between you and His grace. You rely on your own self, you need no help even when you pray. When you ask Him for something, it is just one of your many attempts. You are also tapping this source – perhaps something will come of it. And if something does emerge you claim it was your own effort that brought about the achievement.

Mulla Nasruddin climbed up into a cherry tree. The cherries were ripe, but high in the tree so he had to climb way up. He became frightened and prayed, "Oh, God, if I reach the cherries and get them, I shall offer one naya paisa in the mosque." Now Mulla began to climb with full faith that God would see to him. As he neared the top branch, the thought struck him, "One naya paisa is too much to have committed, and there aren't that many cherries; besides I'm climbing on my own. It wasn't necessary to bring God into this at all." When his hands reached the cherries he said, "I could buy more than this for one naya paisa in the market and You haven't moved a finger. I'll offer a few cherries in place of the naya paisa." As he was busy thinking this his foot slipped and he came crashing to the ground. As he lay there he called out to God, "Couldn't You even take a joke? If You had been a little more patient I would have offered the one naya paisa at the mosque as I promised."

When you worship or pray it is all a display of your egotism and arrogance. It is a decoration for your ego. Real prayer is when you are not, when the worshipper is no more, worship starts.

Nanak says, in shame you melt, you are obliterated. On the one hand you are no more, and on the other His grace pours showers of joy on you. Bliss is always pouring down, but you were so filled with your arrogance that there was no place for it inside. So grace only pours constantly when shame empties you inside.

These are Nanak's four realms.

NOW TO UNDERSTAND THE CONDITIONS OF THE REALM OF KNOWLEDGE:

SO MANY WINDS, WATERS, AND FIRES; SO MANY KRISHNAS AND SHIVAS;

SO MANY BRAHMAS, SO MANY OF HIS CREATIONS OF SO MANY COLORS AND FORMS;

SO MANY FIELDS OF ACTION AND SACRED MOUNTAINS; SO MANY POLAR STARS AND SO MANY SERMONS;

SO MANY INDRAS, AND MOONS AND SUNS, AND GALAXIES, AND CONTINENTS;

SO MANY ENLIGHTENED ONES, AND BUDDHAS, AND MASTERS, AND GODDESSES;

SO MANY GODS AND DEVILS, AND MUNIS; SO MANY JEWELS, SO MANY OCEANS;

SO MANY SPECIES AND TONGUES, SO MANY KINGS AND EMPERORS;

SO MANY REMEMBRANCES, SO MANY DEVOTEES;

NANAK SAYS, THERE IS NO END TO IT, NO END.

No sooner does a man awaken towards existence than he is filled with awe, and great wonder surrounds him. You are not affected by wonder. You go about as if you know everything. A pundit is never astonished; he has an answer for everything. A child is full of wonder. At every step he questions all that he sees and is filled with wonder. Don't think that a child questions because he wants to know; he simply exhibits his wonder and excitement; therefore he doesn't even wait for your answer before he asks another question. He isn't really interested in answers.

He sees the butterfly and asks, "Why does the butterfly have so many colors?" He expects no specific answer. He is merely expressing his wonder. "Why are the trees so green? Why are flowers so colorful? Why are there clouds in the sky? Why does the sun come out every morning?" The child asks because everything fills him with such wonder and mystery, but he is only expressing his astonishment.

A scholar is one who is all answers, but has no questions; he has an answer for everything. A wise man is one who has only questions but no answers. Understand this well. The sage is wonderstruck like a child; he is even more so, for a child sees at most a butterfly or a flower, whereas the sage sees

the whole of existence. How far can a child's vision go? The sage can see through and through, and what he sees strikes him dumb with awe.

These words of Nanak convey his wonder and his love, but you want information, you want answers; for then you can be the master. You can't be a master of wonderment. You can be filled with wonder and astonishment, but then they become your masters; they will surround you and drown you. In wonder you cannot survive – you will be lost. You desire an answer, for you can hold an answer in your hand. You can use answers; you can defeat others and cut their questions short. People are not in quest of knowledge, but of answers so they can be known as wise people.

Remember no one becomes a sage by seeking answers. You become wise only by going deeper into the question. The deeper a person delves into questions, the more doors open to wonderment and mystery; enter one door and a thousand others open before you.

This is the wonderment that Nanak is talking about. He is a rustic, an illiterate villager; therefore you shouldn't be concerned about the form of his language. When a villager enters this realm of wonder he too becomes garrulous. In utter amazement he tries to convey the magic of that wonderland! He speaks in his simple dialect:

SO MANY WINDS, WATERS, AND FIRES; SO MANY KRISHNAS AND SHIVAS;

So many Krishnas! When you begin to see, you too will find there are infinite flutes playing; an eternal dance of the gopis is going on. Infinite is this existence. It does not end with your earth, but you are filled with much arrogance that you feel that existence ends in you! You might even think the infinite dance of existence is only for your entertainment!

Once a villager was caught by the ticket-taker for traveling without a ticket. The villager begged him to let him go for he hadn't a paisa on him. But the conductor wouldn't give in. He pulled the chain and stopped the train and told the man to get out.

The man pleaded, "Please drop me at the first station, then. It is very dark and there is heavy jungle all around."

But the conductor was adamant and he was forced to leave the train. The motorman suddenly saw the man walking on the tracks, so he sounded the whistle for him to get out of the way. "Let him keep sounding the whistle, I shall not get on the train again," the man said to himself.

You think you might be asked to get back on the train, but the whistle is for you to get out of the way, to leave the path. But each man thinks nature is playing for him alone; each man thinks he is the center, and all of existence revolves around him. This is why ancient people like to believe that the earth is at the center and the sun goes around it.

Bernard Shaw once said jokingly, "I do not believe in the theory that the earth revolves around the sun. I just can't accept that idea. It is wrong." Someone got up from the gathering and said, "Every child of the twentieth century knows that the earth revolves around the sun. What proof do you have to negate the theory?" Bernard Shaw replied, "Who bothers about science and what it proves and does not prove? The proof is only this: as long as Bernard Shaw resides on this earth, it cannot revolve around anything else. The sun has to revolve around the earth."

The joke pokes fun at all of us. It is hard for you too to believe that your earth revolves around the sun.

When Galileo made this discovery there was great commotion. The church objected, the priests rose in opposition, even the popes denied its validity. Galileo was told to ask pardon for making such an outrageous announcement. Galileo was a wonderfully strange person – he asked forgiveness. He was a clever man and a true man. He had no intention of becoming a martyr over such a matter. He was a genuine person who was not afraid of the consequences. He said, "I shall ask pardon. I shall put it in writing that it is the sun that goes around the earth, but how will my words change matters? I have not made up this doctrine. If a thousand Galileos deny the fact, what difference is it going to make?"

Man always thought this way, and that was the only reason. Christianity is far behind Hindu thought. It is a very ancient Hindu concept that there are infinite worlds, that our world is not the only one that has life on it. Science now confirms the fact that there are at least fifty thousand worlds where life is possible. The Hindus have always said there are infinite worlds, infinite species and generations. Things do not finish with this world; it is not the ultimate. In fact it is a mere speck. The sun is sixty thousand times bigger than the earth and this sun is a mere ball compared to other suns! There are suns that are tens of millions times bigger than this sun. With such a mediocre sun, this earth is a mere nothing.

Bertrand Russell has written a story: A priest slept one night and dreamed he had died. He went to the gates of heaven, which were closed. He was rather surprised. He had expected the doors to be wide open and God Himself waiting on the steps to welcome him. Hadn't he served the poor and tended the ill? Hadn't he opened schools for poor children? Hadn't he served in the true Christian spirit? But the door was closed, and it was so enormous that he couldn't see where it started or where it ended. He shouted aloud, but his voice couldn't penetrate the thick door. He banged with his hands. He banged his head against the door, but to no avail. It was just like an ant banging on your door! His ego turned to ashes. He had dreamed of a grand welcome. How much service, how much worship, how much charity he had performed; how many he had converted to Christianity, and here no one seemed to bother about him.

Infinite years passed. He sat crouched near the door of heaven, which still had not opened. He had forgotten everything. Then one day the door opened slightly and a man with a thousand eyes, each eye like the orb of the sun, looked around and spotted him – just as you would spot a tiny object with a magnifying glass.

The priest cringed even more, for he thought it was God. He addressed him: "Oh God, how your eyes frighten me, for each is like a sun. I cannot bear to look into them."

The man laughed and said, "I am not God. I am merely a guard. What are you doing here?"

He lost all courage. This was only a guard! If the guard is like this, what would it be to face God? At last he said, "I have come from earth, where my church is well known. I am a believer in Jesus. I am his devotee..." His courage sank further and further.

The guard said, "Jesus? Earth? Which earth are you talking about? Give the file number. There are

infinite worlds. Which earth do you come from and which Jesus are you talking about? Each earth has its own Jesus.”

Imagine the state of the poor priest. He said, ”I speak of that Jesus who is the only son of God.”

The guard said, ”You seem to be mad! On each earth such Jesuses are born and their devotees declare them the only son of God. Anyway, we shall find out. First tell me the number.”

The poor man said, ”We know of no number. We don’t think in terms of numbers. We always thought our earth was the only one of its kind.”

”All right,” said the guard, ”then give me the number of your sun. Which solar system do you come from?”

”We know only one sun and no other,” the poor man wailed.

”Then it will be very difficult,” said the guard. ”But wait here while we make enquiries.”

And again infinite years passed. The guard did not return for it was not an ordinary enquiry. It would take ages more, if he ever did manage to identify him. By this time the poor man’s ego was turned to ashes; his hopes of a grand reception remained a dream. He had planned everything: there would be bands playing, flowers everywhere and God would make him sit at His right hand. In this state of fear and agitation he awakened. He was covered with perspiration. It was only a dream – thank God! But from that day onward he lost all courage.

And this dream is the truth. Nanak is talking of the truth contained in this dream:

SO MANY WINDS, WATERS, AND FIRES; SO MANY KRISHNAS AND SHIVAS;

If a priest had asked Nanak he would have said: ”So many Jesuses! So many Krishnas and Shivas.... There is no end to it, no end.”

Nanak is expressing his awe and wonder. This wonder gives birth to shame and all claims fall. What is one to claim?

There is a well known incident in the life of Socrates. A very wealthy man of Athens went to visit Socrates. His arrogance was natural. When people who have nothing are so arrogant, imagine this man who was a multi-millionaire, the very wealthiest man in Athens. When Socrates paid no attention to him, the man could not bear it. He said, ”Do you know who I am?”

Socrates said, ”Please be seated. We shall try to understand.” He had a map of the world brought before them and he asked the visitor, ”Where is Athens on this map?”

Naturally Athens was marked by a point on the map. The millionaire pointed, ”This is Athens.”

”Now please show me where your palace is in Athens,” Socrates said.

”How can I show you my palace when the whole of Athens is shown only by a dot?”

"And where are you in this palace?" Socrates insisted. "Remember this is a map of this world only, and there are infinite worlds, infinite suns. Who are you?" As he was about to leave, Socrates gave him the map and said, "Keep this map with you. Whenever arrogance takes hold of you, open the map, locate Athens and ask yourself, 'Where is my palace?' Ask yourself, 'Who am I?'"

We are like nothing, and the obsession of being everything has caught hold of us. This is the bane of all mankind. The day you awaken and look around, what will you be able to say of yourself? What are you? You will begin to lose yourself. As you get lesser and lesser and shrink into nothingness, the vast form of the Lord will manifest. He manifests only when you are completely empty.

Wonder is bound to destroy you. Wonder is suicidal. It kills not only the body but your whole being. It is the death of the whole am-ness. This is why you seek answers, whereas the wise man gives you questions. And he gives you such questions that have no answers. And this is to kill your arrogance.

Wake up a little, brush the dust from your eyes and see all around you – what answer does a man have? Science has discovered so many answers. Which answer is an authentic answer? No answer is an authentic answer; it merely pushes the question a little further back.

A small child asked D. H. Lawrence while they were strolling in a garden, "Why are the trees green?" It isn't that Lawrence didn't know the answer, for the answer is simple: because of the chlorophyll in the leaves. But then the question would have arisen: Why is there chlorophyll in leaves? And this one question would lead to another and another. Lawrence was definitely a wise man. He would have got along well with Nanak. He said to the child, "The fact is, trees are green because they are green." There was no need for any further explanation.

This is an answer that a poet would give. It is an answer that a master would give. They do not destroy your wonder but enhance it. This is not an answer in the narrow sense of the word. What Lawrence tries to convey to the child is: I too am filled with wonder why trees are green. All I can say is, they are green because they are green – and there is no way of knowing why they are green.

All searching for answers merely pushes the answers further away. Therefore philosophy reaches nowhere. Each question gives rise to ten more. Bertrand Russell has written: "I chose philosophy as my subject in the university so that I might know the answer to every question in life. Now at the end of my life I know only this: that I found not a single answer but my questions have increased a thousandfold."

So there are the philosophers and thinkers who are forever in search of answers. Each answer creates fresh questions. Those who are weak stop halfway and hold on to their answers. Those who are courageous go to the very end. Then they come to realize how useless their labors were. Then religion is born and mystery takes hold of them.

Overpowered with wonder and mystery, Nanak says,

KNOWING IS THE EXPRESSION OF THE REALM OF KNOWLEDGE.

THERE IS MUSIC AND MIRTH AND FROLIC AND BLISS.

MODESTY IS THE EXPRESSION OF THE REALM OF SHAME.

THE EXPERIENCES THAT TAKE PLACE ARE BEAUTIFUL AND INCOMPARABLE.

HE CANNOT BE SPOKEN OF IN WORDS.

HE WHO TRIES REPENTS LATER.

MEMORY, MIND, UNDERSTANDING, AND INTELLIGENCE ARE ALL FORMULATED HERE;

AND THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF GODS AND ENLIGHTENED ONES.

In the Realm of Knowledge there is an overbearing power of awakening awareness – an overabundance of consciousness – not of answers or of scriptures or principles, but of awareness. Knowledge means awareness, not scriptural knowledge or information or words.

KNOWING IS THE EXPRESSION OF THE REALM OF KNOWLEDGE.

THERE IS MUSIC AND MIRTH AND FROLIC AND BLISS.

Nanak does not mention scriptures at all, nor does he talk of doctrines or principles. There are no answers, but then what is there? Music... NADA.

This nada, the sound, the music, is an experience. Before you awaken in the morning the birds may be singing, only you do not hear them. Then your sleep is broken and you begin to awaken; you turn over, your eyes still closed, but you hear the birds outside your window. The fresh morning breeze caresses you tenderly and you begin to hear the sounds all around. As you awaken you begin to experience the music of existence.

There is still another daybreak exactly like this, another awakening. Right now your life is one long slumber: you walk as if asleep; whatever you do is in a trancelike state. You fight, you love, you meet, you part; you do all kinds of things in this unconscious state.

Once it happened: A news editor wrote a scathing article against the town drunkards. The drunkards were very angry. One of them got hold of a stick and went in search of the editor. He entered his room and waving his stick he called out, "Where is that damn editor?"

The poor editor was in a fix! He was a small, weak man, whereas the drunk was a gigantic fellow. Thinking fast, he said, "He has just gone out. Please be seated. I will go and find him." And so he slipped out.

Just as he walked out he met another burly drunk on the steps. "Where is that so-and-so editor of yours?"

He hollered, "Go right in. There he is!" You can just imagine what happened inside.

This is exactly what is happening all around us. Nobody is in his right senses. You are not quite aware of what you are doing, certainly not of why you are doing things. You are completely oblivious of the doer. You live in a crowd of sleepwalkers. If you are unhappy, what else can you expect? And if your relationships turn out to be veritable hells, no wonder!

Nanak says, In the Realm of Knowledge there is profusion of 'knowing', of awareness. Right now you are in the field of ignorance, where nonawareness runs rampant. Where being asleep is the ultimate.

The first thing that a man of knowledge experiences is the music, the nada. This sound Nanak calls Omkar. He declares: ek omkar satnam. It is the sound Nanak talks of. Omkar is only a symbol to convey the message to you. Existence is song – a very deep song – unobstructed music! No one has created it; no instrument plays the melody. It is an unsounded sound, a causeless song that plays without any reason. Music is the very being of existence, therefore you find it so absorbing. And if you find yourself drowning in music, be sure that melody has a shade of the nada.

A great musician is he who can capture the nada in his instrument. He is able to draw down the Omkar to some degree into your otherwise sleeping world. Music is not meant to stimulate your basic desires.

Music is of two types. One is oriental music, which has been deeply explored and studied by the Hindus. Eastern music is based on the nada. When music wafts towards the nada the listener gradually slips into meditation, which means that you become more aware. You are filled with total consciousness, as if a lamp has been lit within you.

You have heard stories of musicians lighting unlit lamps. Do not take these to be external lamps; they have nothing to do with music. It is you who are the snuffed-out lamp, and if the singer is in a state of samadhi, then only can he light your internal lamp. He can only integrate Omkar in his music and bring it down to your level if he is in a state of samadhi himself. If he can bring down even a drop of this nectar, a slight glimpse of that divine music, when you awaken you are filled with awareness, as if someone has shaken you from your sleep. Then this music becomes meditation.

Then there is the opposite kind of music: it puts you to sleep, carries you further into drowsiness. This music also excites passion. For this very reason Islam had banned music. The Muslims did not know the music the Hindus had discovered, which was connected with the sahasrara, the center of the thousand-petaled lotus located at the top of the head.

There are the two types of music: one is connected with the lowest center, the sex center, and the other is connected with the highest, the sahasrara. The music connected with the latter is the nada. The former only agitates passion, but it was the only music known where Islam was born; therefore all music was completely banned in the mosque.

And it was just as well, for ninety-nine percent of the music that is prevalent is such that can never lead you to the temple steps. The West has evolved a form of music that is all distorted: The loser loses all sense, as if he is drunk. This music leads you into deeper slumber and deeper passions. Prostitutes make use of this music. Saints have also made use of it, but with the difference that the singer-saint has experienced the nada.

Nanak was a singer. He never spoke. He only sang. He answered in music. His songs are not constructed with due rhythm and meter; they were improvised creations that came straight from his heart. Someone asked a question; Nanak made a sign to Mardana who began to play his rabab and Nanak began to sing. Whatever Nanak has said is in song form, for all of existence understands

the language of music. And when the singer is himself in a state of samadhi, the nada inadvertently enters into his song.

Nada means the supreme note that forms silently in existence, like the sound of silence on a quiet night. In the same manner, the nada keeps ringing all twenty-four hours of the day. It is the rhythm of existence. When nothing is, it still sounds. But you have to become very, very silent in order to hear it. When all sound within you stops, then only can you hear. Internally you are a thousand-and-one marketplaces, each replete with its noise and tumult; in this tumult you can hear only what is loudest and what satisfies your cravings. Only then are you conscious of it.

Mulla Nasruddin's neighbor has been practicing his music for hours. When it was well past midnight Mulla could not contain himself any longer. He told him, "You should give a performance in Moscow or London or Peking." The man was very moved by this appreciation.

He told Nasruddin, "Mulla, I never knew you took so much interest in music. Did you like my song so much?"

"It's not that," said Mulla. "At least you will be far enough away from here that we can sleep peacefully."

What passes as music is often nothing but noise and chaos. It is better that you not hear it since you are already so filled with dissonance and discord. Why arouse this poison even further? People dance to incite their passions and sing to work up their frenzy.

But the very thing that arouses passion can also calm; poison can be turned into nectar, depending on what use you make of it. Poison can be both a cure or your death, depending on how you use it.

Nanak says the first experience of the Realm of Knowledge is nada. Then the second is mirth, merry-making. This must be examined, for what has mirth to do with a saint? Mirth means that life is no longer grim but pleasant; it means life becomes sweet, light, joyful, and not burdensome. Ordinarily you see our so-called saints with their long grim faces, as if they bear the burden of the whole world.

Nanak says he who has heard the nada can't be sad and despondent, but filled with mirth and laughter. He can laugh. In fact, only he can laugh in the true sense. Your laughter is a sham; your life energy isn't filled with joy, so how can there be a genuine smile on your lips. Only he can truly laugh, who has known. There is no grimness, no gravity in his life; you find him authentic, genuine. His life is filled with joy and cheer; there are no dark circles of suffering under his eyes, only celebration.

The third is frolic, play. Such a person finds wonder in his life. His frolic has come to the fore, filling him with wonder he thrills at everything he sees, at everything he feels and hears – just like a little child. Wherever he looks he finds infinite wonder. He has no answer for anything and others' answers no longer concern him. Wherever an answer is found, the ego gets a foothold; whenever no answer arises the ego dies a natural death.

Mystery means you cannot hold anything in your grip. You can enter into the mystery if you wish, but you cannot capture it in your grasp. You cannot store it in your safe nor make it a captive of your

scriptures; it can't be brought under any regulation. Mystery is like the vast space of the skies: you may enter into it as you would enter an ocean.

So Nanak says, first the nada, then mirth, then frolic, then bliss. Mirth is like bliss; bliss is deep mirth. Mirth is the top layer, like the waves in the ocean, while bliss is the ocean depths. Smiles and cheerfulness are the thrills of bliss that come to the lips. You can laugh only if there is bliss within you. So mirth is on the surface; bliss is the depth. When they combine, supreme blessedness descends on you.

But your mirth is diseased and unnatural. You cannot even laugh unless someone cracks a dirty joke; it requires filth and dirt. Most jokes are about sex, which everyone can enjoy because they are dirty and debasing.

A man has to slip on a banana peel in order for you to laugh. Where kindness is needed, you laugh and joke. Your humor is sick, diseased. A man who has fallen needs help. Give him help! How is it an occasion for laughter? Deep within you, you desire to lower and abuse everyone else. The more you want to see a person fall, the greater your mirth. For example, if a beggar falls you won't laugh so much; but if Indira Gandhi falls you'll be unable to control your laughter. What is there to laugh about a beggar falling? He was already fallen. But there is an unconscious desire in you to knock Indira down. That would be hilarious to you. If a servant falls no one laughs so much; if the master falls it is an occasion for mirth.

Your unconscious hostility is contained within your laughter. Your laughter is a poison, your mirth but sarcasm – a sneer. The difference between mirth and sarcasm is the bitterness, the sting to it. It has thorns without flowers.

The saint also laughs. His laughter carries no sting, no thorns, he laughs mainly at himself for he is aware of his own state. When he laughs at you, then he is also laughing at himself, for he sees a glimpse of himself in you. When he sees a man fall, he sees humanity falling – not just a man. He knows that man is helpless and that his arrogance is thus ridiculous.

How well this man was dressed: tie, coat and whatnot, but a little peel of banana and he is flat on the ground – tie and all! A banana peel pulled a joke on him.

The saint sees man's helplessness behind this fall: how weak he is and yet so proud! He had a Himalayan ego, but he is brought down by a lowly banana peel. He struts about with the idea of defeating God, but he is shamefully defeated by a banana peel. So, if a saint laughs when a man falls, he is laughing at his state of helplessness. He laughs at the thought of his own helplessness, and is filled with shame. He never laughs to revile or beat someone else. Within him is the bliss which overflows into mirth and merriment.

MODESTY IS THE EXPRESSION OF THE REALM OF SHAME.

As knowledge deepens, awareness increases and so also modesty. He who has attained buddhahood, the Buddha-Purusha, hesitates when he speaks; he doesn't bang the table. Therefore, it is the non-buddhas who gather the followers. They gauge their leader by the force of his words. If a man is hesitant they feel he isn't sure of himself. How can he be our guide? But the Buddha-Purusha is hesitant out of modesty, out of shame, for he knows how difficult it is to tell.

Many people would come to Buddha with new and different questions. Buddha answered very few questions. Some particular questions that have no answer he would not answer at all. Only non-special questions have answers. Whatever troubles man has created for himself have an answer, but the mystery that belongs to existence has no answer.

So Buddha would hold his peace. When he did not answer, many thought he did not know, for they insisted that if he did know he would have answered. This silence of Buddha you will never comprehend; such modesty as was in Buddha very, very few people had. In Buddha's time there were many theoreticians who answered forcefully. People flocked around them. These theoreticians incited their followers to go and ask Buddha certain questions: "If he is enlightened he must answer." This is how people generally believe: if knowledge is attained all answers must be available.

All answers are lost when a person becomes enlightened. He has no answer to give; he feels ashamed; what answer could he possibly give to your question? He also is ashamed of the futile question you put forth, and you are so oblivious to it. People walking on the road have sometimes accosted me with such questions as 'Does God exist?' I am on the railway platform about to catch a train and someone shakes my shoulder, "Please, one minute – what is meditation?"

What can be said to such people? They do not know what they are asking. They want answers. If I answer them my answer should make $2+2=4$. Would that life were a straight case of mathematics! Everything would have been so easy then.

Life is not an arithmetic problem. Life is a poem and you need the necessary ability to understand it. You need the qualification to hear it in silence. Poetic answers never make $2+2=4$; they arouse wonder, they awaken you from wherever you are. They tear you by your roots and take you on a new journey: from wonder into more wonder, towards greater wonder. Nanak says, it has no end, it has no end.

Buddha remained silent whenever anyone asked does God exist. This gave rise to two misconceptions. Hindus thought this man knows nothing. You can ask the dullest village pundit and he will give you an answer. He says, "God is," and offers proofs. If any ordinary man can give an answer, what about this man?

I have heard: In a land of fools, the worst of the fools among them became a minister. Now this fellow was a very good speaker. He was adept at lecturing, and that is all that is required to become a minister. He used to impress the crowd by his loud talking. People thought: Here is a man who knows something; but he was really an illiterate who could neither read nor write.

The trouble arose when he became Prime Minister, for tradition demands that he read his lecture and not speak extempore. But the man was clever. He thought to himself, "Never mind. I shall find a way out." So he would pick up any old newspapers, hold it before the audience, and speak as if he were reading his speech. As he could not read he sometimes held the paper upside down.

One day it happened that someone brought a friend who had just come from a foreign land to hear the Prime Minister. Now this man was literate and he saw that the Prime Minister held an old newspaper, and even held it upside down. He stood up and announced, "This man is a cheat. He is not reading what is in the paper for he is holding it upside down."

Now the local people were convinced by the stranger that their Prime Minister was illiterate.

The Prime Minister put down the paper and addressed the gathering, "What is up and what is down for a man who knows how to read? You must have heard the saying, He who knows not the dance finds the floor crooked. What difference does the floor make? One should know the dance. One must know how to read! Let the paper be of any kind. I can read this paper from all directions. This man is illiterate."

He is still the leader of the town.

When people asked Buddha, "Does God exist?" Buddha remained silent. The other fallacy, the second misconception that arose was that people thought Buddha's silence meant that there was no God. Because of the silence Hindus thought that Buddha did not know and Buddha's followers thought there was no God. His own disciples took him for an atheist, whereas there was no greater theist to appear on this earth.

You will understand this from Nanak's words when he says, modesty is the expression. When you ask, "Does God exist?" Buddha keeps silent, for how should he speak? With what face can he speak? What is he to say of so great a mystery? Buddha answers through his silence, and you do not understand. However you interpret his silence is wrong.

MODESTY IS THE EXPRESSION OF THE REALM OF SHAME.

THE EXPERIENCES THAT TAKE PLACE ARE BEAUTIFUL AND INCOMPARABLE.

HE CANNOT BE SPOKEN OF IN WORDS.

HE WHO TRIES REPENTS LATER.

How does this happen? As soon as the words are spoken the speaker realizes that what he meant to convey remained unsaid, and what he said is not what he intended. Just looking at the listener he knows he has failed to convey the message. Ninety percent falls off as soon as the first words are formed, and the remaining ten percent never reaches the listener's ears. You said one thing; they heard something else.

Buddha would say one thing; the ignorant people would hear something quite different. Then these ignorant people form sects and establish religious traditions. Thus there is no connection whatsoever between the buddhas and these religious organizations. Therefore all of those who have spoken have regretted it. Those who have tried to speak on this mystery have always insisted that the listener should not cling to his words but use them only as guidelines.

Now Nanak must be sorry for having spoken. When he sees the Sikhs today he must be filled with regrets. Likewise Buddha, Mahavir, Mohammed must all be regretting what they started. They must be together in heaven telling one another their sad stories. They are bound to be weeping together.

What the Buddha has to convey cannot be understood by words, for the listener holds on to the words; then he drags them along and forms religions and organizations around these words. Then

these organizations go on for thousands of years. Thousands of errors are committed because of these creeds and doctrines, and thousands of deformities arise. It spreads like a wound on the earth, like an illness on man's consciousness. Nanak says, he who tries to speak, repents later. His words then become the code of law, opinions, beliefs, and hence the mind and understanding of man.

Where consciousness awakens in the Realm of Knowledge, in the Realm of Shame all forms of consciousness take shape.

MEMORY, MIND, UNDERSTANDING, AND INTELLIGENCE ARE ALL FORMULATED HERE;

AND THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF GODS AND ENLIGHTENED ONES.

In that consciousness all these forms are seen. Just as a potter makes so many forms with clay, so also the clay of consciousness takes many forms: intellect, mind, wisdom, remembrance, recollection, genius, brilliance.

When you are sufficiently awakened to rise above these, you realize that they are but various forms of the mind. Whatever you know through them is bound to be limited, for you cannot know the formless through form. That which is behind understanding, memory, mind, intellect is awakening – that is realization! that is awareness! that is consciousness!

You must take hold of this formless and let go of the forms within. As soon as you catch hold of the delicate thread of the formless within you, you begin to recognize the formless in the world outside. Whatever you know through the intellect will be limited by having form. Like seeing the sky through your window, you will see only as much as the window frame permits.

Consciousness takes many forms, just as matter has many forms – somewhere it is a rock, somewhere a cloud, somewhere it is ice, somewhere it is the skies – so consciousness also has infinite forms: intellect, remembrance. Wise men are intelligent, like pundits; holy men have recollection and remembrance, and some have powerful memories. Even if they have no intelligence their remembrance is very strong. It often happens that very intelligent people have hopeless memories; and many whose memories are strong are not intelligent. There are many examples where people with strong memories were found to have dull intelligence. This because the function of memory is different: to store whatever it comes across and recall it. The function of intelligence is different: to make way through the unknown, with which it is unacquainted. Both are oriented differently: remembrance focuses on the past, and intelligence looks toward the future.

Scientists now believe that if memory is very strong, intelligence gets locked up in it thereby preventing intelligence from working freely. At present most educational institutions lay stress on memory, so it is no wonder that the world is so full of dull people. By the time a child finishes his education his brain is so clogged with data and theories that he is lucky if he manages to save anything of his intelligence. Memory is different; intelligence is different; a genius is altogether different. Genius means the natural ability to know life and recognize it. It is the capacity to know and understand in a flash the answer to any question of life. Ask the greatest scientists like Einstein, who would say, "Whatever I have known was not through my intelligence but through my intuition." He has no answer to the how of his achievement. Genius, intuition happens in many, many ways.

Madam Curie was awarded a Nobel Prize for her discovery. For a long time she had sought the answer to the problem but to no avail. One night she got up in her sleep, went to the table and wrote down the key to her work. In the morning she was shocked to see what she had written. Where had it come from? She recalled the previous day's events – how tired she was by the evening, how she had fallen asleep disappointed – another day lost. Things came back to her as in a dream. She saw herself get out of bed and walk towards the table. She saw herself pick up the pen and write the answer. She recognized her own handwriting. What she had vainly sought for days and months had come to her in a flash in the middle of night. This is the experience of all artists and creative people. A poet will tell you that only when he gives up trying does the verse descend on him. This is a part of intuition.

But Nanak says that all this intelligence, understanding, intuition, etc. is a play of the mind. These are different molds, and whatever you know through them will be limited. You have to rise above them. Only One has to be known within; only One has to be known without. And when the One within is known, then only will you know the One without; for when you become an integrated One within, then only shall you recognize the Oneness without.

When you know the One within and the One without, it does not mean you know two, rather you find that the One that is within, is the one that is without. You suddenly discover that all these distances and directions of within and without are self-created. The space outside your house is the same space as inside your house; it is you who have created the walls, and made doors and windows. Do you think you have succeeded in splitting space by raising a wall? No! Space is indivisible. Your walls may or may not be but the skies remain forever.

No sooner do you recognize the One within and the One without than both fall and nonduality is born. The ultimate peak is the experience of the indivisible, the experience of the One.

CHAPTER 9

He Exults In His Creation

9 December 1974 am in Chuang Tzu Auditorium

POWER IS THE EXPRESSION IN THE REALM OF GRACE;

EXCEPT THIS, THERE IS NOTHING ELSE.

IN IT ARE THE GREAT WARRIORS AND HEROES;

THERE RAMA ABIDES IN HIS FULLNESS.

AND IN ITS GLORY ALSO SEETA ABIDES,

WHOSE FORM IS BEYOND WORDS.

THOSE IN WHOSE HEART RAMA ABIDES

NEVER DIE NOR CAN BE CHEATED.

THERE LIVE MANY DEVOTEES OF MANY DIFFERENT WORLDS;

KEEPING THE TRUE NAME IN THEIR HEARTS THEY ENJOY BLISS.

IN THE REALM OF TRUTH THE FORMLESS ABIDES.

HE CREATES THE WORLD AND EXULTS IN IT WITH HIS VISION.

WITH HIM ARE THE CONTINENTS, THE SUNS, THE UNIVERSES;

AND THEY ALL DEFY DESCRIPTION.

THERE ARE WORLDS UPON WORLDS, AND CREATIONS UPON CREATIONS.

ALL WORKS ACCORDING TO HIS ORDER.

SEEING ALL THIS AND THINKING OF IT, HE FLOWERS IN HAPPINESS,

NANAK SAYS, TO DESCRIBE HIM IS LIKE CHEWING ON IRON.

Man is helpless – but only as long as he is away from God. Man is weak, miserable, lowly – but only as long as he is away from God. Our distance from Him is the cause of our wretchedness; the further we move away from Him the more meaningless life becomes.

Many recent thinkers in the Western world feel that life is meaningless, that there is no motive behind our living, nor is there any destiny or order. It is a long story of meaninglessness, uselessness. It is a 'tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'.

This feeling is bound to exist. Look at your own life – how much noise and fuss over nothing! You engage in great projects. You never walk, you run; but have you ever asked yourself, "Where am I going?" After all the running you find yourself exactly where you started at your birth; you haven't gained even a grain of sand. If you look at your hands, they are empty. The treasure chest may be full, but you must leave it behind; you are empty. All the dreams of fulfillment turned out to be untrue.

No matter how much you acquire of this world, at death it falls away from you. And what falls away is never yours even though it belongs to you. Those who took refuge and solace in worldly goods built their palaces on sand; they are bound to fall. How long can you delude yourself? Someday you will wake up, someday you will ponder and realize: I walked so long and so far and so much, but reached nowhere.

Your condition is like the ox at the oil mill. How much he walks! Round and round he goes all day. There is so much noise around him as oil is being extracted. After a day's work he is at the same place as when he started in the morning, and the next day is exactly the same. And so it goes.

Your life is like that of the ox. You may cleverly try to hide it by painting it in different hues, but you are aware of the quality of your heart – a beggar's bowl that is forever asking and never gets filled. The further from God man is the more beggarly and wretched his inside state. The filling only comes when you are with Him.

We are not only distant from Him, but, even worse, we are opposed to Him. Whatever we do is contrary. Distance is of no concern if we are with Him, for then transformation takes place immediately.

If a man swims against the current, trying to go towards its source, he is not far from the river, but against it. And the irony is, the more you fight the river, the more you realize that it is not your enemy.

It is not hostile to you. It follows its course, hurrying along to meet the sea, and has nothing to do with you. Whether you sink or swim is none of its concern. It is you who have made an enemy of the river. It is because of you alone that you find enemies everywhere in this world. When do you find the time to live? All your time is spent trying to save yourself from your supposed enemies.

Life away from God is bound to be meaningless – if not full of misery. It becomes like a nightmare, and you want to awaken but you cannot. You feel somebody sitting on your chest, and your arms are powerless to push him away; or someone is trying to shove you down a mountain and you have no way to save yourself. You try to move your hands but you cannot. You want to open your eyes, but you cannot. You want to shout, but you cannot. This is a nightmare.

Everyone removed from God is in a dream state. Those who are opposed to the flow of existence are in a nightmare. Examine your own life and you will find that such is the condition. The eyes do not open, the hands do not move, the load on the chest does not lessen – and yet you live! Then your life can be nothing but one long tale of woe.

Kierkegaard, Sartre, Marcel, Heidegger, and other great thinkers of the West describe life as anguish and anxiety with no way to be freed from it. They are right to a very great extent. Life as it is generally led is a torment.

But we also know of another kind of life – that of Nanak, Kabir, Buddha, Krishna, Christ. Their lives are just the opposite of ours: where we are weighed down with harassment, their lives are a veritable dance. Where nothing echoes within us except strains of pain and sorrow, their inner self reverberates with music. Whereas we walk as if we have heavy chains around our feet, their step is light; they walk with a spring. While a look at us conveys the fruits of great sin, their appearance glows with the blessings of the divine.

There is another way of living, and the key is to live not away from, but near to God, to live not against His order but in conformity with it. He whose life flows with the law undergoes a change. You may not necessarily struggle against God, but your ego pushes you – it says the more you fight and struggle, the greater you become.

But the joke of the whole thing is, just the opposite happens: the more you win, the less you become. You may find a big heart in a poor man, but not in a rich man; his heart gets smaller with every gain. A poor man may give in charity, the rich man loses his courage to give. A poor man is capable of love, but there is no music of love and cheer within a rich man; and of course, prayer and God are unheard of where he is concerned. He is barely capable of ordinary animal love. The more wealth you amass the narrower your heart gets. It is a contradiction. The internal space gets more and more constricted and you find yourself always anxious and worried about your possessions.

Nanak says, in the realm of grace power is the expression, yet His compassion is attained only when you genuinely feel absolutely helpless. Not a hint of cunning can remain; the helplessness must be total. By merely saying, "I am helpless," nothing happens. The feeling must enter deep inside, penetrating the core of your heart, pervading every atom of your being. Not mere lip service but a feeling from your heart, it should be evident in your tears. It must permeate your every word, and echo even when there are no words. In your every action should ring the message to Him: I am helpless, O Lord! I am helpless!

What can you do? You can neither do anything nor undo anything. Your actions have brought to pass only what should not have happened; you cannot accomplish anything.

There is a saying in English that is similar in many other languages: Man proposes, God disposes! Nothing can be more erroneous. It is just the other way around – God proposes and man disposes! God gives opportunities and proposals, and man refuses them, denies them. God wants to give everything to man.

Existence is waiting to be looted at your hands, but your doors are shut. This existence wants to shower its bounty on you, but alas, your pots are turned upside down. This existence wants to enter you, but out of sheer fright you have not allowed so much as a crack to open to receive it. And you have so filled yourself with junk that even if it enters there is no space for it. You have left no place befitting Him within you.

His grace is attained only when you are utterly helpless, rudderless. The total experience of this helplessness is shame. Then you are ashamed even to say I. Then you wonder on what grounds you can claim I am? On what basis can I say that I am capable of doing something?

But our lives tell the opposite story. You have failed in all your ventures. All your efforts ended in vain, turned to nothing. All the fortresses you built fell into ruins and yet still you have not come to your senses, but hold on to doing. As long as this persists shame cannot enter into you, and Nanak says, "Shame is prayer." As long as you say, "I know," you will not bow down. Does a scholar ever bow down? His head never bends. He may bend his body but his head stands stiff in arrogance.

There is a well known event that the Sufis use for teaching. Two friends studied together throughout their school career. When they finished school and went their separate ways, one became a powerful king and the other a fakir. So it was destined! The king lived in the royal palace; the fakir roamed naked from town to town. The king was famous, the fakir no less so.

Once it happened that the fakir came to the king's capital. Since he was a childhood friend the king made suitable arrangements for his welcome; he had the whole town lit with lamps and the streets strewn with flowers.

As the fakir was proceeding towards the town he met some travelers who said, "What an egoist the king is! He has made all these arrangements just to show you his magnificence. He has lamps lit not only in every house but all along the streets. The whole town looks like the Festival of Lights. He has covered the steps you are to climb with sheets of gold inlaid with precious stones. He wants to show you that you are but a naked fakir while he revels in his glory." The fakir said, "We shall see his arrogance."

The day arrived for the fakir to visit his old friend. All the people went to receive him at the gates to the town. The king was also there. He looked at his friend and was dumbstruck. It was not the rainy season but the fakir's legs were smeared with muck right up to his knees! But it would have been embarrassing to ask him about it in front of so many people. When he crossed the glittering steps and entered the palace, the fakir sat on the priceless carpet spread especially in his honor – and dirtied it!

Then the king finally asked him. "Friend, there was no rain anywhere, and it is not the rainy season, then how come your legs are covered with mire?"

The fakir replied, "If you wanted to show off your wealth, I wanted to show off my poverty to you."

The king laughed and said, "Then come, brother, let us embrace, for neither of us has gotten anywhere. We are just where we were when we left school."

Wealth can fill you with arrogance, and so can renunciation. So arrogance is the only obstruction. Once arrogance is obliterated, shame is what remains.

Nanak says the He who is filled with shame gets showered with God's grace. Shame and modesty is worthiness. As long as you are arrogant you do not need Him, and how can you achieve what you do not need? You have never really called Him, wanted Him, needed Him. If ever you called Him it was for other things: when the child was ill, or you had a case in court – but never just for Himself!

Until you call Him just for Himself, all your prayers are false for your prayer has nothing to do with divinity. You want something of the world – perhaps you might get it from God.

A wealthy man was dying. He called his priest and asked him, "If I were to donate one hundred million rupees to your temple, would I get a place in heaven?" This was a natural question from a man who always thought in terms of wealth.

The priest answered, "There is no harm in trying, though I cannot promise anything. I have never heard of anyone booking his seat in heaven this way. Since your wealth is going to be left anyway, why not try?"

If you have acquired anything through wealth, the feeling always remains in your mind somewhere that worship or meditation can also be attained this way. Wealth is gained by ego, by ambition; whereas worship, prayer, meditation are attained through shame. God is attained only when all ambitions fall, when you find yourself utterly useless, when nothing you do turns out correct. At the moment that you are absolutely helpless and incapable of doing anything, His grace showers.

Not only the ego of doing, but the ego of knowing, must also fall. That you know the four Vedas by heart, or the Koran, or that no one is more adept at the Bible – all this knowledge will keep you from His grace. 'I know', which is the statement of your knowledge, is a subtle form of doing. Your doing and your knowing are two sides of your ego. Both must fall.

Have you ever asked yourself in full awareness what you know? You do not even know the stone that lies outside your house and yet you claim to know God? You haven't been able to know a flower fully yet.

The English poet, Tennyson, said: If I were to know the smallest flower fully, I would know what God and man is. You will have known everything if you have known the mystery of a flower opening, since it contains all existence. If you have understood and recognized the beauty of one single flower, you have discovered and understood the beauty of all existence. If you penetrate the truth within the flower, what is left? He who has known the drop knows the ocean, for qualitatively they are one.

Whatever is in the ocean is contained in the drop. It is a small edition of the ocean. He who knows a single atom knows all.

But what do we know? Whatever information we have is stale, borrowed, belonging to others. It is alien, handed down to you from thousands of hands. If thousands of people have worn the same pair of shoes, you will not be ready to step into them. But this is how your knowledge is. You have not put your feet but your head into such shoes. All your knowledge is borrowed and alien. You read the books, but cannot even be sure if the person is talking from his personal experience or hearsay.

I am told: A certain film actress was very clever. When she removed her jewels each night she left a note next to them, saying: "These are fake jewels. The real ones are in the bank vault." One morning she got up and found them gone. On the table was a note, "I took the fake jewels, for I am a sham thief. The real one is in jail."

Are you sure that the one whose words you are taking in, whose knowledge you are imbibing, is authentic? You have no way to find out. You have no criterion to judge the true from the false. The only real test is when you have your own experience, but then you have no further need to listen to anyone else.

This is the trouble. When gold is at hand we do not have the touchstone; when we have the touchstone there is no need to test the gold. But as long as you are able to test, you need the touchstone very badly. You cover your knowledge with borrowed knowledge, and this strengthens the spine of your ego. 'I know' creates the arrogance and pride that is the hindrance. When there is neither knowledge nor action, you are no more; both your props have fallen, and the castle is razed to the ground. This state where the castle has fallen into ruins is what Nanak calls shame. When shame becomes intense, crystallized, His grace begins to pour. Your shame, His grace: these two are correlated. Shame is like a hollow in the ground and His grace is like the lifegiving rains. It also rains on the mountains, but the water slips off into the valleys below that are low, hollow and empty. His grace pours on all and you can either be a valley and receive it or a mountain and allow it to flow off.

Nanak says, for Him no one is high, no one is low; no one is worthy, no one is unworthy. He showers His grace on all. There are some like valleys who are filled and blessed, whereas others are like towering mountains, so filled with themselves that there is no place to hold His grace.

Be like the valley, the hollows in the ground, and you shall attain Nanak's shame. Once shame forms and the hollow takes shape, since His grace is always pouring, you will become a lake of knowledge and awareness. Your very way of being will change. You shall no more be as you are now. The hollow contains only God. Then you are no longer helpless; in fact no one is stronger than you.

POWER IS THE EXPRESSION IN THE REALM OF GRACE;

EXCEPT THIS, THERE IS NOTHING ELSE.

IN IT ARE THE GREAT WARRIORS AND HEROES;

THERE RAMA ABIDES IN HIS FULLNESS.

No sooner does a person attain to shame than grace begins to rain on him, and the wretched pauper becomes a king. Saints have said, "Through His grace the lame cross mountains, the blind begin to see, and the deaf begin to hear."

The saints are not talking of the ordinary lame and blind; they are talking about you. As long as you are filled with arrogance your ears remain deaf, your eyes remain blind and your heart will be stone; it will be insensitive and register nothing. Till you are almost as good as dead, the flame of your light will be flickering unsteadily, as if the oil is running out. Your flame will lack the luster. There will be no urgency or intensity or depth of sensitivity in your life to awaken your heart, so that it does not beat with a dull thud as if half dead.

Your life should be like a river in spate; not only are you full yourself but you wish to give to others since you have so much. Within you should be a magnificence, a fragrance. The more of it you spread, the more it grows, and you possess life's infinite source.

This happens with grace. It is paradoxical, which is why the words of the saints appear mysterious. They are simple, artless, but nonetheless mystifying, for they seem to be saying the reverse of things: Die so that you can live; lose yourself in order to be worthy of attaining; or, be no more and the elixir of existence is yours.

You keep saving yourself, therefore you are nothing. The more you hold onto yourself, the more miserable and wretched and meaningless you will be. The more you save yourself, the more shall you wonder. These are paradoxical statements that are not immediately understood, for they are contrary to our logic. It says, "If you want to be, save yourself." The saints say, "If you want to be, lose yourself. Did the saviour save even Himself?"

Our logic says, "What if we die?" So we cling all the harder to life. But the saint says, "He who clutches harder to life, his death stands at the door long before his time!" Those who accepted death, welcomed it and went to encounter it found the nectar. They found that death was only a mask behind which the nectar was hidden. You run because of fear and deny yourself the nectar. When you embrace death you find the nectar. The characteristic of that aspect of life which is compassion and grace is power.

The fourth book of Carlos Castaneda is called Tales of Power. It deals precisely with Nanak's fourth realm. As soon as the rays of His compassion descend on you, you attain infinite power. You become capable of untold power; you touch mud and it becomes gold. Before, it was different: you touched gold and it turned into mud, because then you were. Now wherever you look you see heaven. Before this wherever you turned was hell; wherever your feet fell, the place became inauspicious; whatever you did turned poisonous, even your love turned to hate, your friends turned foes. All this happened because you yourself were wrong. You were going against God so the results were contrary. Because of your own self, the results were unfavorable.

Now you are no more and everything is possible. Now your very shadow holds magic. Wherever your eyes look the gates of heaven will open. Wherever you go, whatever you do, the very air in that place will change. The people who gather around you will be affected by your glory; it will permeate them.

Therefore, Nanak insists on the company of the saints. He says to seek out saints and holy men, for they are the same ones who have attained the source of power. Their company is elevating, glorious. Sitting next to them....

Energy or power is active and infectious. Remember, well-being and health are equally infectious. Not only does evil enter you through others, but also goodness enters you and flows to others. You feel a freshness in the company of a fresh person. Sit a little with stale, sad, half-dead people, and their drawn faces will so affect you that you depart a different person – sad, ready to cry like them. Sit with laughing, gay people and even if you have been sad, their joy will begin to infect you. Man is not different from or separated from man. From within we are all connected and flow into each other.

Nanak stresses a great deal the company of holy men and saints. He says, "How will your efforts help? Instead, stay next to those who have attained His support, and through them His hands will touch you too! Through them the fragrant air will reach your heart. "When a person passes through a garden the fragrance of flowers catches onto his clothes. When a person passes a Buddha, knowingly or unwittingly, the fragrance of his buddhahood permeates his clothes. He no longer can remain where he was; somehow he is a changed person.

The company of saints is invaluable. To establish contact with God is difficult for the simple reason that you have no idea whatsoever of Him. The saint is His symbol; you can discover his name and address and find him easily, but where will you seek God? Saint means someone in whom God has crystallized – where his rays are so intense, and the heat so terrible! A saint intensifies God within him in much the same way as we concentrate the rays of the sun through a lens. God is in you too but he is more sparse, less concentrated; His rays do not set fire to you. There is only a lukewarmness that somehow gives you life. The saint is full of fire. He is fire! You are bound to feel the heat when you sit next to him. Something within you will also begin to burn and be destroyed.

The day you attain His grace you begin to gain strength. But remember, that strength is not yours. If you become arrogant with it you will lose it, and in all likelihood tumble right to the bottom. For the subtle ego follows you till the end. It is the last thing to fall. It follows you like a shadow; you hear neither its footsteps nor its voice, and because it walks behind you, you cannot see it.

Just as the body has its shadow, the mind's shadow is the ego. That is why there are stories that the person who attains God loses his shadow. By this don't assume that the physical shadow is lost, for this shadow is bound to last as long as the body endures. It is the internal shadow of the mind, the ego, that is lost. Then, he performs all actions required of him in life, but no shadow forms within; his mind has become transparent. It no longer exists.

Remember, don't be under the impression that you will become strong and powerful. His grace and compassion will rain on you – when you are not. That is all the power you will be capable of. You will become a medium, which is an important word. The flute produces notes which do not belong to it, but to the player. The flute is merely a medium. What is special about the flute, its excellence, lies in the fact that it is hollow. The hollowness allows for the notes to flow. The day that God's grace begins to pour on you, you become like the flute.

Kabir said: I am only a bamboo tube. The songs are all His. It is He who sings. I am only the

medium, an instrument. And the instrument is such that I am absolutely hollow, like a bamboo. There is nothing within me.

POWER IS THE EXPRESSION IN THE REALM OF GRACE;

The ultimate energy is expressed here. He who attains His grace attains this intense magnetism. You are drawn towards him. You try to stop yourself but cannot, for some magnificent attraction binds you to him in spite of all your efforts.

POWER IS THE EXPRESSION IN THE REALM OF GRACE;

EXCEPT THIS, THERE IS NOTHING ELSE.

IN IT ARE THE GREAT WARRIORS AND HEROES;

THERE RAMA ABIDES IN HIS FULLNESS.

When the moment arrives in a person's life he becomes a Mahavir, a great warrior. When we depend on our own self we are miserable paupers; when we attain His support we become a Mahavir. All energy is His, everything is His. We have only to step aside and give way to this energy.

THERE RAMA ABIDES IN HIS FULLNESS.

AND IN ITS GLORY ALSO SEETA ABIDES,

These utterances must be entered into in depth. A person within whom His power descends is bathed in and invested with a double energy: Rama descends into him, and also Seeta. These are important symbols. If only Rama descends the person would remain incomplete. He will gain the male energy, but, being incomplete, it is violent. It will lack the glory of the feminine energy, its gentleness, its beauty, its mildness. Rama is only complete together with Seeta.

The feminine energy is a different dimension of the same energy, which gives it equilibrium, and maintains the balance. If there is male energy alone, a Hitler will be born who can do nothing but destroy, for he has not the feminine energy for balance. The female energy is a creative energy; it is the mother, the giver of birth. It is joined to the root source of existence; it is mild and gentle. The power of this energy is compassion, affection. This energy is not like the sun but cool like the moon. It is an energy, yet it is cool. And where the sun and the moon become one, where hardness and mildness unite, where violence and humility meet, there both Rama and Seeta are.

This is a very deep discovery of Hindu thought that is beyond the understanding of many; Christians, Muslims, Jains and Buddhists have all been incapable of understanding its depth. The Jains cannot accept Rama as God because Seeta comes in the way. What kind of a God has a female with him? Their contention is that God should be unattached. So for them Mahavir is God, for there is no hint of a woman – even in the far distance.

The Jains have carried this affair so far as to deny that Mahavir had a wife or that he had children; they changed his whole life history. The fact is that he was married and had a daughter. It is

mentioned in the Jain shastras that the girl was married and Mahavir had a son-in-law. But the Jains erased this portion of his life for it went against their concept of God. How can he have a child? To think of Mahavir going into sex was unbearable to contemplate, so they changed the whole story and made him stand absolutely alone.

We can see the violence in Mahavir but not tenderness. If one side of life is missing, Jain thought cannot get very far. It did not give rise to any culture or civilization, but remained only an ideology. You cannot find even one town in which only this ideology prevails, for if a town contained only Jains who would be the cobbler? Who would be a sweeper or cut hair? That is not part of their culture. They are crippled and have to depend on others. They follow a mere ideology.

And the most deep-rooted reason behind their being crippled is denying the feminine element. The Jain religion does not ever allow for a woman to attain enlightenment. She will have to be born as a man first, then only can she go to heaven. Women must take orders from men. They are granted no equality in Jainism.

And you will be surprised to know the reason: a man attains celibacy, but even if a woman practices abstinence she cannot be truly celibate because her menstrual flow will continue according to the law of nature. For them a person cannot be liberated until celibacy is fully attained.

The Jains found it difficult to understand Rama and impossible to understand Krishna with all his girl friends. The Buddhist could not understand. And Islam and Christianity were also certainly far removed from it; they couldn't understand either.

The Hindu thought is very deep. It says that energy has two facets; one manifests as male, the other as female. It is not important whether male or female, but the important fact is that the energy balance itself by being both male and female. The male alone has violence, not gentleness. All qualities of gentleness are feminine; even words describing them bear the feminine gender in Hindi, like compassion, affection, kindness, pity – as it should be.

When man reaches the supreme state there is a unity within him of the male and female. He is violent and he is also mild, gentle. The sun and the moon combine within him: he is full of fire and cool as moonbeams. When these two facets are integrated, the Supreme Man becomes manifest. This supreme state is beyond both man and woman for it is the union of both their energies. In them is born the One, but only when they are completely and fully drowned in each other.

Therefore, the sutra of Nanak says that Rama alone is not enough:

THERE RAMA ABIDES IN HIS FULLNESS.

AND IN ITS GLORY ALSO SEETA ABIDES,

WHOSE FORM IS BEYOND WORDS.

Then it is impossible to describe the form. You can discuss the form of a man and you can discuss the form of a woman, but where Rama and Seeta merge into one, discussion becomes difficult, for opposite qualities have merged into another. If you say one thing about it now, the opposite is also present.

In Japan there is a statue of the Buddha in which the right half of the face is of Buddha. The hand on this side carries a burning flame whose light falls on the very gentle, beautiful, tender face, which is feminine in all its qualities. The other hand carries a sword whose glare falls on the left half of Buddha's face. Though the face is the same, the expression is not of Buddha but of Arjuna, a warrior.

The samurais, who are the warrior class, worship this image. The image can be said to be half Buddha and half Arjuna. The male and female have been integrated into one.

Nietzsche has criticized Buddha and called him effeminate. There is some truth in it, for in Buddha manifests completely the form of the female. The male energy of Buddha is not characterized, for Buddha had attained to such depths of tranquility: he had become cool as the moon, and the sun was lost.

The Hindu makes a point to stand Seeta with Rama, Radha with Krishna. When the name is spoken it is always 'Seetaram' and 'Radhakrishna'. Because the woman is the giver of life, she is the first and the man is placed second. Violence is second; compassion is first. When there is untapped violence hidden behind compassion its beauty is boundless. And when the energy lies hidden behind affection, how is one to express it? If there is cold fire, how is one to describe it? Where the opposites meet, expression becomes impossible. THOSE IN WHOSE HEART RAMA ABIDES

NEVER DIE NOR CAN BE CHEATED.

THERE LIVE MANY DEVOTEES OF MANY DIFFERENT WORLDS;

KEEPING THE TRUE NAME IN THEIR HEARTS THEY ENJOY BLISS.

There is no death for him in whom Rama abides, in whose heart God dwells and whose heart is overfilled with him. Understand that death is only for you; there is no death for God. Waves are formed and destroyed, but the ocean is forever. As long as you identify with the waves you will die, for the wave considers itself as separate and is sure to die. Therefore, we are frightened of death. Your identity will die. You have made wrong connections. If you join yourself to God, to Rama, then where is death? Therefore the wise man dies before death; he breaks all his connections, separating himself from all identities. He knows he is neither the body nor the mind; both these will die. He knows he is not the ego, which is also sure to die. It is destructible; it is a small form that has appeared like a wave. No matter how beautiful the wave may be, no matter how high it may rise and boast of touching the skies, the very next moment it begins to drop into oblivion. In youth all waves boast of touching the skies. Ask the same people in their old age!

I have heard: A fox set out for food early one morning. The sun was just rising behind the hills and she found her shadow stretched long before her. Seeing her shadow she thought: "Today it seems I shall need a camel for breakfast, for see how big I have become; look at my shadow!" The poor fox had no other gauge with which to measure herself except the shadow.

She kept looking for a camel. By now it was midafternoon and the sun was high overhead. She was feeling faint with hunger for there was no camel in sight. Suddenly she looked down and her shadow was so small as to hardly be there at all. "Now I can do with even an ant!" the poor hungry fox cried.

In youth the wave is at its peak; therefore youth is foolish. The West put its faith in youth and suffered, and that suffering is increasing by leaps and bounds. The Orient never trusted youth or gave it a place of importance, for it would be like giving importance to foolishness. Youth is the peak of the wave, the longest shadow. In the length of the shadow you see all kinds of dreams. What doesn't each of us dream of becoming? The East has venerated old age, for then the shadow contracts to almost nothing, and if old age does not awaken you and make you aware of the ego, then when will you awaken? If you awaken in young age, your life is filled with glory. If you do not awaken even in old age you are the greatest of fools. In youth your not awakening can be forgiven; not so in old age.

As soon as a person begins to observe life with awareness, he discovers that his relationships were of the wrong kind: they were all physical. The cells of the body change completely every seven years yet you continue to exist. One day in the mother's womb you were so small that you could be seen only under the microscope; that too was your body. Then one day, when you die, your relatives will make a small bundle of your remains and throw you in the Ganges; that too is your body! How many ups and downs have you seen in between these two events? If you identify yourself with this body then you will tremble and fear death. Therefore a wise man dies before death – by his own hands.

There is that incident in Nanak's life when his disciples found him at the burning grounds. He said, "I thought it better to come here on my own feet than on the shoulders of others, and if someday I have to come here it is best that I know the place well. There is no better place than this for meditation. Have no fear for me." And he sent his disciples back. He is saying that death is the meditation; there is no other. If you concentrate and meditate on death, by and by death departs. The top layers of death vanish and the hidden nectar comes into view. The wave is lost but the ocean is found.

Buddha would send his monks to the burial grounds. He told them: "Watch people burn. Observe the bones turning into ashes, the smoke rising from the skin, the flowers from the pyre. See the dead man's own people breaking his skull. Those whom he trusted all his life didn't take a moment longer than necessary to prepare him for the last rites. Watch all of this if you wish to reach buddhahood. All those who promised never to part, cry for a few days and then begin again their normal lives. When all are gone and the corpse is left alone, watch it, observe it quietly. This is what is going to happen to you, if not today, then tomorrow or the day after." So Buddha always insisted that his disciples go to the burning ghat so they could observe it and begin to die consciously; then only do the practices come easier.

For three months, day and night, the monk had to watch death. There was death and death and death.... Death was getting more and more intense. He would begin to see death everywhere, all around him. Everything would seem to be burning; and yet he would sense a point of awareness within him that could not burn. Flames cannot touch consciousness. Flame has nothing to do with it. The monk returns more conscious, more aware; then he breaks his old connections. Only then would Buddha say, "Now it is possible."

There was a fakir by the name of Ebrahim. He was once a king, then he became a Sufi fakir. He used to stay on the outskirts of his own former kingdom. Whenever travelers came to him asking the way to the town, he would say, "Go left." People would walk a mile or two and find themselves at the burning ground. They would turn back very angry with the fakir, and then take the other road to find the town.

When he saw them again Ebrahim would say to them, "I too used to live there. I have now come to understand that it is not a living place but a dying place; every person there is awaiting death. Would you call death's waiting room a living place, a habitation? Would you call it a settlement where people go one by one and never return, where even the very colony one day will be no more? What people call the burning ground is a place where you settle once forever. Now that I would call a real habitation."

Our settlements are death grounds, and our burial grounds are the last of our habitations. A sage dies before death; an ignorant person clings to life, making every effort to survive even with his last breath. A wise man dies but once, but a fool dies several deaths. Until you learn this lesson you will have to die again and again.

Death is an education. It is like a child failing in school who is returned to the same grade. If he fails again and again he remains in the same grade until he learns. In the same way death is a great education. Until you learn to recognize the nectar you will have to come again and again.

A singer was giving a performance. The hall resounded with applause and shouts of, "Encore! Encore!" He sang again. Again they shouted, "Encore!". This went on eight times. His throat became sore, and he could no longer sing. He told the audience, "I am glad that you enjoyed it with such enthusiasm, but now I can sing no more." One man got up and shouted, "Who enjoyed your song? You are a rotten singer but until you sing correctly we won't leave you."

The cycle of death and birth is God's request to you to sing properly. It is part of your training and you have to pass through it. He who understands this breaks his identity with death.

Nanak says that those with Rama in their hearts can neither die nor be cheated. And here you are! No matter how clever you are, how efficient, how cunning, you are bound to be cheated; for no one except yourself is cheating you. No one else can rob you; it is impossible, but you have become attached in such a wrong manner that the other can rob you. Your vision is so filled with illusions that all around you see only enemies – everyone seems out to steal from you.

Sri Ramakrishna used to tell this story: There was a kite that found a piece of meat. She held it in her talons and flew away, but it was her bad luck that there were many kites out flying in the skies hunting for food. They saw the piece of red flesh and began to chase her. They swooped down on her, pricking her with their beaks. She tried her best to hold onto the piece of flesh, but there were too many kites and she was badly wounded. They had plucked so many of her wing feathers she could hardly fly. Ultimately she let go of the food in her mouth. No sooner did she do this than all the other kites left her. She flew to the branch of a tree and sat there quietly.

Ramakrishna would say, "From the day I saw this happening I let go of my piece of flesh! Now I have no enemies. Actually I had no enemies before; it was the piece of flesh that was causing all the trouble."

As long as you hold onto wealth, someone is bound to be your enemy; as long as you hold onto your flesh others will not leave you in peace. In truth there are no enemies, only you catch hold of the wrong things. Whenever you grasp hold of something, even your friend will seem an enemy.

Mulla Nasruddin's wife was very angry. She was into a senseless tirade against Mulla. He, poor man, stood quietly with both hands in his pants pockets, as men usually do. After she had said all she wanted to say, and even more, she shouted at him, "And stop this nonsense! I see you clenching your fists at me inside your pockets!" The poor man was just keeping quiet to save his own skin.

If you are angry, fists appear everywhere, gripped and taut. It was only natural that Mulla's wife saw fists in his pockets. In fact your eyes create these illusions for you. If you are holding a piece of meat like the kite, and you have the same understanding as you have now, you are bound to be cheated. The piece of flesh is the body; as long as you hold onto the body you are bound to be cheated. There is no way to save yourself no matter how clever you are.

Kabir says, "Your efficiency has no value – not a tuppence. You hold the lamp of consciousness in your hand, yet you fall into the well."

You are bound to be cheated, for you yourself make the arrangements: you establish wrong contacts and false relationships. And he who relates himself to the wrong, to the false, determinedly arranges to get himself cheated. If you hold onto the piece of flesh the kites are bound to swoop.

THOSE IN WHOSE HEART RAMA ABIDES

NEVER DIE NOR CAN BE CHEATED.

THERE LIVE MANY DEVOTEES OF MANY DIFFERENT WORLDS;

KEEPING THE TRUE NAME IN THEIR HEARTS THEY ENJOY BLISS.

These are the four divisions of the path of the journey. First, in the 'Realm of Religion', there is nature. In 'Knowledge' there is the awakening to nature – to be aware and conscious of things as they are. In 'Shame' it is to be modest, understanding your condition you become humble, helpless, zero. The fourth is to allow His compassion and grace to shower on you without any obstacles.

These four are the divisions of the journey. The fifth is the destination, and that is: Truth. In the Realm of Truth abides the formless, God. That is the destination.

He creates the creation and exalts it with His vision. Here the path ends. Now there is no more need to divide it into any divisions. When His grace fills you completely, you are fully bathed; then you have nothing left to call your own. You drown and flow away in the ocean of divinity. You seek: Where am I? Where am I? You have no idea where you have disappeared. You have no knowledge of your own self, of where you are, though you are completely aware. You seek here, you seek there, and find it is He and He alone that is everywhere; you are nowhere, you are zero. When this knowledge becomes crystallized you become a mere medium – no more.

In the Realm of Grace, you will be only a medium, a flute, for the songs are His. Then this too vanishes and even the flute is no more. Only He is there. There is now no one to say even as much as: "You, you, you!" For as long as this knowledge remains, a little of yourself also remains.

IN THE REALM OF TRUTH THE FORMLESS ABIDES.

HE CREATES THE WORLD AND EXULTS IN IT WITH HIS VISION.

WITH HIM ARE THE CONTINENTS, THE SUNS, THE UNIVERSES;

AND THEY ALL DEFY DESCRIPTION.

THERE ARE WORLDS UPON WORLDS, AND CREATIONS UPON CREATIONS.

ALL WORKS ACCORDING TO HIS ORDER.

SEEING ALL THIS AND THINKING OF IT, HE FLOWERS IN HAPPINESS,

NANAK SAYS, TO DESCRIBE HIM IS LIKE CHEWING ON IRON.

An important thing to keep in mind, as Nanak stresses time and again, is that God has not stood apart or removed Himself from His creation after creating it, nor is He in any way opposed to it, nor has He forgotten it. God's work of creation goes on every minute, eternally. Actually, creation is God's way of being. He creates and creates and creates, and He is always interested in whatever He creates.

This is very significant. We tell the seeker not to be attached to anything in order to attain God, but God Himself is not unattached or uninvolved. If He were so, the process of creation would stop; everything would come to a halt. Now what is this? As soon as you become one with God a new kind of involvement arises, a new interest, where there is no difference between attachment and nonattachment, where there is neither desire nor desirelessness, where there is neither enchantment nor otherwise. All differences fall away.

God creates with full interest and desire, yet He is desireless, uninvolved. How will you be able to understand this paradox? Nanak says it is as difficult as 'chewing on iron'. God creates, so His interest is natural, His involvement is natural; but it is not a blind involvement as we have with our desires. In His involvement there is no possessiveness, no ownership. He creates you and frees you, and lets you loose. This is why you can wander, commit sin, do evil. He does not bind you in chains to keep you away from evil. He has His relationship with you, all right, but He does not stand in the way of your freedom. It is not that He is against you, yet you are completely independent. This is rather complex.

When a mother is attached to her son, this attachment kills his freedom, for she is always saying: Don't go here, don't go there. Don't do this, don't do that, and a thousand other don'ts. She smothers him with her love, but kills him nevertheless. She doesn't give him enough independence to allow him to stand on his own two feet or gain some experience of life; in this manner she cripples the child. He will never become mature as long as he is under his mother's protection; even when she dies, her hold over her son will continue as before and he will find it difficult, if not impossible, to love another woman. He knows only one love, his mother. Anyone else would be sinful. The mother was interested in the child, but it was blind infatuation.

A relationship with open eyes protects you, and at the same time does not destroy your freedom. It sometimes obstructs with a view to making you worthy of going ahead. It makes you strong. It

supports you today and withdraws the support little by little so that you may be able to stand on your own tomorrow. It does not lend the support in order to make a cripple of you.

Then there is another kind of mother: if she is told that her attachment to her child is harmful, she draws back completely and removes all restraint from the child. Now total nonrestraint is not the same as giving freedom to your child. If it is a boy he may go to prostitutes, take drugs, gamble, steal, murder. The mother has given him full freedom to do as he pleases; she has become indifferent to her child. First she cared so much, but her caring was blind; now there is negligence and indifference, which is equally blind. The balance lies between the two.

This balance is the characteristic of God. It is His very nature. His attitude towards His creation is: He protects you so that you may be independent, and gives you independence so that one day you may be able to surrender. These are two apparent contradictions. He gives you the opportunity to go far away, for if you do not go far how will you come close? He gives you license to wander, for if you do not wander how will you gain experience? He gives you a chance to fall, for if you do not fall how will you learn to protect yourself?

And yet He protects you and follows you. His eye watches everywhere; His shadow is everywhere; He envelops you from all sides. No matter how far from Him you go, still He is beside you, so close that whenever you need Him you have only to turn and there He is – available to you that very moment.

There is the well known couplet: "In the mirror of my heart is the picture of my beloved. I have only to bend a little to get a glimpse of Him."

No matter how far you go, He is always behind you, following you. He causes you no interference, no matter what path you tread. He does not even stop you from going wrong, if that's where you are heading. He allows you to be wrong if you so wish, and in His tender love He does not remove His energy from you, but waits. He awaits your pleasure. He hopes that one day you will return and when you do – ah, what joy, what ecstasy he feels!

SEEING ALL THIS AND THINKING OF IT, HE FLOWERS IN HAPPINESS,

NANAK SAYS, TO DESCRIBE HIM IS LIKE CHEWING ON IRON.

This is certainly so, for there all contradictions are laid to rest, and become one.

I have studied the lives of many people and find that we can move towards any extreme and do all kinds of things, but all extremes can be very dangerous.

I know a very possessive husband who follows his wife not just as a shadow, but like a ghost. When he is in the office he is always worried; perhaps his wife is laughing with someone and having a good time. He would leave his work and pay surprise visits home just to check on her. He cannot bear her talking and laughing with others without him. He firmly believes in the descriptions of the wife given by Kalidas, the famous Indian poet. In one of his best known poems he describes a wife so pining away from a fifteen-day absence from her beloved, that she 'wilts away and becomes like a skeleton' and then she describes it all in messages sent to him with the clouds.

This constant siege from all sides has filled the wife with boredom and subtle hatred. Theirs had been a marriage of love. They had been very much in love. I could see that, and I knew them for a long time. But when the husband's love became so excessive, his hands no longer formed a garland around her neck, but became a noose. It is not diamonds and gold alone that bind; such love could also be fatal. The wife's love began to diminish and she began dreaming of being freed from her husband. The more independent she tried to become, the more restrictions he created for her.

I explained to the husband that this was madness, that he was killing his wife's love for him with his own hands. Love also wants freedom and a chance to breathe. Love needs a little distance, a little aloneness, some time to oneself. I advised him, "Don't be after her so much or you will kill her love for you. Then you will have only yourself to blame."

After a great deal of discussion the husband began to see some sense in it, but then he began to disregard her completely. Now even if he saw her in bed with another man, it would make no difference to him. He says he has given up his possessiveness. He says, "Now I have nothing to do with her. She can do what she pleases. I am in no way connected with her now." The only type of connection he knows is a noose.

This is a natural human trait. If full freedom is given as in the West, it tends to become total indifference, or we set up such a complete subjugation that it can strangle. This is what is happening in the East.

To say anything about God is as good as 'chewing on iron', so difficult is it. He is both: He gives you full freedom, but His love is not an iota less on account of this. He leaves you free, which is the only genuine love.. There is no conflict between His love and the freedom He gives you; He does not stop you even if your feet go astray, but waits patiently for you to return. When you retrace your steps and the prodigal comes home – oh the joy, the celebration!

Nanak says: He worries about you and thinks of you. He rejoices in you. He does not stand apart, unaffected; His nonattachment is filled with a deep essential affection. He is far and yet He is near. He has left you to do as you please, and yet His eye is always on you. He has never, never left you. He always stands besides you. Your sorrow and anguish touch Him; your joy and happiness fill Him with cheer. You are not a stranger in this universe; it is your house. You are not alone in this world. God is always with you.

This assurance and comfort has deep meaning for the devotee; otherwise there is nothing. If you put aside the thought of God, the world stands untouched, unconcerned beside you; it does not bother what you do or what you do not do, whether you live or whether you die. Let the storm take you; there is no one to care.

But for the devotee there is great assurance and solace in the feeling that 'someone is waiting for me'. When you return home you will not find it empty; when you return inwards to your own nature you will find God awaiting you. Not only will you find Him waiting, but you will be enchanted by all the arrangements for the celebration He has made in your house.

A story that Jesus told time and again is well worth understanding. A rich man had two sons. One boy turned into a vagabond. When he came of age he demanded his half share, which he took and

left for the city, for the village offered no means of spending his money: there were no gambling houses, no taverns, no prostitutes. He lost every penny he had in these pursuits and become a roadside beggar. The father was keeping track of him. When he heard of his son's destitution, he was very unhappy. He knew that it was useless to try to bring him back by force, for that might take him farther away. He could only wait, hoping that when his son began to see things in their right perspective he would return on his own.

The elder son remained at home. He worked hard and had doubled the remaining inheritance. He plowed the fields and tended the vineyards, working from morning to night.

Then one day it occurred to the beggar son: "I shall die this way. I still have a home. My father is alive and I can count on his love. He gave me an opportunity to learn for myself what is right and what is wrong, so I am sure his compassion will not fail me now and he will take me back to his heart. I have full confidence in him."

One day he sent word to his father that he was coming home. The father arranged a grand reception. He had lambs butchered and the best of everything prepared, for his son was coming home. He decorated the whole village with flowers and invited everybody in the village.

The elder brother was in the fields. Someone went to him and said, "It is so unjust! You have served your father faithfully your whole life and have doubled and trebled his assets. You have never gone against his wishes, yet he never arranged such a grand reception in your honor. Now your brother who squandered his inheritance on wine, women and song is returning, and look at what your father is doing for him. It is rank injustice."

The elder brother also felt it was unfair. He returned home saddened and downhearted. He saw the lamps and the flowers set out in his brother's honor and could bear it no longer. He went to his father and said, "I have served you and obeyed you my whole life, but you have never prepared a feast in my honor. Today this prodigal son of yours returns home and look how much you have done to receive him. I can't believe my eyes."

The father replied, "Son, you have always been near me. You never went astray, so there was no need to welcome you. You are always with me and welcome every moment. You are so close to my heart, but this boy who went astray, who wandered and ruined himself, and for whom I spent so many anxious, sleepless nights, he is returning and needs to be welcomed. You gave me no cause for worry; instead I have always been happy and pleased with you, so there is no need to express excessive happiness in your case."

When the prodigal returns a magnificent reception is called for. Jesus would say: Good people, holy men and saints, are like the elder brother; those who have gone stray, sinned, committed crimes, are like the younger brother. Jesus made this a wonderful beginning for his spiritual teachings and because of this, the Jews turned against him. For the Jews believe that he who sins is punished by God; whereas Jesus has said He will welcome him when he returns for He loves him. Do as much wrong as you please, you cannot remove yourself from His heart. You may show your back to Him but He will wait. He is the Father of all.

We have a very deep connection with existence, and existence feels pleased – so the Hindus have known from time immemorial. That is why it is said that when a person attains buddhahood flowers

bloom out of season. Flowers open when Buddha passes by, whatever the season, for existence is filled with bliss at that moment.

This is what Nanak is saying, that He is so filled with joy and dances in ecstasy whenever the prodigal returns. This is the union of freedom and love. Do what you will, you cannot displease Him. His love for you is much deeper than anything you might do. But His attachment is not like yours. He doesn't chain you by the neck. God is not a prison; God is love and freedom. It is difficult to explain, for they appear so contrary, for when you love a person you take away his freedom, and when you give freedom you say goodbye to love.

Where affection and nonaffection both are, where desire and desirelessness both are, where all contradictions unite, there is the great confluence.

NANAK SAYS, TO DESCRIBE HIM IS LIKE CHEWING ON IRON.

CHAPTER 10

Patience is the Goldsmith

10 December 1974 am in Chuang Tzu Auditorium

SELF-RESTRAINT IS THE FURNACE; PATIENCE IS THE GOLDSMITH;

INTELLECT IS THE ANVIL; KNOWLEDGE IS THE HAMMER;

FEAR IS THE BELLOWS; AUSTERITY IS THE FIRE;

FEELING IS THE CRUCIBLE INTO WHICH THE NECTAR FALLS.

THE COINAGE OF THE WORD IS CAST IN THE MINT OF TRUTH.

ONLY THOSE RECEIVING HIS GRACE CAN SUCCEED IN IT.

NANAK SAYS, ONE BECOMES EXALTED BY HIS COMPASSIONATE LOOK.

Epilogue

WIND IS THE GURU; WATER IS THE FATHER; THE GREAT EARTH IS THE MOTHER;

NIGHT AND DAY ARE MIDWIFE AND GROOM; AND THE WHOLE WORLD IS PLAYING WITH THEM.

GOOD AND BAD DEEDS ARE READ OUT IN HIS COURT BY DHARMA,

AND OUR OWN ACTIONS DETERMINE WHETHER WE ARE NEAR TO HIM OR FAR.

THOSE WHO MEDITATE ON HIS NAME AND LABOR SINCERELY EARN MERIT;
THEIR FACES ARE RADIANT WITH SUCCESS,
AND MANY OTHERS ARE LIBERATED BY CONTACT WITH THEM.
SELF-RESTRAINT IS THE FURNACE; PATIENCE IS THE GOLDSMITH;
INTELLECT IS THE ANVIL; KNOWLEDGE IS THE HAMMER;
FEAR IS THE BELLOWS; AUSTERITY IS THE FIRE;
FEELING IS THE CRUCIBLE INTO WHICH THE NECTAR FALLS.
THE COINAGE OF THE WORD IS CAST IN THE MINT OF TRUTH.
ONLY THOSE RECEIVING HIS GRACE CAN SUCCEED IN IT.
NANAK SAYS, ONE BECOMES EXALTED BY HIS COMPASSIONATE LOOK.

Self-restraint means giving direction to life, giving it vision and a goal. A man without restraint runs in all directions, not knowing where to go or what is to be attained; he has no aim, no goal in life. He is like a blind man shooting an arrow. A life of restraint is one in which a person is well aware of his goal; he knows exactly where to let his arrow fly. An arrow that is let fly haphazardly cannot possibly hit the target. No power is attained without restraint and moderation.

So the first quality, self-restraint, involves having a direction, a goal. Once you decide upon a goal then you have to let go of everything that does not further your goal. If you want to achieve one thing you have to let go of a thousand others. He who tries to attain everything ends up with nothing; you have to make a choice.

Now you have come to listen to me here. You had to practice some restraint in choosing to hear me: you left some work half done, or you could have put this much time to some better use, or you could have done some profitable business in the time you spent here. You could have done many things, but once you made the decision to come here, you renounced all the other possibilities for this period of time.

Each moment carries infinite possibilities that can carry you in a thousand directions. A man chooses going to a house of prostitution instead of the temple; another goes to the temple who could also have gone to the prostitute. Both have practiced restraint in not taking the other choice or a thousand and one other possibilities.

You take one step and you leave thousands of steps behind. Only that person requires no restraint who does not walk at all. Whoever walks will have to direct each step of his with the utmost awareness and understanding.

So – direction, path and goal. When these three are in complete harmony you attain self-restraint and balance. Nanak says that is the oven, the furnace where gold is purified and all waste matter

burns off. Choose your goal in full awareness, then your life becomes an arrow proceeding in a particular direction, rather than tumbling and fumbling from one corner to another like a blind man; neither are you being jostled about by the crowd, moving helplessly wherever it takes you, nor prodded and kicked from here to there by your own desires.

This is the basic difference between the man of restraint and the desire-ridden man. A man torn by desires runs in a thousand directions simultaneously. It gradually drives him insane trying to do a thousand things at the same time. When he is taking his meals his mind is involved in his shop; when he is in the shop his mind is busy with a hundred other things. Had he a thousand hands, a thousand legs, a thousand eyes, a thousand bodies, you would see the actual state of his mind: his thousand bodies would all go in different directions, with no likelihood of their meeting again.

However, this is your internal state: your mind travels in a thousand directions without any hands and feet, tearing you into fragments. Unless and until you become an integrated whole, you are not fit to be offered at the feet of God.

Many doctrines have been formed since ancient times with regard to the integrity of man. In Islam there is the concept that if a man has any part of his body maimed – whether a finger is cut off or he has undergone an operation – he is unfit to reach the feet of God. Therefore the Muslims are very fearful of operations; if they have to have one they feel guilty and fearful of becoming unfit for God.

In Pakhtoonistan if a limb has to be removed it is severed and preserved until the person dies, and is then buried along with him so that, when he approaches God, he is not incomplete. It is a very significant idea to be a fully integrated whole before approaching God, but here, as elsewhere, a wrong interpretation is being followed.

The Hindus also have this same concept. You must have heard the old stories: when a man had to be burned in a sacrificial fire care was taken that all his parts were intact. If even the slightest defect was present, say a bit of the small finger was chopped off, then he was disqualified.

The finger of a prince got crushed and broken in a door of the palace. Being a devotee who believed and trusted in God, he turned around and said to his attendant, "God be praised! I could have died."

The attendant was surprised. "Your devotion is beyond my understanding. Your finger is broken and you are bleeding badly, yet you thank God. That is carrying devotion too far. You are only fooling yourself by thanking God for this." The attendant was a man of reason.

The prince replied, "Wait awhile, for time will tell." Faith cannot be explained by reason, because faith has no proof.

The prince and the attendant went hunting one day. They lost their way in the jungle and were captured by avdhoots, a group of ascetics who were looking for a human being to sacrifice. First they caught hold of the prince, but found that all his parts were not complete – the one finger was missing. He would not do, so they seized the servant and found his body intact. As they were preparing him for sacrifice the prince reminded him, "Didn't I tell you God's grace is on me? I am saved from death." The test, the authenticity of faith, takes time for proof.

Human beings were offered as sacrifice, but this too was a misunderstanding. The sages preached that only he who is total within himself can gain entrance to the Lord's assembly. The lack of a finger does not make you incomplete; even if the head is cut off, a man is not incomplete.

But when consciousness is cut off and his mind falls into fragments, then he becomes incomplete. Your mind is like mercury: let it loose and it breaks immediately into a thousand pieces that cannot be gathered together; touch one small pellet of quicksilver and it will break into ten more. That is how your mind is, broken into thousands of pieces, with each piece going its separate way. If and when you become at all awakened and look within yourself, you will find one part of your mind heading East, one to the West, one to the North, one to the South. One part wants to earn money, another wants to follow the spiritual path, and so on.

Mulla Nasruddin set out to get a beautiful wife. When he married and brought home his wife, his friends were shocked at how ugly she was. They asked Mulla what had happened.

"I was in a terrible fix," he tried to explain. "The girl's father had four daughters and he described the dowry position of each. The youngest was twenty-five years old and very beautiful. For her he had set aside twenty-five thousand rupees as dowry. Feeling the dowry to be rather low I asked about the other daughters. The second youngest is thirty years old and he had provided thirty-thousand rupees for her. The third is thirty-five and he provided thirty-five thousand rupees for her. He was reluctant to mention his eldest daughter but I told him not to worry but just state the facts. She is fifty years old and has a dowry of fifty-thousand rupees. I don't know what came over me then, but here I am stuck with a fifty-year-old hag. I only realized my foolishness on the way home."

The mind is fragmented, so never trust it. One part wants beauty, another wants wealth; you go to fetch one thing and you return with something else; you came on earth to get one thing, but instead you take something very different when you return. Do not trust your mind or you will get nowhere; you will fragment into many pieces like a drop of mercury.

If you do not listen to your mind but instead heed the witness within, you will be able to remember what you have come into this world for, what you have come to buy from the marketplace of samsara. That remembrance will become your goal, then you will gain the ability to throw off the fragments that besieged your mind. To practice self-restraint involves the ability to leave the chaff for the wheat, to let go of the useless and worthless in favor of the useful and worthwhile.

The worthless has no value; it serves no purpose in life, brings no peace or joy. It is not designed to reveal the truth, but it has its own attraction, its own temptation and excitement. You can tell yourself: What harm is there in leaving the road to pick some flowers? I can always get back again. But when you take the first steps off the road towards the flowers, you see so many flowers up ahead, and your journey changes course as you shift a little this way or that to savor a little of the fascination of things that are perishable. Lean a little towards them and you are gone!

There are thousand of paths on which to go astray, but only one to reach the right place; therefore you need a very strong memory – uninterrupted remembrance is required. There are many devices and tricks for losing the path, but only one way to reach the destination. There are millions to lead you astray, but only one who can lead you right. If you want to go astray and wander, go ahead. You can err for lives on end. That is what you did, and that is why you are here now, and that is what you still are doing. But there is one path.

Always remember: truth is only one, not many; untruths are infinite, countless. Only the one is worth attaining; the untold others are only worth discarding. It is like a children's maze with many, many paths, but only one exit; the paths all look as if they lead somewhere, but ultimately they arrive at a dead end.

Life is such a puzzle. Whereas children's puzzles are small and contained on a single piece of paper, life's puzzle is endless. It has no beginning and no end; therefore the need for a guru. If you try to solve life's mystery and persist in walking on your own, you will wander for millions of lives.

There is the danger that you might feel that there is no way to get out of the rut of the mundane world; you have tried so many times that you may be disheartened. You might become so despondent you will give up all hope. There is another danger, that you get habituated to wandering. When we do something so many times we become quite efficient at it. Then it doesn't matter what the work is; you've become such an expert wanderer that even if you come across the right path you will shun it.

Guru only means a person who has found the door and can stop you from wandering. He will warn you from treading a path that may seem very attractive and very promising but is only a pseudo-path. You may attain wealth – untold wealth, but what will you gain in the end? Where will you reach? You will find yourself smack against a wall. What will you attain through position? Ultimately you will find the path is lost. Protect your reputation as you will, but what does it yield in the end? Those who respect you have nothing themselves, so what will they give you? What value is the opinion of worthless people? From whom do you seek honor and respect – from those without eyes to see? Even if they pay homage to you, what is it worth? It is like a bubble; no sooner do you get it, it bursts into thin air.

SELF-RESTRAINT IS THE FURNACE;

He has used the word furnace after long deliberation. For restraint is not a bed of roses; it is fire. The mind would crave a bed of flowers, and find all logical excuses for non-restraint. The mind refers to non-restraint as enjoyment and it calls self-restraint suffering; whereas the reality is just the opposite.

Enjoyment is suffering because the more you enjoy the more you rot. Every sense-enjoyment leads you ultimately to gloom and dejection. After each enjoyment you find yourself a little more broken in body and in spirit, a little uglier and more deformed. You had hardly anything to call your own, but whatever little you possessed is lost, and you are left a beggar, wanting more. And still the mind urges you on for more and more pleasures telling you that time is running out. Who knows whether this opportunity will come your way again?

The mind never says: "Practice restraint! Who knows whether this moment will come again in this lifetime, or not?" It never urges you forward on the path for fear of time running out, because the mind always hankers after pleasure.

Try to recognize how the mind always yearns for happiness, but instead always gets unhappiness. It seems as if on the door to happiness is written: Sorrow and Suffering, and on every door of unhappiness is written: Happiness. Seeing the sign the mind enters, but it is deluged by suffering and sorrow.

Kahlil Gibran has written a very nice story. He says when God created the world He created a Goddess of Beauty and a Goddess of Ugliness. He sent them both to earth. Since the road from heaven to earth is very long, they were both tired before they reached halfway. They looked at their clothes so covered with dust that they could hardly make one another out. So they halted beside a lake and decided to take a bath and wash their clothes. There was no one around so they removed their clothes and stepped into the water without fear. The Goddess of Beauty loved the feeling of the cold, soothing waters. She swam far out. The Goddess of Ugliness grabbed the opportunity and quickly came ashore, put on her companion's clothes and disappeared.

After some time the Goddess of Beauty, having had her fill and realizing it was getting late, decided to come ashore. To her surprise her companion was missing and so were her clothes. What was she to do? The people from the village were arriving. She was obliged to put on the ugly one's clothes. Gibran says, "Ever since then ugliness masquerades on earth in the clothes of the Goddess of Beauty, while the latter moves about in her clothes."

This is exactly what has happened. Suffering goes about in the garb of happiness; untruth masquerades as truth, and the mind is deceived by it. It fails to see what is behind the mantle.

Self-restraint requires first that you begin to see the suffering. You will experience great difficulty initially. How difficult it is to get up at five o'clock in the morning. The whole body revolts, the mind refuses and offers excuses: "It is too cold to get up today, and you need the sleep. You can get up early tomorrow." You gain nothing by sleeping that much longer, but the mind coaxes you into thinking how lovely it would be.

You have no idea of the happiness outside: the sun is rising, birds are singing, flowers are opening, dew is on the leaves – all the beauty hidden in the early morning! There is no more beautiful time of the day, no moment so refreshing. Missing the morning, you can never regain that freshness during the day, but the mind whispers otherwise: "Stay and rest a little longer in that world of oblivion." Waking seems so difficult, but only by awakening does one reach happiness; asleep, a man only loses.

Therefore Nanak says that self-restraint is a furnace where the gold is purified. But you must be prepared to pass through the fire. Only by going through the difficulties and troubles does a person attain the supreme happiness. You also pass through suffering and sorrow, but you resent it; then it is not restraint. When you pass through suffering in full awareness, when you accept the anguish and pain it brings, and when you look upon it as the path, the inevitable furnace of life through which you must pass in order to be purified, then the whole alchemy of suffering changes.

Everyone passes through pain and sorrow, be he in the world or a sannyasin. The worldly man weeps and wails and misses. He who passes through suffering with full awareness, with the attitude of acceptance, makes his suffering a stepping stone and goes beyond suffering. To practice restraint is to accept the suffering as the spiritual path. One should not be vanquished by it, but on the contrary, make it a stepping stone and rise above it. Therefore, it is like a furnace.

... PATIENCE IS THE GOLDSMITH;

When gold is thrown into the furnace, one has to exercise great patience. He who is impatient fails; he who is patient is successful. If you hurry, become impatient, it means you have not accepted

suffering and are eager to be done with it. In that case you have not understood the glory of suffering. You do not know that as you suffer you are being cleansed and purified and absolved from all that is worthless and useless. You have not recognized suffering as a friend yet. It is only at that point that you attain to self-restraint. He who recognizes suffering as a friend is in no hurry. He can maintain his patience, and God is attained only through patience – infinite patience. To attain God is not a paltry thing to be instantly attained.

You plant a seed. Seeds of seasonal plants take two to three weeks to sprout. By the sixth week they begin to flower, and at the end of twelve weeks their life cycle is over. When you plant a cedar tree it lives for one hundred years, or perhaps two, three, or even four hundred years. There are trees in America thousands of years old. They take such a long time to grow that the seed remains under the soil for years before it sprouts.

The baser pleasures of this life are quickly attainable, but they vanish as quickly. Remember the equation: the quicker attained, the earlier lost. If you want to attain God you will have to practice infinite patience.

And remember another fact: the more patiently you observe, the earlier you attain. The more you rush the later you attain. You are the cause of the delay. Why does this happen? Because the more patient you are, the deeper inside you go. Impatience is characteristic of a shallow person; it is a sign of childishness. When little children plant a mango seed, after an hour they take it out to see whether it has sprouted yet. Then they put it back in the soil. Again they remove it to see whether it has sprouted, and again they return it to the soil. That seed will never sprout.

You must have noticed the patience and tranquillity of the villager. The city shopkeeper has little patience. The further into the countryside you go, the more peaceful and tranquil they are, because they have learned to be very patient with nature. You plant the seeds today, but you can't gather the harvest tomorrow. Long association with nature and observing the law of patience, and they become tranquil. But he who wishes to reap the harvest of the infinite must sow and toil in the field of God.

Nanak's father was always after him to do something and not be idle. "At least plow the fields," he would tell him.

"That I do, father," Nanak would reply.

"What field did you ever plow? What harvest have you ever gathered? What money have you ever earned? I always see you sitting home doing nothing."

Nanak answered, "You are right, father. You see me always sitting at home. The field I plow is of a different sort, and whatever I earned is all within me. May He pour His compassion on you so that you may have the eyes to see what I have attained. I have earned a great deal and harvested much, but it is so subtle that the ordinary eye cannot see it."

He who has walked on the path of religion has desired to reap the harvest of the infinite, for which unlimited patience is required. It only means having no expectations. You must not ask when it will happen. Leave it to Him; when it happens is His will. Whenever it happens, be ready to accept. Let aeons pass but never complain: I have been waiting so many years.

There is a very ancient Hindu story: Narada, the heavenly messenger, was once going to Heaven to see the god Vishnu. On the way he met an old sannyasin and asked him, "I'm going to meet God. Is there any message you would like me to give?"

The old sannyasin replied, "When you meet Him please ask Him how much longer I shall have to wait? I have been a sannyasin the last three births."

Narada said he would surely give the message. He went a little further and found another sannyasin sitting under a tree. He was young and lost to this world as he sat playing his one-stringed instrument. Nanak asked him jokingly, "Well, brother, have you any message for Him? I'm on my way to Vishnu's abode." The young man kept singing, his eyes closed. Narada shook him by the shoulder and asked again.

He answered, "No, brother, I have nothing to ask. His grace is boundless; whatever my wants He has already provided. Don't trouble Him on my account. You needn't even mention my name because I have everything I could wish for and more. If possible just convey my gratitude to Him."

When Narada returned and met the old sannyasin, he told him, "Forgive me, brother, but Vishnu said, 'As many leaves as there are on this tree, so many births will this man have before attaining.'

The old sannyasin was filled with rage. He tore the book he was reading, threw away the mala, and shouted in anger, "What injustice! For three births I have done penances, tortured myself, and still so many births to go! It cannot be!"

Narada then approached the young man under the second tree. "You didn't request it, but I asked God on your behalf how long it will be before you attain, and He said, 'As many leaves as there are on the tree where he sits, so many births must he take before attaining.'"

The young man jumped up with his instrument and began dancing with glee. "So soon? How high has He rated my worth! Look at the ground! There are so many leaves. Look at the other trees covered by leaves, but He has counted only the leaves of this tree for me. Only so many births? How wonderful! I am not worthy of it. How will I bear His grace? And how will I express my gratitude to Him?"

He was mad with joy and danced round and round the tree, and danced around Narada. He could not contain his joy. The story goes that thus dancing, he attained samadhi. His body fell away. What was to have happened after infinite years happened immediately. For him who has such patience, attainment does not take a moment longer to come.

... PATIENCE IS THE GOLDSMITH;

INTELLECT IS THE ANVIL; KNOWLEDGE IS THE HAMMER;

We can use our intellect in two ways. We have already made use of it as a knapsack, but not as an anvil. We fill it with information, just as a ragman fills his bag. We hear scriptures and listen to sadgurus. Whatever we get, no matter what its source, we dump into this bag, this beggar's sack. It contains everything: scriptures, masters' teachings, newspapers, Vedas, radio advertisements,

movie songs. If someone abuses you, you tuck away the abuse in the sack. If someone gives you a mantra to recite, you store it there. Your mind is a sack in which the mantra mingles with foul words. Vedas are lost in everyday news. And such a bag we constantly drag behind us.

This we call memory. It is not knowledge, just rubbish. Genuine knowledge is that which is attained from our own experience. The intellect is filled with borrowed knowledge; everything is stale. Nanak says, however, that intellect is the anvil and knowledge is the hammer.

Nanak says knowledge is the blow of the hammer. Whenever you attain knowledge, howsoever infinitesimal, every hair of your body trembles with its impact. This is why we avoid knowledge, because we don't want to bear the shock of it. Instead we merely gather information, because this gives no shock. You read in the shastras, "God is the ultimate truth." What shock is there in that? You read, "Meditation is the way." You have learned it by heart; you even tell it to others. What impact does it have?

A little girl was playing in her courtyard when her mother called her from the top of the stairs for her bath. The little girl didn't want to leave her game. Her grandmother, who was herself sunning in the courtyard, told her daughter many times, "Let her play. You can give her a bath later on." But the mother was adamant. At last the child left her playing and began to climb the stairs. When she saw her mother she said to her, "How strange that you always tell me to 'listen to your mother' but you don't listen to your mother at all."

Do you ever heed the advice you give others? No, it's just stale stuff that you pass on to others. Once you give it away you are free of it. There's no more to it. It never did anything for you; nor will it for others.

Advice is given so freely, and taken so rarely. People feel so free to distribute knowledge, but who takes it? On the contrary, you avoid such people because they bore you. They fill your sack of intellect with all the trash that lies in their sack. The joke is they have never put it to any other use.

Real knowledge carries an impact; it is born out of life's experience, the friction of life. When you take a jump into existence, knowledge is born – not through scriptures and words. Experience is a blow, so we try to avoid it to save ourselves.

Gurdjieff used to compare our knowledge with the buffers of a train or the springs of a car. Both are shock absorbers. When there is an impact they absorb the shock, whereas authentic knowledge is a shock in itself.

When someone close to you dies, you say, "The soul is eternal." This knowledge has never shaken you in your life. You use it merely as a shock absorber. The sages who have declared this truth of the immortality of the soul, have practiced self-restraint. They have passed through many furnaces and fires. This knowledge has been like a hammer of the anvil for them. This knowledge has completely crushed them; it has broken their skulls open, so to speak. Their ego has been reduced to dust. It has severed all their connection with the body. This knowledge has caused their whole world to reel and fall to pieces. This is the knowledge that initiated them into sannyas. This knowledge has made them as good as nobodies in the mundane world. It has uprooted them completely from samsara. It came as a hurricane and swept them away completely.

What has your knowledge done for you? It is like a lullaby. When you do not fall asleep you hum your knowledge, and so fall asleep. When someone dies, you use it to absorb the shock, because you are afraid of death. It could also have been possible for a death in your family to become a full-fledged experience for you, by which you attained knowledge. In that case, the event of death becomes the hammer and you are the anvil; and when the hammer fell on you, the blow would have awakened you.

No one ever awakens in this world without a blow; you have placed shock absorbers all around you so you are safe inside. Nothing can affect you.

Someone dies, and you say, "The soul is immortal." You see a beggar on the road and say, "Poor man. He is paying for his past actions." You are loathe to give him a paltry two paise! You really have to believe he is suffering from past actions or you would consider yourself partly responsible, which would be a blow to you, so you create a shock absorber. You say, "Poor man, he suffers because of his own actions." And you go on your way. His plight creates no anxiety in you, no worry, no food for thought.

You are very efficient. Your cunningness knows no bounds. The sages attain knowledge by the impact of events, and you use that very impact as a shock absorber. Whatever happens you save yourself. You take great care to protect your ego, the very thing that needs to break.

INTELLECT IS THE ANVIL; KNOWLEDGE IS THE HAMMER;

But where is the hammer to descend – on whose head? Only if you place your own self between the anvil and the hammer can knowledge be created in you. Only when you break into fragments – only then! But you save yourself in a thousand ways.

One day, early in the morning, I called on Nasruddin. The poor man had a bad cough. His tongue hardly remained in his mouth; he was panting for breath. Doctors had told him time and again to give up smoking but he just would not. "Why don't you give up smoking, Mulla? You see how ill it makes you."

He told me, "Since you asked, and since you are my good friend, I must tell you what actually is my reason for not giving it up." He drew closer to me and whispered, "Last time I gave up smoking the second World War started that very day. Do you really think I wouldn't otherwise give it up?"

Look at the ego of this man! He has the power to start world wars. You devise methods for your ego. You think the whole world is at your beck and call; you are the ruler, and if you die the world will die with you. How can the world go on without you? Wars are started or stopped by your smoking habits! Look around and you'll discover many similar stories about yourself.

Nanak says that knowledge is the hammer. Don't use your intellect as a sack or else the sack will grow and grow, while you get smaller and smaller, until one day you'll get lost in your own sack. You will die beneath its weight; that's how pundits and scholars die, crushed under their own knowledge.

Make your intellect into an anvil and its shine will improve with every experience of life. Each blow will cleanse and polish it. If you ask a goldsmith or blacksmith they will tell you that hammers often

break as they strike, but the anvil remains intact. The anvil even begins to shine more and more as the hammers break.

Lao Tzu asked why the anvil does not break. He answered that it is because it bears the blow, and the hammer breaks because it attacks. Aggression always breaks by itself. You need not worry about it, just develop the ability to endure; then every situation that is aggressive, that shakes you up, will make you all the stronger. Ask the goldsmith and he will tell you how many hammers he has broken on his anvil, while the anvil remains intact. Though you would think that the anvil should break after so many blows, what hits breaks itself, while what bears the impact is saved. The secret lies hidden in the anvil.

Nanak says the intellect is the anvil, so the intellect will not break. Don't be afraid, but make it vulnerable to the blows of experience. Let the blows fall – as many as life lets fall on your consciousness, so shall you be purified. Make life an adventure. Don't run away from where you think the blows will fall. He who flees is defeated already; he has not accepted the challenge. His anvil will get rusted even if he sits in the Himalayas. Don't be a coward or a deserter but stand up to the challenges of life!

Therefore, I don't call him a sannyasin who has run away from life. He has run away from the hammer, his anvil is sure to get rusted. Look at our sannyasins sitting in the Himalayas and you will not find the shine of intelligence; they look rusted. If you have eyes to see you will find that their understanding and intelligence are almost nonexistent; they are as if dead. The lamp of life does not shine in them as it should; everything is dull, despondent inside them. Struggle and friction is necessary for the flower of life to burn, because that is its food.

INTELLECT IS THE ANVIL; KNOWLEDGE IS THE HAMMER;

Whenever the hammer falls on the intellect, the impact produces a moment of knowledge, just as on a dark night the lightning flashes. Don't miss it although you are afraid and trembling. The flash will light things around you for a great distance and all the roads will appear clear for a moment.

Each blow of knowledge is a flash of lightning. When there is friction in the clouds, lightning is formed. Similarly, when there is friction in life the flash of knowledge appears; so don't run away from any situation in life. Stop; go through it. That gives you maturity and wisdom, and only that gives rise to understanding.

Nanak never told his disciples to run away from samsara, because that would be running away from the hammers, where all knowledge is born. If you run away from your wife you remain childish; there is growth and maturity in the friction with her. Run away from your children and you will fail to develop the art of extending your strength, your firmness.

Have you ever realized how a woman changes once she becomes a mother? Not only is the child born, but the mother is born along with it. Before she was an ordinary woman; now she has a special quality that a childless woman can never know. When a child is born, a young man, who had been a mere boy until then, becomes a father; there is a maturity, a firmness in being a father. The thought of being a father, the state of fatherhood, is the beginning of an altogether new experience. Don't run away from it. Make use of all the doors that life has opened for you.

This is why Nanak never advised his disciples to run away to the jungle, but exhorted them to remain in the mundane world to allow all the blows of the hammer to fall on their anvil. They were not to fight shy of it.

FEAR IS THE BELLOWS; AUSTERITY IS THE FIRE;

You can make use of fear in two ways. The one you use now is to run away when there is fear. You believe in the logic of the ostrich and bury your head in the sand. How will you progress if you run from fear? Fear is an opportunity. The basic fear is that you might not exist! And if you are not prepared to annihilate yourself, how can God happen within you?

There is no fear except death: Perhaps I might die and be no more! He who is unprepared to die cannot go into God or enter into prayer.

The other possibility with fear is to surrender. Accept the existence of death; do not turn your eyes away from it. The day you encounter death with open eyes, you will see death disappear into oblivion. You had never come face to face with death, and therefore it existed for you. All fears of life flee in this manner if you face them in full awareness.

Nanak says that fear is the bellows. Don't be afraid of it, because the more you flee from danger the more you fear it; your life's austerity and fire will dwindle to that extent. Wherever there is fear, accept the challenge and enter into it. This is how a warrior is born. He enters wherever there is danger. Where death stands lurking, he accepts the invitation. Where there is danger he walks right into the heart of it. The further you penetrate the fear, the more fearless you become; the more you run away from it, the more fearful you will become.

He who learns the art of using fear, for him fear becomes like a bellows. And every moment of fear ignites the flame of austerity yet more. There is fear in the devotee, but he has transformed his fear into devotion. Now he fears only God, so that through the fear he can maintain restraint and balance in his life. With the help of this fear, he can regulate his life so that it is kept from going on the wrong path. This is not an ordinary fear. Ordinarily, when you fear someone you make an enemy of him; but the fear of God is wonderful, unique. The more you fear Him, the more you fall in love with Him.

You are anxious not to miss Him for a fraction of a moment. Only your fear shows the possibility of your going astray. "Do not let me go astray, O Lord! May your remembrance never leave me. Only your grace can keep my remembrance constant. I search for You, dear Lord, but without your help, how can I?" This fear reflects his helplessness, his state of poverty.

The devotee converts fear into prayer. He does not run away from it. Every fear, every danger he turns into prayer. Whenever fear takes hold of him, he utilizes it as an occasion for prayer.

Nanak says austerity is the fire. Whenever you complete a work you have started in all earnest and resolve, a wonderful heat is created within you. Then it doesn't matter how small or unimportant the work. This is the meaning of austerity.

Suppose you have decided to fast today. It is not that you want to do it to go to heaven; if this were possible, going to heaven would be an easy matter. You are not fasting because you want to perform

a good deed. Your fasting involves a process of austerity and resolve. You have resolved not to eat today. The body will make its daily demands when the mealtimes come. You will hear its hunger cries without letting them pass unheeded. You will not deny the hunger, but say to the body: I agree that you are hungry; it is time for your food, but I have decided to remain hungry today. Sorry, but you'll have to go without food.

You will not abandon your resolve for the sake of the body. This requires a good deal of awareness. The body's demand is not wrong, but today you are going to live by your resolve. What does this mean? It means you are placing yourself above the body. You are becoming bigger than your body; you are making the body obey you. The mind will think of food, but you say: That's all right. You may think what you please, but I shall only witness it, and not join in. I abide by my decision; that is my resolve. Then you will experience a heat, a kind of fire, an energy being born within you, an energy you have never known before. This power comes by the mastery of resolve. You are now your own master.

Then you will get up the next morning in quite a different way. You will find you can rise above your body. A new experience – you can rise above the mind. You will get a new experience that you are apart from both body and mind. You will get a faint glimpse of this experience.

This is austerity. It is neither for gaining salvation nor going to heaven. Austerity is meant for knowing that one's life and consciousness is beyond the body and the mind. But he who thus raises himself above the mind and body invariably finds the door to beatitude opened wide for him.

What Nanak means when he says that austerity is the fire and fear the bellows, is that one should not run away from anything; rather find some use for it. Each thing has its proper use. There is nothing in life that cannot be put to use: sex energy turns into celibacy, anger turns into compassion, fear becomes prayer, suffering becomes penance. What is required is an artist with the necessary skill. This life which can be a king's domain for you becomes a prison otherwise. Everything depends on you.

Everything is already present within you. All you need is the proper art of putting them together well. This putting together is what is known as self-restraint. You have everything within you, but you have never put them together with the proper system, proper tuning and music. They all lie inert within you, but you don't know what to do with them. A stone lies in front of your house and you think it a nuisance. Another man uses it to cross to the other side; for him it becomes a stepping stone. Everything is within you. God has given everything complete to man, but the freedom to gather himself together to make use of the gifts God has given him lies entirely with man.

If you observe well you will find exactly the same qualities in a criminal or thief or a sinner as you find in a virtuous, good man. The only difference is the arrangement and use to which it is put.

A thief enters somebody's house at night. It is not an easy job. He also has to transform his fear. He enters a house where he is a complete stranger as if he couldn't care less! He makes a hole in the wall and breaks in. He does it so efficiently and quietly that there isn't the slightest sound. Then he enters, in full awareness. It is someone else's house, where he is not welcome, so he has to move in the dark and be so alert and concentrated lest something fall and the people awaken.

Zen fakirs say: "If you want to go to the house of God, you must learn the burglar's art." You need as much alertness as the thief uses. You also must transform your fear and enter like the thief, as if it is your own house.

There is a Zen story: There was a very well known thief who was considered number one in the hierarchy of thieves.

He was so adept at his art that he had never been caught, yet everyone knew he was a thief. The news even reached the ears of the king who called him, and honored him for his wonderful efficiency and skill.

As he became older his son said to him, "Father, it is time for you to teach me your art, because who knows when death may come?"

The thief replied, "If you wish to learn I shall teach you. Come with me tomorrow night."

The next night both father and son set out. The father broke through the wall as the son stood watching. His absorption in breaking in would have put any artist to shame. He was lost in his work as if he were lost in prayer. The son was awed by his father's proficiency. He was a master thief, the guru of so many thieves.

The son was trembling from head to foot, though it was a warm night. Fear arose again and again, chilling his spine. His eyes darted everywhere, watching all directions, but his father was lost in his work and didn't lift his eyes even once. When they entered through the hole the son was trembling like a leaf; never had he felt so afraid in all his life, but the father moved about as though the place belonged to him. He took the son in, broke the locks, opened the lock of a huge wardrobe filled with clothes and jewels, and told the son to get inside.

No sooner did the son enter but the father closed the cupboard, locked it, and taking the key with him, left the house shouting, "Thief, thief!" and returned home. By then everyone had awakened. The son was caught in the worst dilemma of his life. What was he to do? He was worried about the footprints and the hole in the wall. At that moment the servant came right up to the wardrobe. The poor boy was at his wits end, his mind completely blank. At such a time the mind does not work, because it is full of stale knowledge and doesn't know how to deal with fresh situations. He had never heard of such a thing arising in the whole history of thieving. His intellect became useless.

At the moment the intellect became useless, the consciousness within was awakened. Suddenly, as this energy caught him, he began making a noise as if a rat was gnawing at the clothes inside the cupboard. He was shocked at himself; he had never done such a thing before. The woman servant brought a bunch of keys and opened it. He immediately puffed out the lamp she was holding and, giving her a push, ran out of the house through the hole in the wall. Some ten or twenty people gave chase. There was a great deal of noise, because the whole village was awake. The thief ran for his life – ran as he had never run before. He had no idea it was he who was running. Suddenly, as he reached a well, he picked up a big stone and threw it in the well – all this without the slightest idea of what he was doing. It seemed to him it was not he but someone else directing him. At the sound of the stone falling in the water the crowd gathered around the well, thinking the thief had fallen in.

He stood behind the tree to rest a bit, then continued home muttering to himself. When he went in he found his father fast asleep with the blanket over his head. The son pulled off the cover and said, "What are you doing?" The father continued snoring away. He shook him hard. "What did you do to me? Did you want to see me killed?"

The father opened his eyes for a minute and said, "So you have returned? Good. I'll hear the rest in the morning," and appeared to fall back asleep.

The son pleaded with him, "Say something, father. Ask me what I went through or I shall not be able to sleep."

The father said, "Now you are an expert; you don't need to be taught. Anyway, say it if you must." After the son recounted all that had happened the father answered, "Enough! Now you know even the art that cannot be taught. After all you are my son! My blood flows in your veins. You know the secret. If a robber uses his intelligence he gets caught. You have to leave your intelligence behind, because each time it is a totally new experience, a new moment; each time you are entering a different person's house and every house is new. The old experience never comes of use. Use your intelligence and you land yourself in trouble. Rely on your intuition and you succeed."

Zen masters always mention this story. They say the art of meditation is like house-breaking – you need as much awareness. Intelligence should be put aside and awareness should come into play. Where there is fear there is bound to be awareness. Where there is danger you become absolutely alert and all thoughts stop.

Nanak says fear is like the bellows, so make use of fear. If there is fear, awake! Don't protect yourself from it. But what do we do? We take precautions whenever we sense danger: we take a sword or a gun along to the trouble spot, or we take a few servants along to protect us, or we build high walls so that no one can come in. We protect ourselves from fear.

This depletes our consciousness even more. As it is, we are well nigh unfeeling, insentient, and this will make us more so; therefore, the more protected a people the less intelligent they are. It is rather difficult to find an intelligent person among the rich. The rich man has all the arrangements for protection, therefore he doesn't have to use his brains. Others serve him; what his intelligence should be doing is instead done by others.

Thus you often find the children of rich families tend to be dullards. At best they will be mediocre. You will not see the luster of consciousness in them or the sharpness of understanding, and never the brilliance of genius. Their servants need to be brilliant, but what need is there for the master to be clever?

Nanak says to make fear the bellows. Wake up in fear; it is a wonderful state. Your whole body trembles; each hair of your body stands on end. At that time, when the whole body trembles, your consciousness should be stable and unmoving like a steady flame. Then fear becomes the bellows.

Austerity is the fire. Wherever there is suffering in life, take it as an exercise in austerity. Accept your suffering fully and openly, and be resolute. When you fall ill accept the illness. Do not fight against it. Then you will find that not only does the body get well but also the mind attains a new kind of

health. When you fall ill, don't fight the illness; rather look it straight in the face and accept it: You have come? Welcome! Don't quarrel with it; don't avoid it. Don't involve your mind in other things, or you will miss the opportunity. Each condition in life that we encounter can become a path that leads to Him. Remember this: each event is a step towards His gate. If you know this you will make use of it.

FEELING IS THE CRUCIBLE INTO WHICH THE NECTAR FALLS.

Nanak specifies not thoughts but feeling. Feeling is the consciousness beyond your thoughts. Thoughts flow in your mind; emotion is the force of the heart. Feeling is not logic; it is love, and so it is within the heart. It does not fit any calculations. It is a state of intensity, ecstasy, exhilaration. When you are emotional you are united with the depths of the universe. Thoughts are your most superficial layer, like the outer fencing of your house. It is not even part of the house, only an outer limit to keep away outsiders. This is not you. You are your emotions.

But we become frightened of our emotions. Gradually we have clogged our emotions, if not cut them off completely. We don't listen to our hearts at all. We heed only the intellect, and act according to our reasoning. And where does your intellect take you? It is the shallowest thing within you, so it guides you only towards superficial things. That is why you are out to amass wealth – you gather all the trash – and why you are so concerned about your honor and position.

Stand a little away from your thoughts and drown your feelings. It is difficult. How do you drown in emotion? In olden days the Hindus would get up in the morning and bow to the rising sun. They would accept the grace and kindness of the sun in all humility. They would pray to him in thankfulness that he had come yet once again and given them one more day of light; and with it the flowers will open, the birds will sing and the story of life will go on. They would bow with both hands and thank him for his kindness to them. As they stood with hands folded they drank in the light of the sun, and a feeling of gratitude would thrill their hearts.

When they went to the river they would bow to it before stepping into the waters; thus they would establish an emotional relationship with the river. Truly the river washes the body, but something else gets cleansed inside as well. The river is pure and it belongs to Him – this feeling gets intensified internally.

When they sat down for meals they would remember Him first, set His plate apart, and eat only after first offering to Him. The Hindus have called grain Brahma because it gives you life. They have turned everything into the remembrance of God. From everywhere and every place, they have taken care to see that the impact of His remembrance falls on us. Therefore when they sit, when they sleep, when they stand or walk or work, or do anything – His remembrance!

We have turned around and denied all of this. We say: What is this bathing in the river? It is only water, mere H₂O. Where is God in it? You bow to the sun! What is the sun but a ball of fire? To whom are you bowing? If the river is only water and the sun is only fire, then where will you find God? Then what is your wife, your son – only a collection of flesh and bones. Then how will you awaken your emotions?

To awaken the emotions is to know that the world is full of consciousness. Whatever is seen does not end there; there is much more within, deep within. Emotions means the universe has an individuality,

a soul. Granted that the child is a collection of flesh and bones, but within the child something has incarnated. Within him, God has descended. He is a guest in this house.

The tree is a tree – that is true – but there is something within the tree that is growing and developing. Within the tree there is also someone, something, that feels joy, that feels sorrow. The tree also has different moods, different emotions and experiences. Within the tree there is even sleeping and waking. The latest discovery of science is that trees feel, much as human beings do, and their experience is deep and their knowledge too. They are also sensitive like human beings, as are also rocks and stones.

Everywhere there is sensitivity. Man alone has lost his sensitivity and his emotions; therefore the world is so sad and gloomy. Without gaiety or mirth it seems a useless place. As soon as your emotions awaken, the world becomes transformed. In fact, the earth is the same, the people are the same, everything is the same – nothing changes, except you.

Feeling is the only vessel into which the nectar is poured. If you have no feelings you will remain bereft of God. The only obstruction to awakening feeling is that emotion is absolutely the reverse of intellect – totally different from it. In samsara intellect is of great use, and not emotion. If you want to amass wealth you cannot afford to be emotional or you will be ruined. If you want to succeed in politics, you cannot use your emotions, because you need the utmost heartlessness and hardness to be in politics. You need excessive, aggressive thoughts; peace and silence will be of no value. You have to forget completely that there is something called a heart within you.

I have heard: It is said that in the very near future all parts of the human body will be readily available, just as we now get spare parts for our cars. Already there are blood banks and eye banks and kidney banks.

So it once happened, in this story of the future, that a man's heart was not working very well, and he wanted to change it. He went to a heart bank and asked to be shown some hearts. There were many kinds of hearts: one belonged to a laborer, another to a farmer, yet another to a mathematician, and there was one of a politician. The last one was the most expensive. "Why?" asked the customer. The shopkeeper replied, "It is brand new. It has never been used."

Thinking his customer could not afford much, the shopkeeper took out yet another heart and said, "This is the cheapest I have. You see it is secondhand and quite worn. It belongs to a poet who has used it to the maximum."

The politician has no use for such a dangerous organ.

Begin to use your heart gradually – and it can only be done gradually. Remember only one thing: put aside thoughts for a while and bring in feelings. Sit near a tree, look at a flower without thinking it a rose or gladiolus. What does it matter, the name? Don't think of its bigness or smallness. What has that to do with you? There is an invisible beauty around every flower. Drink that beauty in but don't think about it. Just sit silently beside the flower and be a witness to it.

Soon you will discover that the process that has now started within your heart has stopped the process of thoughts within your mind. This is because energy can work in only one direction. The

thrill you feel in your heart only you shall know; no one else can ever know it or be told about it. It is like a mute eating a candy; how can he tell the taste to others? The heart has no language for communication.

Sit next to the flower and hear the song of the birds. Rest your back against the trunk of a tree and feel its roughness. Lie down on the soil and feel its cool touch. Sit under a waterfall and let the water flow all over you. Let its lovely feeling go deep within you. Stand facing the sun, close your eyes and let its rays touch you everywhere.

You have only to feel. You need not think about what is happening. Whatever is happening, let it happen; allow your heart to thrill with ecstasy. You will soon discover a movement starting within your heart as if a new mechanism that had been lying dormant has begun to function. A new melody now begins to play in your life. Your life center changes, and it is on this new center that nectar pours.

THE COINAGE OF THE WORD IS CAST IN THE MINT OF TRUTH.

What Nanak means by the Word is Omkar. As truthfulness fills your life, Omkar will begin to be molded within you, and you will be immersed in it. You harm others with lies, but the greater harm is that untruth prevents you from being the mint of truth where Omkar is molded, where the highest experience of life will form.

ONLY THOSE RECEIVING HIS GRACE CAN SUCCEED IN IT.

Nanak reminds us after every couplet to remember, when the event takes place, when grace descends, it will not be because of you. Don't be filled with pride that "I am a great devotee," or "My heart is so sensitive," or "My austerity is great!" No, this does not help. Only he who is fortunate to receive His grace can do this work.

NANAK SAYS, ONE BECOMES EXALTED BY HIS COMPASSIONATE LOOK.

WIND IS THE GURU; WATER IS THE FATHER; THE GREAT EARTH IS THE MOTHER;

NIGHT AND DAY ARE MIDWIFE AND GROOM; AND THE WHOLE WORLD IS PLAYING WITH THEM.

GOOD AND BAD DEEDS ARE READ OUT IN HIS COURT BY DHARMA,

AND OUR OWN ACTIONS DETERMINE WHETHER WE ARE NEAR TO HIM OR FAR.

THOSE WHO MEDITATE ON HIS NAME AND LABOR SINCERELY EARN MERIT;

THEIR FACES ARE RADIANT WITH SUCCESS,

AND MANY OTHERS ARE LIBERATED BY CONTACT WITH THEM.

Nanak's symbols are invaluable. They have been chosen with great feeling. He says the guru is like the wind. He cannot be seen, only experienced. Those who try to see him will miss, because who can see the wind? You can only experience it and feel its touch, but you cannot bind it in your fist.

The guru cannot be held captive; the guru who is willing to be enclosed in the disciple's grasp is no guru. Most gurus are like that, directed by their disciples telling them what should be done, what shouldn't be done. There are assemblies of disciples who run the holy men. They decide which holy man is worthy and which is not. The association decides which should be worshipped and which should be kicked out. How topsy-turvy this world of ours! We direct our gurus: how they should sit, how they should walk, what they should say. Remember, such gurus are not real.

You will not find true gurus in our ashrams and monasteries; you will find fakes masquerading as gurus. A true guru cannot be held captive. You cannot direct a Mahavir, a Buddha, a Nanak. They obey only their own will. The wind blows where it will. Where it does not blow, there is nothing you can do. If you try to gasp it in your fist, whatever little was there, that too will go out. Those who liberate others cannot be taken captive. How can you bind the very person from whom you seek liberation or beatitude?

WIND IS THE GURU; WATER IS THE FATHER; THE GREAT EARTH IS THE MOTHER;

Your body cannot exist without the earth; the mother is absolutely necessary. No birth can take place without the earth, but the earth is the grossest of matter. Birds and animals have mothers but no fathers. Fatherhood requires a higher level of culture and conditioning. The mind is the father, the body is the mother; wherever there is a body, there is mother. The father begins where the mind is born, so the institution of fatherhood is a very new happening.

Only man has fathers, and they too are not very ancient if you measure human history. Before that there was no father, because the woman was a possession of society; she was wife to many men so it was difficult to name the father. The state of man was just like the animals. You will be surprised to know that the word uncle appeared earlier than father. This was because those who were big and capable of being fathers were all uncles; it was impossible to trace the individual father of any child.

Father came much later because father is the mind, the impressions of previous lives, the culture. Therefore father is a social achievement, not a natural phenomenon. In nature there is no way to recognize the father. When the society develops to a great extent the father steps in.

Therefore Nanak says the mother is like the earth. No one can be without her. It is the grossest form of matter. Father is more fluid; his relationship is not as fixed, as material, as the mother's. To show the fluidity of the father relationship, Nanak compares it to water.

These are the three steps: mother is symbolized by the earth, which is very gross, material; therefore woman is called prakriti or nature. Over this, one stage higher, is the relationship of father, representing culture, society and past impressions. The third stage is still higher, where the relationship with the guru begins; it involves religion, yoga and tantra.

If you stagnate at the level of the mother you remain virtually an animal. If you stagnate at the level of the father, you remain a mere man. As long as you do not reach the guru level, your spiritual state does not form. These are the three steps in life. All animals reach up to the level of the mother. All men reach up to the level of the father. There are very few who reach up to the guru. And as long as you do not reach the guru, you will not attain your full stature, because the mother is the body relationship, the father is the mind relationship, whereas the connection with the guru is the relationship of the soul.

This latter relationship is the greatest of all; there is no connection deeper or higher. Those who are without a guru are as if incomplete. With a guru your journey of this world ends and a new journey starts. The guru is the end of this world and the beginning of the next. He is the gate; therefore, Nanak called his temple, gurudwara. Dwara means gate. This side of it is the world, that side is the other world. The guru is in between.

NIGHT AND DAY ARE MIDWIFE AND GROOM; AND THE WHOLE WORLD IS PLAYING WITH THEM.

The whole universe is a game involving time. There are two kinds of players: one has turned the servants into masters, and the other has understood the servant to be a servant.

Time is not your master but your slave. Make use of it, but do not let it use you. The state of affairs as we see it is just the opposite: time uses us.

People come to me and say they want to meditate but have no time. You have no time for meditation? Is time your servant or are you time's slave? People complain they don't know how to pass the time, but when it comes to meditation, where has the time gone? And it is the same people! They have a lot of time – watching television, going to movies and clubs – and yet there is no time to spare. The question arises how to spend it.

On holidays people do not know what to do. They get very tired doing nothing. On Sundays they don't know what to do, so they go for a long drive or go to the beach or climb a mountain. One day in the week they get to rest and relax and this is how they spend it; ultimately they get so tired that they look forward to going back to work. On Mondays they are happy again as they head towards the office. It is said in America that people get more tired on holidays than on working days.

Time is using you. If you are the master you have all the time at your disposal. If you are a slave, you have no time at all. What can a slave possess? His time is not even his own.

Nanak says all the world plays with them. There are two types of play going on: in one, he who is the master utilizes his time to find the path to the one beyond time, which is meditation; the other is to be consumed by time.

I have heard: A beggar went to a grain shop and told the grocer, "I have no money today. You will have to give me grain on credit."

The grocer was a kind man. He gave him some grain, but at the same time he said, "Look, brother, I have given you grain on credit, but I hope you will not sell it to buy a ticket for the circus that is in town!"

The beggar laughed and said, "You needn't worry. I have already bought my ticket."

For the useless you have already saved enough time. For the meaningful it is difficult to find time. Be the master of time. Then alone will you be able to go beyond time.

GOOD AND BAD DEEDS ARE READ OUT IN HIS COURT BY DHARMA,

AND OUR OWN ACTIONS DETERMINE WHETHER WE ARE NEAR TO HIM OR FAR.

God is near everybody. For Him you are neither near nor far. He is equally near to everybody. It is you who are either near or far from Him. Your actions take you either closer to him or further away.

If your actions are such that they make you insensitive and unfeeling, then you are standing with your back towards Him. The sun is the same whether you face towards it or away from it. If your actions are such that it has filled you with consciousness, awareness, wakefulness, then you are facing the sun. You are the same; the sun is the sun. The difference is wrought by the direction you choose.

God is consistently near you, Nanak says. No one is high, no one is low in his eyes; no one is worthy, no one unworthy. If you are unworthy you are the cause of your unworthiness. Bring about a little change within yourself and you shall become worthy. For there is only one difference between you and the worthy; the worthy person stands facing towards God, while the unworthy stands with their backs to Him.

THOSE WHO MEDITATE ON HIS NAME AND LABOR SINCERELY EARN MERIT;

THEIR FACES ARE RADIANT WITH SUCCESS,

AND MANY OTHERS ARE LIBERATED BY CONTACT WITH THEM.

Nanak says whenever a person becomes liberated many others are liberated by contact with them. Liberation is such a great and superb occurrence and it is such a beatific occasion – even a single person's liberation – that whoever comes near him is filled with his fragrance, and his life journey changes. Whoever comes near him is filled with the resonance of Omkar; infected by the flavor of liberation, they get a taste of it, which, though very little, can bring a complete change into a life that has until now been mundane and worldly.

A light shines within them. Look with love at such a person and you will see it. If you see with a worshipful eye, you will soon recognize it. A light shines within them and its rays spread out from within them to everyone around. This is why the faces of the saints and incarnates have been depicted with halos around their heads. This aura cannot be seen by all; it can be seen only by those who have faith. And those who can see this aura light their own darkened lamp with the lamp of such a one; whenever a single person attains salvation, thousands who stand within his shadow are also liberated. Liberation never takes place for one single person, because when this supreme moment arrives he becomes a gate for many others.

Keep awakening your faith and your feelings so that you can recognize the guru when he comes. He who has recognized the guru, has discovered the hand of God; he has recognized that which is beyond the universe. He has found the gate, and once the gate is found, everything is attained. You have never lost anything, everything is intact within you, and when you pass through the gate you recognize your own being. You reawaken to the light, the brilliance that is yours. What treasures you always held within you are now unfolded. The guru acquaints you with the self that you always were, and which was not for a single moment lost.

The story is very sweet: Kabir said, "The guru and God are both standing before me. Whose feet should I touch?" Kabir is in a fix. If he bows to the guru, God will be insulted. If he bows to God, the guru will be insulted. What a dilemma! Whose feet should be touched first?

When the guru saw Kabir's dilemma, he told him, "Touch His feet, because I only existed till here." The story is so very endearing. The guru signals to Kabir to touch His feet. "I no longer exist for you. The Lord is before you waiting for your greeting."

But Kabir falls first at the feet of the guru: "It is your glory, my guru, that you brought God down to meet me." If there is faith in you, you will recognize it. All that is required is faith, feeling; thoughts and the intellect have never helped anyone to reach. Don't expend that useless effort, wasting you time, trying the impossible. You cannot be an exception.