

THE MYSTERY OF DEATH

Kirpal Singh

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Life is a postponed death.

Schopenhauer

Death claims us at our birth.

We live on borrowed time.

*Those who hope to purchase health at a
high price are fools & scoundrels. Sch...*

** Every breath we draw, every step we take & every
meal we eat is an attempt to get rid of death.
But it is of no avail.*

"After all, for us - who are Greek Orthodox
by religion - death is only an episode"

Genl. John Metaxas
premier of Greece
at the time Hitler
threatened to in-
vade & overtake
her.

It is noble to will life in spite of suffering.
Man must strive to become stronger and by sur-
passing himself. Man is not a man merely but a
dynamite. (Nietzsche)

MYSTERY OF DEATH

Death falls heavy upon him who is too much known ~~to himself~~ to others and too little to himself; and Portarroy, a man celebrated among the early restorers of literature, thought the study of ^{our} ~~our~~ death of so much importance, that he has recommended it from his tomb: 'I am Portarroy, beloved of the powers of literature, admired by men of world, and dignified by monarchs. Then knowest thou who I am, or more properly who I was. Yet thou, stranger, I who am in darkness can not know thee, but I entreat thee to know Thyself.'

. Seneca .

To him, alas, to him, I fear,
The face of death will terrible appear,
Who in his life, flattering his senseless pride,
By being known to all the world beside,
Does not himself, when he is dying know,
Nor what he is, nor whither he is to go.

J. Johnson.

Every man is a god in the making. His soul is
part or parcel of God. Emerson.

He taught me doctrine - 'the insignificance of the
private man.'

True friendship
is a passion of an
action of the same kind.

It is necessary to be, at intervals, dis-
enchanted of sublunary hopes & fears
that we may place ourselves in His
presence who view 'effects in their
causes' and 'actions in their motives',
that we consider things as if there were
no other ~~than~~ beings in the world
but God & ourselves; or may commune
with our hearts & be still.

Johnson.

He must expect to be wretched
who prays to beauty, riches, or politeness
that regard which only virtue & piety
can obtain.

Johnson.

That life protracted is protracted woe.

Johnson.

The Darkless dwells in the heart of death,
When Man bursts his mortal bounds, the
Boundless stands revealed.

- Tagore

Life is a funeral procession with the
laughing of gods from behind - the best
thing is to join in that laughing & be
all-wise.

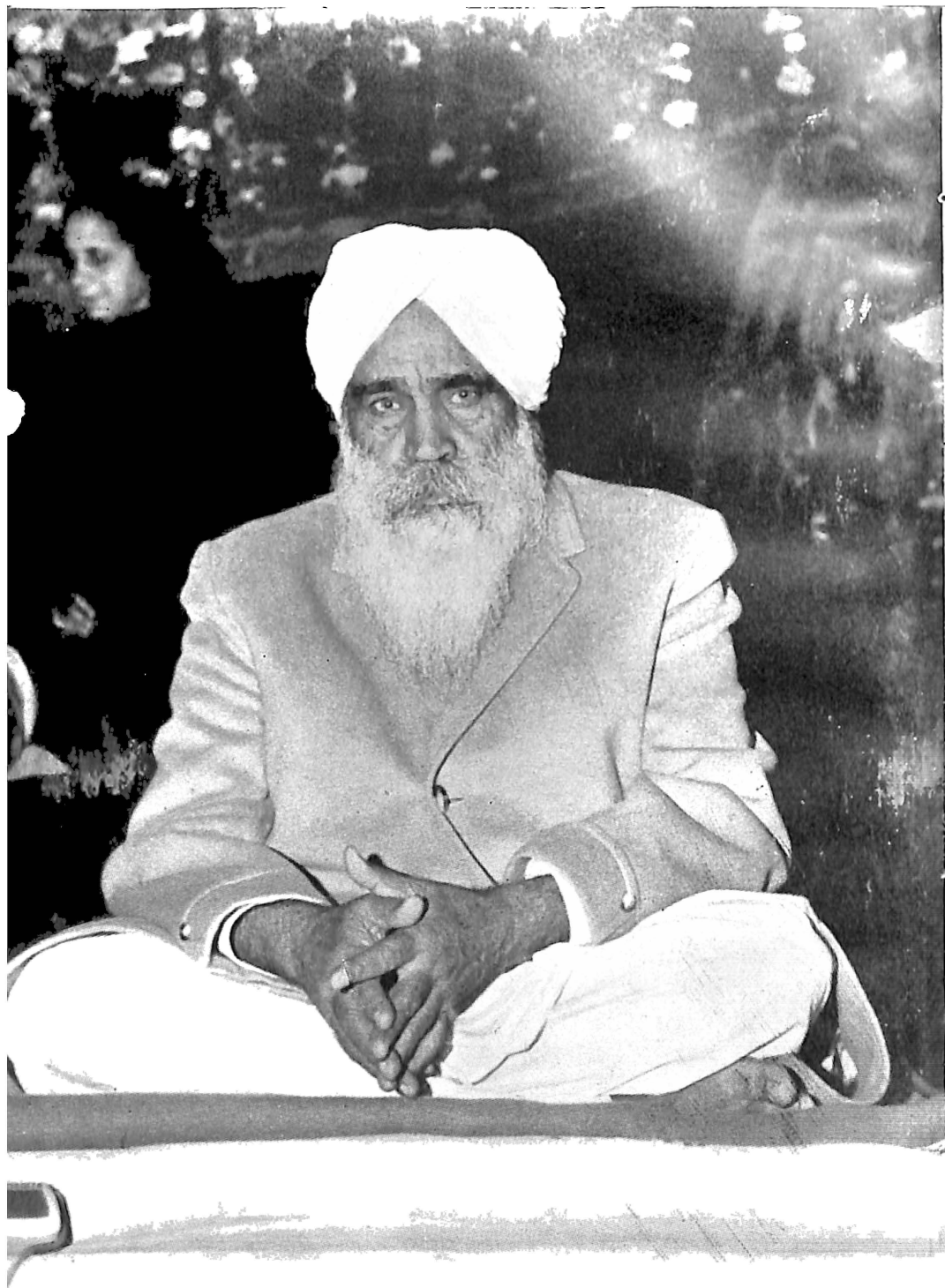
- Ghalib.

From God we come & unto Him we return.

- Quran.

'Know Thyself & nothing to exceed.'
Delphic Temple to Apollo.

The mind is more than the brain. The
'creative' mind is more than the 'analytical'
mind (or brain). It is the cr. mind that
alone can realize the fundamental truths
of experience. The cr. mind contains within it
the entire past, present & future. Frank Baggam.



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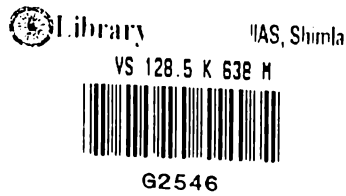
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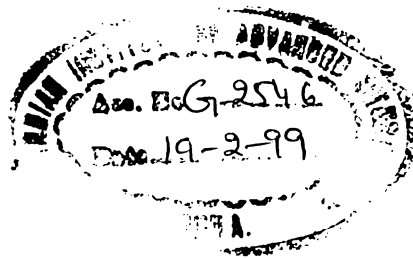
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*Dedicated
to the Almighty God
working through all Masters who have come
and Baba Sawan Singh ji Maharaj
at whose lotus feet
the author imbibed sweet elixir of
Holy Naam—the Word*

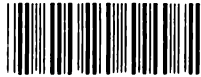
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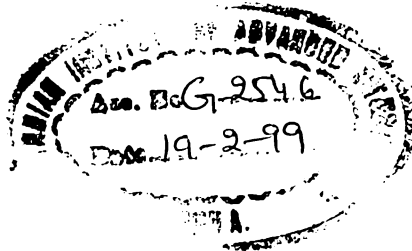
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'Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone'

FOREWORD

Sant Kirpal Singh, who has for years kept ablaze the torch of spirituality in his capacity as President of the World Fellowship of Religions, has for the good of humanity attempted in this book to throw light on a theme which has baffled the seekers of God and others through the ages. A careful study of it may have the effect of lessening the terrific fright that contemplation of death causes to countless millions by adopting means which are favoured by almost all the religions of the world, especially those of which God is the focal centre.

Radha Krishna Khanna
M.A., LLB.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

‘Death’ is the greatest enigma in life. It has baffled humankind from times out of mind. And yet despite all attempts to solve the mystery, it has remained as mysterious as ever before.

The Saints of the highest order—Sant Satgurus, or the Perfect Masters—who come down from the region of deathlessness and are ever in tune with the Infinite, know the shadowy character of death. They teach us that death is not what it seems. It is a joyous birth (born again) into a life more beatific than we ever dreamed of here. It is just as sun sets on this side of the globe and rises in the other part. They point out and demonstrate to us the way to conquer the seemingly invincible and terrifying death and thus become fear-free. This is the grand lesson that we can get from the Saints. They assure us that we do not die—we simply shake off physical vesture of body to work in other bodies : physical or astral or causal ; and ultimately rise to realise our divine nature and see oneness in God—the All-consciousness and bliss.

In the pages that follow, an attempt has been made to suggest the way to the solution of tangled riddle in succinct and lucid language which may be easily intelligible to the reader. The study offers a somewhat simplified approach to the abstruse and esoteric doctrines pertaining to the body and the soul, the relation between the two. It also offers the methods to control the mind so as to make it a willing and obedient instrument for transcending body-consciousness, which can be a foretaste of the

actual death-experience which all of us have to undergo ultimately.

The glory of a Perfect Master lies not only in teaching merely on the level of intellect but in encompassing a direct, immediate and first-hand experience of what he teaches. The science of the Masters is the only spiritual science which is demonstrable in the laboratory of the mind. It yields out-of-body experiences, opening up vast vistas of spiritual awakening into unearthly realms of indescribable splendour; and all this while living in the flesh. Salvation to be real must be gained right now and here.

The way to the Spirit, and Power of God, is always open to the sincere seekers after Truth, but success on the Path depends on the divine grace mediated through some God-man. One who is fired with the love of God is sure to find the means to reach God. It is just a question of the intensity of yearning. Where there is sincere and genuine love of God, He comes in the garb of a Saint to lead the aspirants to Himself. May His Light be a lamp unto the feet of those who aspire for the Life of the Spirit, and lead the aspirants to a human pole where that Light shines.

My heartfelt thanks go to Shri Bhadra Sena specially, and to other dedicated souls like him who in one form or another helped in bringing out this work; and spent long hours over the manuscript in a spirit of loving devotion.

August 25, 1968

Kirpal Singh

INTRODUCTION

‘Life’ and ‘Death’ are correlative terms. In the realm of relativity we cannot think, speak and act except by putting one thing in juxtaposition to another. This is the way to understand what is phenomenal. In multiplicity, we are confronted at every step with complex jigsaw puzzles, and have, therefore, to follow an analytical process of sorting out the component parts in each case, to name them individually and to put one in relation to the other, so as to comprehend something of it on the plane of the senses and the intellect. Thus by the very nature of things, and by the nature of the cognizing faculties with which nature has endowed us, we live by the knowledge of the parts only and never get a true picture of anything in its totality. Since we have no knowledge and experience of the noumenon, we are content all the while with forms and colours of the things we see, their attributes and characteristics which may be apparent on the surface, without penetrating into the depth, the central life-principle which is the self-same in all in spite of the differences in the mass, the density, the volume, the weight and the shape of what we see and observe. Like the Lady of Shallot, we live all the time in the world of shadows as reflected in the reflecting mirror (of mind and intellect), with our back turned, as it were, even upon the objective world around us, what to speak of the subjective world in each one of us—the world of reality with wonders greater, vaster, more gorgeous and more glorious than anything in the physical.

With the dawn of first flicker in man, of Divinity, the All-controlling and All-sustaining Power behind everything organic or inorganic, developed the consciousness of some principle which was the life and soul of the universe. This gradually led to the founding of various religions, each according to the insight that its founder had, regard being to the needs of the time and the people and the level of racial understanding and capacity to accept, digest, and assimilate the teachings of the Apostles, Messiahs and Prophets who came from time to time for the material, mental, moral, social and economic upliftment of the multitudes.

All religions spring from the best of motives. The leaders of religious thought are as much the product of the time as the conditions they create for the amelioration of the masses among whom they preach. This being the case, it may not be far amiss to say that for the majority of the people, the superb teachings of the enlightened teachers, formed what may be said socio-religions, codes of social and moral precepts so as to make people live in peace with one another, rather than in a state of perpetual unrest, and fear of war—war of one against all and all against one.

All good and virtuous thoughts, like other thoughts, proceed from the mind. In the case of world teachers such thoughts had their origin in the life of the spirit they lived. It is, however, very few who rise to their level, and profit by their intrinsic teachings, the practical aspect in each religion—mysticism—constituting the core of what they taught.

Thus the practical central theme was imparted to the chosen few—the elect—while the masses were given the theoretical aspect of the teachings in the form of parables as might, in course of time, enable them to grasp and understand the true import of what they actually taught. Thus as one probes the bottom of all religions, one gets glimpses of the reality no matter how faint and vague at times they appear because we have not yet developed the eyes which their founders had. For the common man, religion remained, for the most part, a theory, a rationalised theory at the most, to improve his lot in life and make him a better man, a better member of the social order to which he belonged, a true citizen of the state, clothed with civic rights and obligations, social and family responsibilities, for the healthy discharge of which he was thus equipped.

All virtues, all acts, all arts, all sciences and all crafts including statecraft, priest-craft, the gentlecraft have their basis in the lowest common multiple in varying degrees, of the underlying universal truth, as conceived by their progenitors; hence we see an amalgam of religion with social and moral trappings to make it presentable and acceptable to the generality of mankind. This is the aspect of religion that provides a firm basis to the social order of the race.

If we move a step further, we come to other stratum in religion. It is one of moral virtues, arising at different levels, as rites and rituals, forms and formularies, austerities and penances, humanities and charities, incantations to tame and reconcile irreconcilable powers that be, and invocations to

friendly powers for aid and succour in times of need.

Last, but not the least, come the yogis and yogishweras well versed in yogic disciplines as we shall presently see.

At the apex of the hierarchy, are Master-saints, Perfected-beings or God-men who not only speak of the Power and Spirit of God, but make It manifest in their initiates and consciously link individual souls with It. It must be said to their credit that theirs is the true religion, truly religious, etymologically and practically, binding men back to the Creator.

The teachings of Masters do not form an institutional religion as it is ordinarily understood to be. It is a regular species of science—the Science of Soul. Whosoever faithfully practises this science as enjoined by the Masters, gets the same experiences and arrives at the same conclusions; irrespective of the social religion to which he belongs and the Church; High or Low, Papal or Anglican, Episcopal or Presbyterian, to which he owes allegiance.

The Science of Soul is the kernel and the core of all religions. It is the foundation on which all religions rest. The Masters teach that there are seven planes—Pind, Und, Brahmand, Par Brahmand, Sach Khand, Alakh and Agam. And above all the cosmos, there is the eighth plane, called differently by the Saints as Anami (Nameless), Maha Dayal (Lord of compassion), Nirala (the most wonderful) or Swami (the Lord of all). The initiates of the Masters are given an account in brief of the distin-

*known
to be
Brahman
in the*

guishing features of each of the first five planes and the characteristic sounds and lights prevailing in each; and the names of the presiding powers.

The initiate who successfully crosses the first plane is called a sadhak (disciple). And the one who traverses the second is known as a Sadh (a disciplined soul). He who is washed clean in the Par Brahmmand of the lingerings and longings in him is called a Hansa (a purified soul) and he who goes further up is called a Param-Hansa (an immaculate soul). He who reaches the fifth plane (Sach Khand) is called a Sant or a Saint. And a Saint who is commissioned by the Supreme Being to teach Truth (Shiksha) and to demonstrate Truth (Diksha) is called a Sant Sat-guru (or a Perfect Master) having authority to guide jivas (human souls) into the realms beyond, to their ultimate Home (the Kingdom of God).

Yoga means union of soul with the Oversoul or God-power. There are so many forms of yoga—Mantra yoga, Hatha yoga, Ashtang yoga, Karam yoga, Bhakti yoga, Jnana yoga, Raja yoga, Laya yoga and the like. These yogic disciplines, more or less, deal with the training of the physical body, the outgoing faculties, the mind and the intellect. They aim at securing a healthy mind in a healthy body, so as to achieve health, physical fitness and longevity. Each has its own scope and purpose. But all these different yogic forms do not constitute watertight compartments but together they serve to integrate man to make him whole or an undivided individual. (For a detailed account in this behalf, reference may profitably be made to the study of "Crown of Life"

wherein the subject has been dealt with at some length).

There is yet another form of yoga—the Surat Shabd Yoga or Communion with the Holy Word (Sound Current). It is at the root of all religions and yet it is not properly understood by the theologians. It takes one to the ultimate goal—Anami or the Nameless Absolute Who is at the back of the entire creation both as its material and efficient Causeless Cause. As the Ocean of Pure Consciousness heaved, the Formless and Nameless Absolute came into expression, in many different forms with many different names by the Power of Its own heaving vibrations; the Sound whereof came to be called the Holy Word. How to get into direct touch with the Spirit and Power of God, the Primal Creative Principle (the Light of Life) is the subject of mysticism. While all philosophies deal with the manifested aspect of the Unmanifest and the creation of the Uncreate; mysticism, on the other hand, deals with the first Creative Principle itself, the vibratory force characterised by Sound and Light (Sruti and Jyoti).

The process of Communion with the Word starts with a conscious contact with the God-into-expression-Power (the Naam or the Holy Ghost) and it grants one an actual experience of ineffable bliss of the higher planes, not on credit to be experienced in the hereafter (after death); but right here and now, while yet living in flesh in the material, physical world.

These vibrations, resulting into various types of

sounds, guide the initiate through the different planes of varying densities, material and spiritual, and ultimately lead the spirit into a purely spiritual world of Sat Naam (the Kingdom of God), from where the Divine Harmony emanates which becomes the means of leading back the world-weary souls to the True Home of the loving Father—the heaven of bliss. Tulsi Sahib says: “A Sound from afar is coming down to call you back to God.” Similarly, we have the testimony of Shamas Tabrez when he, addressing himself, says: “O Shamas ! Hearken thou to the Voice of God, calling thee unto Him.” Guru Arjan likewise says:

He Who sent you into the world, below, is now
calling you back.

In the Quran we have: “O thou soul ! return to the Lord, well pleased and pleasing Him.”

A Perfect living Master is a ‘must’ on the path Godward. In the Gospel of St. John, we have: “No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” (14:6). All the Masters say that there is always in the world a Master or a ‘Murshid’ who functions as a Qibla Numa, or a pointer to the Qibla or the holiest of the holy, sanctum sanctorum, worthy of our adoration and worship. In the Sikh scriptures we have: “The teachers come in succession from age to age.” St. Luke likewise tells us: “As He spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began.” (1:70).

The Law of Demand and Supply is always

working in nature. There is food for the hungry and water for the thirsty. Where there is fire, oxygen of its own comes to its aid. But each Prophet and a Messiah works out his mission for the time he is sent into the world. Jesus said: "As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." (John 9:5). But when one fulfils his commission, he is recalled, gathered up and passes away from the scene of his activity on the earth-plane. In nature, there is no such thing as vacuum. The Power-of-God cannot but continue the work of the regeneration for it is a ceaseless task. While withdrawing from one human pole, the said Power chooses another human pole for Its manifestation and work in the world. Such a human pole may be said to be the vicegerent of God. He steps into the breach, fills in the gap and carries on the work. It is just like replacing a fused bulb with the new one, to ensure continuity of Light. The Christ Power or the Power-of-God continues to shine undiminished from one pole or another; may be in the likeness of Zoroaster, Confucius, Jesus, Mohammed, Kabir, Nanak, Tulsi Sahib or Soami Ji.

As stated before, the world is never without a Master. After Soami Ji, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji carried on his Master's mission in the Punjab and then his illustrious spiritual son and successor, Hazur Sawan Singh Ji whose grace continues to shine, even now, more than ever before, all over the world through 'Ruhani Satsang' with its Headquarters in Delhi—a common forum where religious heads of the country and from abroad meet, from time to time, and work in cementing mankind into one brotherhood as children of God, irrespective of the social

religious orders and the countries to which they belong.

When the Saints leave the world, accounts of their valuable experiences in the course of their search for Truth are compiled and they add to the sacerdotal literature of the world, as extant today. In the twentieth century we are fortunate to have several scriptures coming down, from ages gone by. We have Zend Avesta, the Vedas, the Upanishadas, the great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Bhagwad Gita, the old and new Testaments, the Al-Quran, the Ad Granth and many other books like Sar Bachan and Gurmat Sidhant. All of them deal with the self-same Truth which is one, and only one, but approach to Truth, is in a variety of ways each having its peculiar terminology and mode of expression. But most of us sticking to the teachings of the one or the other of the sages, find it hard to comprehend their import for lack of knowledge of the inner meaning of key-words employed and the language or dialect pressed into service. Unless a man of realisation who has himself experienced the truths propounded by the writers comes to our aid and explains them to us and in a way intelligible to us, we cannot get at the real meanings. In the hands of such a competent Master, the past records come alive and become a source of inspiration for the aspiring souls. It is, therefore, said :

The scriptures are tools in the hands of a Master and do help in ferrying across the sea of life,

But the scriptures become intelligible only when some God-man comes to interpret them.

At initiation, the seeker after Truth is consciously linked with the Holy Word, the God-into-expression Power in the form of Light and Sound emanating from the vibratory motion in the depth of the Ocean of Love as God is. He is given a direct demonstration of the Power and Spirit of God and begins to see the Light of God and to hear the Music of Spheres, vibrating unceasingly everywhere, in space and out of space, for there is no place where It is not. Of Guru Nanak, fully dyed in the colour of the All-pervading Naam and always living in a state of continuous ecstasy, it is said that once in his travels he, while in Mecca (in Arabia), was one day found lying in the sacred precincts with his feet towards the sacred shrine 'Qaaba.' The attendants of the shrine could not tolerate this apparently sacrilegious act. They rebuked him for the affront saying, "How is it that you are lying with your feet towards the House of God?" Guru Nanak who was conscious of the Spirit of God surging everywhere and in every direction, meekly asked, "Please tell me where God is not so that I may turn my feet in that direction." This is how God-centred Saints look at things. They see God everywhere and in all directions as an All-pervading Life-principle pulsating in all that is.

Similarly, in Al-Quran, the Prophet has declared: "The Kingdom of God extends from east to west and the faithful can find Him in whatsoever direction they may turn their face towards Him, for God is sure to meet them in that very direction; as He is not confined to any particular space and is All-knowing, knowing the heart of each."

Al-nisai, a Muslim darvesh, elaborating this point goes on to explain: "For me the whole earth is but a tabernacle of God and a holy place for offering prayers. My followers are free to say their prayers wherever they may happen to be, when the time of prayer dawns."

In the Acts of the Apostles (17:24), we have: "God is the Creator of heaven and earth and He dwelleth not in temples made by (human) hands."

Oliver Wendell Holmes, therefore, lays more emphasis on devotion than on anything else for loving devotion sanctifies the place, the time and mode of prayer. He says: "All is holy where one kneels in devotion."

The Power and Spirit of God is All-pervading. It is ever-present and ever-vibrating. By attuning to the Divine Melody, the soul is spontaneously lifted, as it were in an electric lift, to higher and higher regions and one proceeds on and on in the wake of the tuneful Music which gradually becomes more and more subtle until it gets absorbed into the Source whence it proceeds—the Absolute, the Anami or the Nameless and the Wordless.

We all are in search of God according to our own lights. The souls after passing through a long and wearisome evolutionary process of self-discipline and self-purification, are ultimately led by the God-power to the feet of a Master-saint for journey back to God. "No man can come to me except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise

him at the last day." (John 5:44). The 'last day' here means the day when one leaves the dross of the body, may be voluntarily in one's lifetime by rising above body-consciousness by the practical process of self-analysis; or involuntarily at the time of death when the sensory currents are wrenched out of the body by the Angel of Death. Guru Arjan says: "He that sent you into the world is now calling you back. Turn ye Homeward with ease and comfort."

The inventions of radio and radar have now proved, beyond doubt, that the atmosphere around us is full of vibrating sounds which can be picked up and drawn down to be heard from any distance whatsoever provided there is an instrument well-equipped, well-adjusted and well-attuned to catch them. This is exactly what a competent Master does at the time of initiation when he tunes in individual souls and makes the Sound principle audible to them.

The outer earthly music has great impact on man. The soldiers on the march are roused by the martial strains of bugles and trumpets. The highlanders in their tartan kilts march triumphantly with the sound of pibrochs or the bag-pipes. The sailors and seamen tug and pull at the sails and work at the oars with rhythmic shouts. The muffled drums play the funeral march to the sorrowing mourners accompanying a bier. The dancers dance in unison with the accompanying music and the jingling of their bracelets and anklets. Even the animals, like the chiming of the bells tied to their horns. The fleet-footed antelope is enticed from the hiding thickets by the beating of drums. The deadly cobras are charmed

by the snake-charmer by the music of vina. The outer music takes the soul to the end of the material plane and raises emotions which otherwise lie too deep for tears. Such indeed is the power of music. John Dryden, an eminent English poet of the seventeenth century, speaks of it eloquently:

What passion cannot Music raise and quell?
When Jubal struck the chorded shell,
His listening brethren stood around,
And wondering, on their faces fell
To worship that celestial sound.
Less than a God they thought there could
not dwell
Within the hollow of that shell,
That spoke so sweetly and so well.
What passion cannot Music raise and quell?

When such is the power of the earthly music, one may well imagine what would be the power of the celestial Music? How inebriating and exhilarating it would be when one would begin to rise above body-consciousness and be in tune with the heavenly Harmony. The Word is the God-power come into expression. God is Symphonic Love, all bubbling out and brimming over. He is the Source at once of Love, Light and Life.

The way to the Absolute leads through many mansions (planes and sub-planes) lying on the way from the physical to the Father's Home. The journey is fraught with danger. The mental planes are altogether impassable without a guide fully conversant with the turns and twists of the path. Hence the

imperative need for a Guru (torch-bearer) or a competent Master, a regular traveller on the way, fully cognizant of the difficulties and hazards that beset the path. He alone who is conversant with the way Godward, can safely take the spirit through slippery regions of blinding light and bewildering shadows and through delusive siren-charms and the terrors of the unknown. Maulana Rumi therefore exhorts us:

Find thou a traveller of the path for without
such a traveller,
The path is full of untold pitfalls and inconceivable dangers.

We, on the other hand, are deeply engrossed in the world. Kabir gives us a vivid description of our helplessness in the fearsome sea of the world. He tells us that the way to real happiness is long and dreary; and we are snoring deeply on the plane of the senses. He asks us to wake-up and start on the tortuous uphill journey. We all are in the deadly grip of the steely tentacles of life carrying a heavy load of delusions on our head. Our so-called friends and relations are mostly our creditors and debtors and they are mercilessly pulling us to pieces in devious ways. The wonder is that we lovingly hold on to them and hug them to our bosom little knowing that they are bleeding us white. What we consider as our very own is just a mirage and is very often taken away from us in the twinkling of an eye. Again, the poor soul has, after death, to tread the solitary path to the judgement seat of God (Dharam Raj, the Divine Dispensing Power) all alone. With

the worn-out boat of the body, we are floating rudderless like weeds in the treacherous streams, continuous prey to chance winds and stormy waters. How then are we going to cross over to the other shore? For a mere pittance we are constantly engaged in a losing game; and in the end pass out like a hunted quarry, and know not whither we go. We have no knowledge of the life beyond the grave. How can we be saved? This defies our understanding and we feel baffled and helpless.

The Master promises to be with us all the time, both here and in the hereafter into the beyond. He gives a demonstration of it to the initiate by manifesting his Radiant Form within each one of the initiates. And he assures us in no uncertain terms: "Where I am, there shall ye be also."

The initiate is taught the esoteric way to rise into the Kingdom of Heaven which lies within him. The inner journey starts with the opening of the single eye or 'shiv netar.' It opens when the sensory currents are withdrawn and gathered up to the seat of the soul at the eye focus behind and between the two eyebrows. On entering into the beyond, the initiate can talk to the Master within and come back with a fully conscious recollection of the experiences gained on the inner planes. In the Kingdom of Heaven there is neither the chain of endless cause and effect nor is there space nor time. There is nothing but one continuous present in which one lives in a world of his own. The communication between soul and soul is through etheric thought-waves or vibrations.

All this, and much more, can be achieved by daily and prolonged loving devotion to the spiritual sadhanas or practices. In this way, an initiate attains conscious contact with the Master on the higher planes and by degrees gets absorbed in Him, so much so that he becomes one with Him; and Paul-like begins to say:

I am crucified in Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son-of-God, who loved me.

—(Gal. 2:20)

The Master is 'Word-made-flesh,' he is all the time in direct and constant communion with the Divine Word in him nay, he actually revels in It and often proclaims: "I and my Father are one," or as we read in Gurbani, "I and my Father are dyed in the self-same colour," or "I and my Father are in working partnership with each other" (so as to run together the spiritual administration of the world). In short, it may be said that the Master is a conscious co-worker with God of the Divine Plan.

Ashtal | At times, the Master takes the initiate 'under cover' far beyond certain planes which are bewitchingly beautiful so that he may not get entangled therein and be lost in the wonders of the way. Maulana Rumi therefore says:

If you intend going on a pilgrimage (into the beyond) then take thou a pilgrim for thy companion,

It matters not whether the said pilgrim is a Hindu, a Turk or an Arab ; but see that He is a real pilgrim.

A living Master is such a pilgrim. "Type of the wise who soar but never roam ; True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home." To have a living Master is a great blessing. He never leaves nor forsakes the initiates even unto the end of the world. When one is initiated, the Master lives in him in His astral or luciform body and ever remains with him till the end of journey to Sat Naam or Sat Purush ; and absorbs himself in Him and also makes the initiate-soul get absorbed in Him—the two becoming one in Him. Even if at any time the disciple goes astray or is led astray, he is brought back to the path of rectitude either in this very life or in succeeding ones.

Again, Christ and other Masters have, in course of time, to pass away from the earth-plane and yet they ^{شہد کروپ} live in Shabd form within, but out of space and out of time. Bound as we are with one or the other of them, we naturally wish to live and die for them. But little do we know how to contact them within our own self. Such a contact is possible and well within our reach if we but find a Shabd swaroop or Word personified teacher competent to link us with the Word, nay transform us into the Word in which all Masters of ages gone by eternally live.

I am reminded of a lady who met me in America during 1955. She used to greet Christ within herself and was thus self-satisfied and did not like to make

further attempt to advance further on the *spiritual* path. One day I casually suggested to her to ask Christ as to what further steps *He* would prescribe for inner progress. The following day she came and warmly pressed for initiation, remarking that Christ had directed her to seek the guidance of the living Perfect Master if she desired to further advance.

The Powers within never obstruct the seekers after God; and if one is in contact with an ancient Master, he readily and gladly tells his devotees what to do for the next steps on the spiritual path.

A few of the initiates are taken up by the Master and shown the glory of the fifth region (Sach Khand) and most of the initiates are guided on to that plane. But as said before, there are in all eight regions, and the eighth is the ultimate goal which is reached by those who attain complete perfection.

It is after transcending Sat Lok that one gets to know the ineffable and incomprehensible,
It is in the region beyond all these that Saints reside and Nanak the lowly one also rests there.

St. John, the Divine, in the Revelations, gives us an exposition of his inner experiences :

I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day and heard
behind me a great voice as of a trumpet,
Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and
the last ;
And I turned to see the voice that spake with
me.

He was one like unto the Son of man.
 His eyes were as a flame of fire ;
 His voice as the sound of many waters ;
 His countenance was as the sun shineth in his
 strength,
 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet dead and
 he laid his right hand upon me saying unto
 me—Fear not, I am the first and the last ;
 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the
 spirit saith :
 To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of ^{his own}
 the fruit of life.
 He shall not be hurt of the second death, ^{given}
 To him will I give to eat the hidden manna, and ^{eternal}
 will give him a white stone and in the stone a
 new name written, which no man knoweth
 saving he that receiveth.
 And he shall be clothed in white raiment and I
 will not blot his name out of the Book of Life,
 And I will make him a pillar in the temple of
 my God.
 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire ^{strongly}
 that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment ^{new}
 that thou mayest be clothed ;
 And anoint thine eyes with eye salve that mayest ^{pure}
 see.

—Ch. 1, 2 & 3.

In Ch. 12 of the second book of Corinthians,
 St. Paul speaking of his visions and revelations tells
 us of the third heaven when he says : “I knew a man ^{tridevati}
 caught in the third heaven (Brahmand), whether in
 the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God
 knoweth.

“How that he was caught up into the paradise[/] and heard unspeakable words which is not lawful for me to utter.”

All the Masters stop short when it comes to revealing the innermost secrets. Shamas Tabrez says : “When it comes to telling the tale of the Beloved, my pen falters and the page is torn.” Maulana Rumi also forbids the giving out of the inner secrets : “Thou mayest tell thy vision, not a jot this or that even. Else He will blot out all that thou hast seen, as it had never been.” So does Kabir emphatically declare :

I beseech thee with all the force at my command,
Be careful that the inner secrets do not go out.

We may as well close this with the memorable words from the famous Masnavi wherein the great Rumi says :

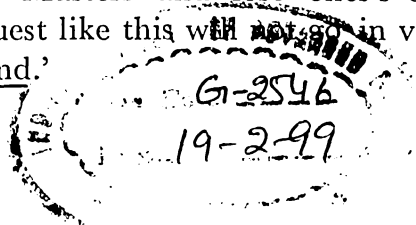
It is not fitting that I tell thee more,
For the streams' bed cannot hold the sea.

This then is the way that the Masters of yore kept hidden to themselves the Secret Doctrine of Divinity, as a sacred trust, and imparted something of it only to their trusted and tested disciples (gurmukhs). Indeed it is not a subject that can adequately be discussed in mere words. The proof of the pudding, however, lies in its eating. It is a practical process of self-analysis, tapping and inversion ; and whosoever by the grace of a Perfect Master gains an access into himself and delves deep within is sure ~~of~~ find the pearl of inestimable value. A touch of reality makes one real beyond all relativity ; and the

mortal man is at once transmuted into an immortal spirit, dissolving the Gordian knot between the inert matter and the living soul. Thus is solved the mystery of 'life' and 'death,' for life alone exists through the passing shadows of all that is transitory, swallowing death in victory at every step. *re/*

In the following pages, an attempt has been made to tell something of the Secret Doctrine in the three dimensional language at our disposal which is highly inadequate to express the ineffable. May the Power and Spirit of God help the readers to a better understanding of the subject at the feet of some Competent Master, capable of delivering the spiritual riches here and now in this life, for who knows whether the Truth will dawn or not in the hereafter as it is so solemnly and seriously held out and promised by so-called teachers with whom the world abounds. In this context Christ has given a solemn warning : "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (Math. 7 : 15). If a blind leads the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

It is, therefore, of paramount importance that one must make a thorough search for a Competent and Perfect Master and satisfy oneself of the genuineness before accepting and adopting him as an unerring guide and an unfailing friend on the God-way. It does not matter if one may have to spend his entire life-span in this momentous quest rather than be taken in by pseudo Masters and lose one's only chance in life. A quest like this will ~~not~~ be in vain. 'Seek and ye shall find.'



*I died as mineral and became a plant,
 I died as plant and rose to animal,
 I died as animal and I was a man.
 Why should I fear ? when was I less by dying ?
 Yet, once more, I shall die as man, to soar—
 With angels blessed, but even from angelhood
 I must pass on; all except God doth perish.
 When I have sacrificed my angel soul,
 I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.
 Oh ! let me not exist, for non-existence
 Proclaims in organ-tones, "To Him we shall return."*

Maulana Rumi

دریا چھو کر نہ تے - نہ ہونا تو سی خدا ہو ؟ غائب

*I Am lost to myself :: of my existence
 I would have been God but for this
 existence
 "Ghaleeb"*

I

NOTHING DIES IN NATURE

Death and deathlessness both inhere in the nature of all that is—all that combines in itself both matter and spirit. Matter is but a projecting screen for the spirit—the all-pervading spirit that attracts matter in varying degrees of densities and vibrations to manifest itself in various patterns of forms and colours, at different levels of existence. Spirit by itself without material mantle to manifest itself on the earth-plane is a void; for spirit without the covering of matter cannot be seen with the eyes of flesh just as the power of spring makes itself felt only when it acts on flowers and fruits making them bloom and blossom with juicy fragrance and luscious flavour.

Man represents in him the doctrine of trinity on earth, as he combines in himself body, mind and soul, the last being of the essence of God, the life-breath enlivening both the body and the mind making one a living man, with the breath of God surging in him from top to toe.

The human body is individualised matter inasmuch as spirit enshrouded therein seems to be an individualised spirit like the sun reflected in so many water pots. At death, the body, composed as it is of different elements, dissolves and returns to the cosmic reservoir of substances, ultimately merging in one primal substance ; and the soul returns to God :

“As soon as the silver cord is loosened, the golden bowl is broken like a pitcher at the fountain or the wheel at the cistern. Then the dust returns unto the earth as it was and the spirit returns unto God who gave it.” (Eccl. 12 : 6-7).

A living man is not something independent of, and apart from the Supreme Power, that flows in him. He is a product of the Supreme Power acting on material plane through an organised body of waves which produce a state of consciousness in him. Man exists when the Supreme Power runs in and through his bodily mould, but when that Power withdraws unto Itself, he is no more a living entity for all functional activity in him ceases and what remains?—nothing but a mass of inert matter the same as before in shape and substance, but without the living life-impulse that was pulsating in him moments before.

Like man, the entire universe is a manifestation of the one life-principle, the principle of living consciousness in varying degrees, right from Logos down to the atoms of the material elements perpetually moving in rhythmic motion, forming and reforming in quick succession many patterns by the Supreme Power acting in and upon them. In short, the intelligence of the universe abides, and abides forever and anon, in the heart of each atom which is dancing to its tune like the eternal dance of Siva, the living embodiment of Shakti, the Mother of the universe. In the esoteric cosmogony, the theory of ‘dead’ matter does not find any place whatsoever for matter cannot exist by itself without the cohesive power

inherent therein. Matter in fact is energy in congealed form.

In ancient philosophy, a sharp distinction was drawn between 'being' and 'existence.' The Logos, the Archetypal world is that of true being, changeless and eternal ; while 'existence' is an expression and expansion or a moving forward and outward into the world of becoming, a world of ceaseless change and transformation from moment to moment.

Physiologists and physicians like botanists, horticulturists, floriculturists, tell us a lot of the mechanical and chemical processes going on in the human metabolism or in fact in any living organism, be it a tree, a flower, a fruit, an ant or an elephant ; but cannot tell us why they live, how they live, what for they live, what is life itself, and above all what is consciousness that characterises the life-impulse on any and every plane of existence.

The cosmic cycle proves that life is eternal. It is an endless process. It continues on and on, assuming one form after another in endless series, appearing, disappearing and reappearing like waves and bubbles on the stream of time—time rolling down from eternity to eternity. Nature is but one vast reservoir of life and matter in which nothing is lost and nothing dies, no matter how forms may change, and change kaleidoscopically in less than the twinkling of an eye. It is this changing process that is commonly called death—death of one form at one place and birth in another form at another place or on another plane. Invisible vapour arising from the sea dies so as to

change into visible solid snow on the mountain-top and the visible snow in its turn taking once again the reverse process—the process of death, melts into liquid water and water changes back into invisible gaseous aeriform or vapour again, making a continuous chain of cause and effect. Similarly, man becomes visible entity when spirit puts on a human form and then in course of time that very man of so many parts on the stage of life (at once son, brother, husband and father ; now an infant, then a young man and lastly a dotard), ultimately becomes invisible when the spirit in him withdraws causing to the consternation of those around, a void in the vast web of relationships that he wove around him during his existence on the earth-plane. This is what actually happens at the time of the final change when the physical body disintegrates and resolves into the cosmic order of things, and life currents merge into the great cosmic life-principle which is vitally organic in nature ; and not chemically inorganic and mechanical.

Death is not what it seems to be, and what it is taken for in common parlance. Death and life are correlative terms on the earth-plane only, but in reality there is no difference between the two, and in fact one cannot be contradistinguished from the other ; for death cannot swallow life nor can death put an end to life. It is just an interchangeable process as two sides of a coin rotating on its axis. Do we not see day and night, light and darkness, alternately coming and going, as the rotating earth spins and revolves round the sun casting shadows of varying lengths at different places while the sun itself continues to

shine all the time. Death does not mean total extinction or annihilation as, at times, it is believed to be. It is nothing but a change of consciousness from one place of existence to another place of existence. Life, on the contrary, is one continuous process which knows no end for the so-called death that follows life is not lifelessness but life in another form at another place, here on earth or elsewhere and in a different form, with a different name, and under different set of circumstances as is adjudged by Divine Dispensation working on the inexorable law of action 'as ye sow, so shall ye reap.' Life being a positive expression of the Supreme Being, is not subject to the negativity of death, and the latter cannot, therefore, extinguish the former—the eternal flame of life.

We have the testimony of an unbroken line of Masters who taught that life and death are mere words in the world of duality, meant to describe the surface effect or the circumferential shifting of the state of consciousness of the Inner Being dwelling at the centre. These are merely visible and invisible stages in the cosmic cycle through which the inner man passes. The lamentable, horrifying and much-dreaded death is, in reality, a rebirth (being born again of the inner man) into a life which may be more joyous and more beautiful than known hitherto. "Death the awe-inspiring and heart-rending death," says Kabir, "is to me a harbinger of joyous life, and I welcome it fully." The Gospels also tell of the Kingdom of God that awaits one beyond the death-door :

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.....

Except a man be born of water and of spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.....

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but cans't not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the spirit.

(—John 3:3-8)

Thus with each successive death or dissolution of form, the spirit freed from the solid mould, renews from strength to strength and from power to power, growing in greater and wider consciousness than ever before. In this context Maulana Rumi tells us :

I died as mineral and became a plant,

I died as plant and rose to animal,

I died as animal and I was a man.

Why should I fear? when was I less by dying?

Yet, once more, I shall die as man, to soar—

With angels blessed, but even from angelhood

I must pass on; all except God doth perish.

When I have sacrificed my angel soul,

I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.

Oh ! let me now exist, for non-existence

Proclaims in organ-tones, "To Him we shall return."

Death then is another name for a change in the central life-principle, the pivot round which organised life-m Monad moves and functions. It is a change from one set of circumstances to another set of circumstances, in different forms and under different

conditions as most suited to the ultimate unfoldment into full efflorescence of the Self or the living-monad, leading to greater and greater awareness of, and arising into the higher, spiritual values of life :

Behold, I show you a mystery ; we shall not sleep (in death), but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye..... raised incorruptible....putting on incorruptionand immortality.....swallowing Death in victory.....(defying) the sting (both) of death and (the fear of) grace.

—(Cor. 15:51-55)

In 'Man the Unknown' Alex Carel says: "Man is made up of a procession of phantoms, in the midst of which strides the unknowable Reality." Nanak, likewise, speaks of himself, in much the same strain : "In the midst of the outer physical mould, called Nanak, plays the invisible Power of the Supreme Being."

In Bhagwad Gita, the Song of the Adorable One, Bhagwan Krishna, the seventh avtar of Vishnu, one of the famous triad in the Hindu mythology, tells us :

Know thou, O Prince of Pandu, that there was never a time, when I, nor thou, nor any of these princes of earth was not ; nor shall there ever come a time, hereafter, when any of us shall cease to be. As the soul, wearing this material body, experienceth the stages of infancy, youth, manhood and old age, even so shall it, in due course of time, pass on to another body, and

in other incarnations shall it again live, and move and play its part. Those who have attained the wisdom of the Inner Doctrine, know these things, and fail to be moved by aught that cometh to pass in this world of change—to such Life and Death are but words, and both are but surface aspects of the deeper Being (within).

Thus it is clear that under the cosmic cyclic law, all things move in a circle and all things are eternal. The dance of Siva, at once the god of death, and death leading to rebirth, not unoften at a higher level of existence, goes on forever and forever. Under this ever-revolving wheel of life, man, by a process of evolution or growth, keeps changing from a mere physical to an astral, then to causal and finally to a spiritual being on various planes of existence until he rightly comes to his own; knows and realises the ever-evolving principle of consciousness in him in its fullness which he potentially is and embraces the totality of his being. “All the same, we live, move and have our individual being in God (the Universal Being), for we are His offspring and He is the very being of our being and without His Power working in us, we cannot exist and function.” (Acts 17:23-24).

‘Like begets like.’ Each thing, be it a plant, an animal or a man, grows from the seed after its own kind, though according to a set pattern of life determined by the quality inherent in the seed. “God giveth it (the seed) a body as it hath pleased Him and to every seed his own body.” (1 Cor. 15:38-40).

Man at the highest rung in the ladder of life on earth is not fragmented from his Maker. The Father is in the son in a potential form and the son is firmly rooted in the Father, though he may, circumstanced as he is, not know it owing to limitations of the fleshly raiments in which he lives all the time functioning on the earth-plane. Because of the Power of *in/* God working [^]him, he verily but unwittingly lives in the temple of God: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of the holy God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (and therefore is you). The term 'man' is merely a name applied to the incarnated God-spirit on the earth-plane. This then is the famous doctrine of holy trinity: A whole consisting of three parts—the Father (the Universal Spirit), the son (the individualised spirit clothed in body, mind and intellect) and the Holy Ghost (the saving links or life-lines between the two by following which the human-spirit transhumanises the human trappings)—all combined in man. Hence the exhortation of the Prophet of Galilee: "Be ye Perfect as your Father in heaven is Perfect." Perfection comes from the Perfect One.

'Perfection' then is the goal of human life which consists in self-unfoldment or evolution of the individual spirit by transcending the limitations of body, mind and intellect and by tapping the deep-rooted latencies in the depths of the great sea of unconsciousness yet unexplored and unknown. It is indeed a difficult task but not impossible to achieve, if one is lucky enough to contact a Master-soul, well-versed both in the science and art of Pra Vidya or the knowledge of the worlds that are heavenly and lie beyond

the senses which help us only in the realm of Apra Vidya or the knowledge of the empirical world of observation and experimentation. "The Kingdom of God cometh not by observation—the Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21). The Kingdom of God is not to descend from the clouds above. It is already there in man and one can witness its glory by the process of inversion (akin to death), a voluntary process of course while living, as was taught by the Masters to their chosen disciples, from times immemorial. What a man has done, [^]man can do if there is proper help and guidance from some God-man. Every Saint had a past and every sinner has a future.

II

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

We all have come down to the distant land called earth, like so many prodigal children of God, carrying with us the potential of our Father, which we are frittering away, day by day and moment by moment, in exploring the ephemeral beauties and glories of this region, losing all recollection of our divine origin and the blissful parental home, and of our ancestry together with the great heritage that is ours. 'Born of the flesh,' and living in the flesh we have lost our touch with the saving life-lines within, and as such are spiritually dead—dead in spite of the hectic life on physical and mental levels and the wondrous achievements in the fields of art, science and technology. With all the comforts of life that Dame Nature has provided to her foster-child, man, we yet live in a state of perpetual fear and distrust not only of others but of our own self for we find ourselves helplessly and hopelessly adrift on the sea of life without any moorings to hold on and keep our barque on a steady and even keel on the tumultuous waters.

Man is a microcosm, a replica of the macrocosm (universe). The two—the individual and the universal—are intimately inter-related, part to part. All that is without is also within and the spirit in man despite the heavy load of physical and mental trammels has the capacity to break through the thick

enshrouding veils and peep into what lies beyond—the perpetual sway of the Supreme God, the eternal self-existing Truth, perennially the same from the beginning of time.

We have, in this respect, the testimony of a number of mystics :

Thou while living in space, hath thy roots out
of space,
Learn thou to shutter down this side, and soar
into fields infinite,
For so long as one does not rise above the world
of senses,
One remains an utter stranger to the world of
God,
Strive on and on, till thou art completely out of
the cage,
And then shalt thou know the vanity of the
realms below,
Once thou art above the body and the bodily
adjuncts,
Thy spirit shall bear testimony to the glory of
God;
Thy seat is verily the throne of God,
Fie on thee that thou chooseth to live in a hovel.
Thou hath a body even when out of the body,
Why then art thou afraid to get out of the body?

O friend ! bypass the life of the flesh
That thou mayst experience the Light of Life,
Thou verily art the life of all that exists here,
Nay, both the worlds, here and hereafter art in
thee,

It is from thee that all wisdom hath descended,
And it is to thee that God reveals His mysteries,
In short, though thou appeareth but so small,
And yet the entire universe resideth in thee.

Equipped as thou art with a human body and
an angelic sprite,
Thou canst at will roam the world over or soar
in the sky
What a great fun it would be to leave the body
here below,
And wing thy way to the highest heaven above,
Quit thou thy elemental house of flesh and
blood,
And take with thee thy mind and spirit far
above.

If you could but come out of the tabernacle of
the flesh ;
It may enable you to go to the place where flesh
is not ;
The life of the flesh is from water and food
alone ;
For on earth you are clothed in the raiment of
self-same stuff ;
Why not go you nightly out of the charnel-
house ?
For you possess hands and feet that are not of
of this earth ;
It may suffice you to know,
That there is in you an ingress leading to thy
Beloved.
When once you get out of the prison-house of
the body,

You shall without any effort land into a new world.

The Perfect Master, time and again, tells us of our lost Kingdom lying within, neglected since long and altogether forgotten in the mighty swirl of the world of mind and matter in which we have been drifting all the time. This is the God-given opportunity for us to tread the untrodden path and to explore the unexplored, and to rediscover within us what is already our own, the real inner being in us. Human birth is a rare privilege indeed. It comes at the end of a long evolutionary process, beginning from rocks and minerals, then passing through vegetable kingdom, then the world of insects, reptiles and rodents, next the feathery fraternity of birds and fowls and penultimately beasts and quadrupeds. Man has in him an element which all other creatures lack or have just in infinitesimal measure—the skyey or ethereal element that gives him the power of ratiocination and discrimination, enabling him to distinguish right from wrong, virtue from vice, and to understand and to practise the higher and nobler values of life with freedom of will to choose and adopt the same for further progress, so as to be ‘born of the spirit,’ adding new dimensions to his consciousness by arising into supra-mental awareness—first cosmic and then of the Beyond. All this is a certain possibility, though we may not know of it at the moment.

“Our self,” says Jung, the philosopher, “as the container of our whole living system, includes not only all the deposits and the sum of all that has been

lived in the past, but is also the starting point, the pregnant mother-earth from which all future life will spring; the presentiment of things to come is known to our inner feeling as clearly as is the historical past. The idea of immortality which arises from these psychological fundamentals is quite legitimate."

Imprisoned in the clayey mould and domineered by the mind, man is yet a puny child of clay in the vast creation, insignificant in stature and strength. But he is limitless and all-pervading in soul; the seemingly individualised spirit in him is a priceless crest-jewel of inestimable value. So says Bheek, a mystic sage :

O Bheek ! none in the world is poor for each
one has tucked in his girdle a precious ruby ;
But alas ! he knows not how to untie the knot to
get at the ruby and hence goes abegging.

"God," says the sage of Dakshneshwar (Rama-krishna Paramhans), "is in all, but all are not in Him." Guru Nanak tells us of the way out—way to unravel the great mystery and to acquire mastery over everything else—"By conquering the mind, you conquer the world" is his simple device. The mind as at present is torn between countless desires of diverse nature, pulling in different directions. It has, by degrees, to be reintegrated and made whole—an undivided whole—with the love of God surging in every fibre of its being ; for then alone it would become a willing instrument to serve the spirit instead of dragging It down and without, as it does now, into tight bottleneck corners, here, there and every-

where and at all times. Unless this hydra-headed monster is trained and tamed it, like the sea-god Proteus, continues playing wild antics, under different guises and various shapes, putting on, chameleon-like, the varying ground-colours of its own choosing. So long as it keeps attached to the earth and all that is earthly, it keeps waxing in power and strength derived from the mother-earth. It has, therefore, to be lifted high into the air and held aloft, as Hercules did with Antaeus, to get rid of the giant, who was invincible as long as he maintained his contact with the mother-earth from whom he derived his strength. Once the mind gets in touch with the Divine Melody that comes wafting from above, it is lifted up, losing for good all interest in the down-pulling sense-pleasures of the world. This gradually leads to a virtual death of the body that is now left far below as well as of the mind that goes up some way to merge in chit-akash—its native habitat, the great storehouse of memories from times immemorial and from where it descended with the blowing down of the vital airs (pranas) on the pure consciousness, wrapping it with a two-fold covering (mano-mai and pran-mai koshas), constituting the mental apparatus befitting the soul for functioning on the earth-plane, through yet another covering—the physical covering (ann-mai kosh) of the body fitted with gross sense-organs, so very necessary in the world of sensations.

While confined, cabined and cramped in the magic box of the body, we are not chained to it though all the time we think and act as fettered prisoners, for we do not know how to unhook the

indwelling spirit in the body and how to rise above it. All the Masters from ages past have been telling us with one voice 'to go within and look inwards' for the beacon light, the 'Light of Life' uncreated and shadowless, All-luminous in Its own luminosity, the only ray of hope and deliverance in the enveloping darkness of the murky prison-house in which we dwell. Of this it is said:

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

—St. John

Take heed that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

—St. Luke

It is this light which is acclaimed as the 'day-star' that serves as 'a lamp unto the feet' of the faithful, enrapturing both the mind and the spirit which alike are unwittingly attracted and begin drifting upward into realms of higher consciousness, super-consciousness, along the lighted current of life, the Audible Life Stream (Shabd), carried as it were on the wings of the Divine Music springing from the holy Light, metaphorically described as pegasus, the white winged horse of the gods or barq (the lightning) that is said to have carried the Prophet to heaven (almiraj).

The great Masters in all times, and in all climes, speak of this unique and wonderful house, the human body, the veritable temple of God in which dwell the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Unless the Son (the human spirit) is, by the grace of some

God-man, baptised with the Holy Ghost (the Power-of-God made manifest in the flesh by a God-man), the prodigal Son, wandering among the wonders of the wondrous world without, cannot by himself find his way out of the labyrinth, to the Home of his Father (God), for the eternal and fundamental law is : "It is in flesh (clayey mould) and through flesh (Word-made-flesh) that we come to Him who is beyond the flesh." (St. Augustine). Within us is the Light of Life. Day and night burneth eternally this celestial lamp in the dome of the bodily shrine. 'Whosoever comes by this Light of lights, to higher realms, he soars unfettered.' This is the truth and leads unto Truth. "He that knows the Truth knows where that light is and he who knows that light, knows eternity, (St. Augustine) knowing which (Truth) shall make you free" (free from all the impregnable bondages, regrets of the past, fears of the present and terrors of death in which we constantly live). (John 8 : 12). The Word or the Holy Ghost is the great Truth at the bottom of all creation : "All things were made by him (the Word), and without him was not anything made that was made," says St. John. "The entire world sprang from Shabd," is what Nanak tells us. Again, "With one Word of His, this vast creation blossomed into being ; and a thousand streams of life sprang into existence." In Upnishads, it is said, 'Eko-aham, Bahu syaam' meaning, 'I am one and wish to become many.' The Mohammedans speak of the Word as 'Kun-fia-kun'—He willed, and lo, all the universe sprang up. Thus it is God-in-action Power (Light and Life—The Melody of God), All-pervading and All-powerful, immanent in all that is visible and invisible, creating and sustaining count-

less creations. Speaking of creation, Nanak tells us : “And countless Thy planes ; unapproachable and inaccessible Thy innumerable heavenly plateaux.” Even by the word countless, we fail to describe Him. The words count and countless are indeed of little consequence for the Almighty. He who is immanent in everything and is the very life of the creation itself, knows every particle thereof.

To come to a better understanding of the higher life, the life of the spirit, one has to actually cross the trans-frontiers of the earth life and pass through the gates of what is called death, and be reborn in the ethereal unearthly world beyond. “That which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.” (John 3 : 6-7). It is this contact with the ‘Light of Life’ as manifested within by a God-man that brings to an end the peregrinations of the soul in the ever-revolving wheel of births and rebirths. The entire creation is believed to be divided into eight million and four hundred thousand species (84 lakhs) ; (i) water creatures—9,00,000 (9 lakhs), (ii) air creatures—14,00,000 (14 lakhs), (iii) insects, rodents and reptiles etc.—27,00,000 (27 lakhs), (iv) trees, shrubs, herbs and other vegetables and creepers etc.—30,00,000 (30 lakhs), and (v) all kinds of quadrupeds and animals, human beings including gods and goddesses, demi-gods and godly powers, demons and wandering spirits etc.—4,00,000 (4 lakhs). A jiva-atman or an individual soul unless liberated (becomes an atman), keeps revolving in one or other material body by the compulsive force of karmas and impressions gathered from life to life. This then is a prelude to real life

and life eternal, coming as it does from contact with the 'Voice of the Son of God (i.e. inner Music made manifest by Him) and they that hear (though dead to It now) shall live (and live eternally by us)'—John 5 : 25—for it is said : "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing : for in the wilderness (of the human heart) shall waters (of life) break out and streams in the desert." (Isiah 35 : 5-6). "For now we see through a glass ; darkly but then face to face : Now I see part ; but then shall I know even as I am known." (1 Cor. 13-12). "The spirit, when attuned to the Sound Current" says Nanak likewise, "begins to see (the Light of God) without eyes (of flesh), to hear (the Voice of God) without ears, clings on (to the Divine Music) without hands and moves forward (Godwards) without feet." Again, the great teacher goes on to explain : "The seeing eyes, see not (the reality) but by the grace of the Guru, one begins to discern (the Power of God) face to face. It is why a worthy and worshipful disciple can perceive God everywhere." Our sense-organs are so formed as may help us in the physical world alone and that too imperfectly, but they fail us when we come to the supra-physical level. 'By seeing we see but do not perceive, by hearing we hear but do not understand, and we have a heart that has neither feeling nor understanding.' But a complete change, a marvellous change comes about only when one learns how to invert and undergo practically a process of voluntary death while living. So the exhortation : Learn how to die (die to the earth life) that you begin to live (live freely and fearlessly in the living spirit, free

from the limiting adjuncts of the bodily sheaths). One has, therefore, to 'forsake the flesh for the spirit.' Love not the flesh more than the spirit, is the age-old advice of the Prophet of Galilee.

As long as we are 'at home in the body, we are absent from God.' And, 'the more one withdraws from himself, the nearer one gets to God.' Nothing in creation compares with the Creator, for what is not God is nothing. With the transference of consciousness from the earth-plane (death as is commonly known) to the spiritual plane (rebirth or second birth—birth of the spirit, as it is called), through contact with the Master-power flowing in the body, one never perishes. 'When all others desert (you), I will not abandon you, nor allow you to perish the last.' "He that overcometh (transcendeth the physical in him by transhumanising the human), shall not be hurt of the second death" because 'if ye are led by the spirit ye are not under the law (the law of action and reaction or cause and effect leading to repeated incarnations).'

All this is not a mere theory but a fact—the 'fact of life' for 'the flame of life' cometh with every individual from the moment of one's birth, and it is given unto every man to know the secret of the flaming Sound and "the mysteries of heaven (the Kingdom of God)." (Matt. 13 : 11). In this science of the Beyond, logic and reasoning have no place. Actual seeing alone brings in faith and belief. The Light of light, the Father of lights 'swayom jyoti swarup Parmatma' (self-effulgent God), nooran-ala noor' (the great celestial Light), and the spirit in

man (the spark from the divine light of the universal spirit, a drop of consciousness from the ocean of consciousness, appearing as individualised spirit clothed in various mantles), are all within the human body (nar-naraini deh); but strange as it may seem that though living in so close proximity to each other, one has not seen the face of the other; because we have mistaken the arid wilderness of the world as our real abode. The Master-souls not only apprise us of the reality and the rich heritage to which we are entitled, but Christ-like proclaim: "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 16 : 9). Nanak also tells us : "The Master has the key for the mobile house of soul chained to the body and the mind; O Nanak! without a Perfect Master, there is no way of escape from the prison-house." But how many of us have put faith in their solemn assurances, and how many of us are prepared to take and accept the keys of the Kingdom and more so to unlock the steely portals, behind the eyes? And much less to hear the Word (the Holy Word) of which Christ says: "He that heareth my Word...is passed from death unto life," (John 5 : 24) in spite of our vehement daily prayers for being led from untruth to Truth, from darkness to Light and from death to Immortality. It is indeed a strange paradox, more paradoxical than the riddles ever propounded by Sphinx, the monster of Thebe to the Thebans or the enigmas of life put by Yaksha, the demon-guardian of the pool of refreshing water, to the Pandva princes who went, one by one, to slake their thirst but could not do so (except Yudhishtira, the prince of dharma) and were turned into stones for their inability to solve the same. Are we not,

in fact, leading a stark and stiff life, stiff in death as it were, like many insensate things, awaiting the advent of the Prince of Peace, to raise us once more into life (life everlasting) by conquering the Sphinx and the Yaksha of old—keeping a dragon-like strict watch over us lest we, lured by the legendry Golden Fleece, escape, Jason-like, with the much coveted prize, from his domineering sway. This then is the great enigma of life which has got to be solved, for without solving it our brief existence here is dwarfed and stunted.

The majority of us simply lead an animal existence—living like them a blind life in the brain. We have never risen above the emotional and mental worlds which we ourselves have cast around us and which now hold us in their iron grip. The ‘heaven’s light,’ is to most of us a figment of human imagination and not a reality :

While with us in the body, we see Him not,
Fie on a lifeless life like this,
O Tulsi ! everyone is stark blind.

Kabir tells us :

The entire world is groping in darkness,
If it were a question of one or two, they could
be set right.

Nanak also speaks likewise :

To the Enlightened One all are purblind,
For none knows the inner secret.

Nanak then goes on to define blindness :

They who lack eyes are not blind,

Blind are such as see not the Lord.
And eyes that see the Lord are quite different.

Again, it is said :

The eyes of flesh see Him not, but when the
Master illumines the eyes within,
A worthy disciple begins to witness the Power
and glory of God within himself.

How is it that we do not see Him with all our
earnest and well-meant endeavours ?

Enveloped in darkness we strive darkly for God
by deeds not less dark ;
Without a Perfect Master none has found the
way nor can one do so ;
But when one comes across a Perfect Master,
one begins to see Him with an eye opened in
the closet of his heart.

It is only by direct Communion with the Name
(the Holy Word) that one comes to know that by
knowing It nothing else remains to be known. In
Jap Ji, the great teacher recounts the innumerable
benefits which spontaneously begin to flow and one
becomes the abode of all virtues :

By Communion with the Word, one can attain
the status of a Sidha¹, a Pir², a Sura³, or a
Nath⁴;

By Communion with the Word, one can under-

-
1. Sidha: A man endowed with supernatural powers.
 2. Pir: A Muslim divine or a spiritual teacher.
 3. Sura: A god.
 4. Nath: Yogin, an adept in yoga.

stand the mysteries of the earth, the supporting bull⁵ and the heavens ;

By Communion with the Word, the earthly regions, the heavenly plateaux and the nether worlds stand revealed ;

By Communion with the Word, we can escape unscathed through the portals of death ;

O Nanak ! His devotees live in perpetual ecstasy, for the Word washes away all sin and sorrow.

By Communion with the Word, one can attain the powers of Siva, Brahma and Indra ;

By Communion with the Word, one can win esteem from all irrespective of one's past ;

By Communion with the Word, one can have yogic insight with the mysteries of life and self all revealed ;

By Communion with the Word, one can acquire the true import of the Sastras⁶, Smritis⁷ and Vedas⁸ ;

O Nanak ! His devotees live in perpetual ecstasy, for the Word washes away all sin and sorrow.

By Communion with the Word, one becomes the abode of Truth, contentment and true knowledge ;

By communion with the Word, one gets the

5. Dhanul: It is the fabled bull, supposed to be supporting the earths and heavens.

6. Sastras: The philosophical treatises of the Hindus.

7. Smritis: The ancient scriptures of the Hindus.

8. Vedas: The earliest books of human and divine.

fruit of ablution at sixty-eight pilgrimages⁹;
 By Communion with the Word, one wins the
 honour of the learned ;
 By Communion with the Word, one attains the
 stage of Sehaj¹⁰;
 O Nanak! His devotees live in perpetual ecstasy,
 for the Word washes away all sin and sorrow.

By Communion with the Word, one becomes the
 abode of all virtues ;
 By Communion with the Word, one becomes a
 Sheikh, a Pir, and a true spiritual king ;
 By Communion with the Word, the spiritually
 blind find their way to Realisation;
 By Communion with the Word, one crosses
 beyond the Limitless Ocean of illusory
 matter ;
 O Nanak! His devotees live in perpetual ecstasy,
 for the Word washes away all sin and sorrow.

Thus we see that the secret of success both here
 and hereafter lies in attuning the 'self' within to the
 Overself or the Sound Current which is the be-all and
 end-all of all existence. Nanak, therefore, exhorts :

It is by a great good fortune that one takes a

-
9. Ath-sath: Literally, these two words mean eight and sixty, *i.e.* sixty-eight. Nanak is once again making use of the Hindu belief that ablutions at 68 places of pilgrimage purify all sinful acts.
 10. Sehaj: This term refers to the state when the turmoil of the physical, astral and causal worlds with all their enchanted panorama, are transcended and the great principle of life is seen within.

human birth and one must make the most of it,

But one goes down in the scale of creation by deliberately breaking away from the saving life-lines in him.

It is, indeed, a sad plight for one who gains the possessions of the whole world but loses his own soul. Far from having any profit, he incurs a dead loss, irreparable and irretrievable, whereby he suffers for ages before he comes again to the human level. Once the opportunity is allowed to slip through the fingers, the gains made so far go overboard and one hopelessly flounders on the shoals and sand-banks of the stream of life. The fall from the top rung of the ladder of life is a terrible fall indeed !

III

LIFE IN FULLNESS

This earth, the arena of so many struggles and strifes, full of sharp antinomies and contrarities, presenting, as it does, a vast panorama of life in its variegated forms and colours, is but a speck in the boundless creation of the great Creator :

There is no end to the creation ;

There are countless forms of life with varied names, species and colours ;

Writ on the objective world by the ever-flowing pen of the Creator.

—Nanak

With all its seeming imperfections, this world serves a useful purpose in the divine plan, just like an apparently insignificant cog in the machinery of a great powerhouse. Nature, the handiwork of God, is not the least extravagant in its design and plan. This world is a penitentiary, a house of correction, a sort of purgatory, a plan of expiation, a training ground where souls get chastened by experience. It is a half-way house between physical planes and spiritual realms. The powers that be of the earth are hard taskmasters, believing still in the ancient Mosaic Law of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' Here all kinds of third degree methods are employed and hard knocks are administered, rendering less than justice, untemperd by compassion and misery, so that one should take his lessons seriously, and by

degrees turn away from the way of the world to the Way of God. Life on the earth-plane then is a dreadful thing 'dark with horror and fear,' and we are long lost children of God in the labyrinthine wilderness of the world.

Evolution is in the nature of living monads and consists in moving towards its source and becoming one with it, for true happiness lies in 'fellowship divine; fellowship with Essence; till we shine; fully alchemised and free of space.' But the tragedy of life on earth is that 'we do not know what we are and much less of what we may become' for 'what we are we do not see; what we see is our shadow.' The 'inner being' in us is so constituted after the fashion of God that it knows no rest until he rests in Him. "A truly religious experience," says Plotinus, "consists in the finding of the true Home by the soul exiled from heaven." And this experience can be ours if only we know how to unhook the 'self' from the trammels and trappings of body and mind.

Self-realisation and God-realisation are the highest objects of mundane existence. Self-realisation precedes God-realisation. 'Know Thyself' has ever been an article of faith with the ancients. First the Greeks and then the Romans in their turn laid great stress on 'gnothie seauton' and 'nosce teipsum' as they called it respectively and both these terms stand for 'self-knowledge' or knowledge of the 'self' in us. The knowledge of the self or 'Atam Jnana' of the Hindu Rishis and 'Khud Shanasi' of the Muslim darveshes comes first. Next comes the

realisation and experience of the Overself or God—Parmatman or Rab-ul-almeen and this is called Khuda Shanasi or Knowledge of God.

The process of self-realisation whereby the self can be separated from the mighty maze of mind and matter, begins with introversion—receding of attention, the outward expression of spirit in the world outside. It is an art of inversion from the world of senses to the world within, and beyond the physical senses, technically called Pra Vidya. Real life or Reality is something that is cognised only in a death-like state, a state that intervenes on conscious withdrawal of the sensory currents from the body to the eye-focus. Life is ‘an active principle, however removed; from senses and observation.’

In the workaday world, we are prone to all kinds of lusts—lust of the flesh, eyes, ears and other sense-organs—and we are being constantly swayed by countless attachments, myriads of aspirations and desires, springing from the diverse longings of the heart and unknown latencies lying hidden in the folds of the mind. All types of likes and dislikes, prides and prejudices, loves and hatreds and many other things unwittingly keep creeping into our consciousness, personal consciousness, frittering our energy, and keeping us away from the ultimate goal and purpose of life; to wit, self-realisation. This ignorance of the aim of life is a serious malady we are afflicted with, and it is the cause of bondage,—bondage of the soul to a world ‘bursting with sin and sorrow.’ Yet, there is a Power within us that resurrects the soul. We have, therefore, to take a turn from this drama of hectic activity and

find the still-centre of our being within the human body where the All-pervading and All-free Power resides. This body is verily the temple of God, and the Holy Ghost dwells therein. So all this present activity has got to be reversed and geared back into the opposite direction. This is termed by Emerson as 'tapping inside' and 'going into the fox-hole in the brain,' as once remarked by President Truman, for it was into this fox-hole that he repaired whenever he wanted peace and relaxation from the burden of his high office. The Vedas call it 'Brahm-rendra' or the hole through which Brahman could be contacted.

"Knock and it shall be opened unto you," St. Matthew says significantly enough. It shows that a door within the body leads into the realm beyond—the Kingdom of God. And of this inlet it is said : 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' To locate this gate and to have an experience of the ingress makes for personal conviction, for nothing becomes real till it is experienced. Intellect is finite and so is reasoning based on intellect. Scriptural texts speak of Truth but do not demonstrate It, much less give a contact with Truth. Logical knowledge is all inferential and cannot be depended upon with certainty. Certitude comes only when 'the eternal Word speaks.' The shortest, the swiftest and the surest way to plumb Truth is through a mortal leap (into the Unknown), says Henri Bergson, the great philosopher. Perception, intuition and reasoning just help in understanding the Reality to a certain extent at the level of the intellect ; but seeing is believ-

ing, seeing within with ones' own eye, the 'Single Eye' as it is called. Of this inlet or ingress little is known to the people at large. Nanak emphatically declares : "The blind find not the door." In order to find the 'strait gate' and the 'narrow way' leading unto life—life eternal—the life of spirit as distinguished from the life of the flesh, we have of necessity to recoil from the present downward and outward expansion, gather-in the outgoing faculties of the mind at the seat of the soul, behind and between the eyes. In other words, we have to change the centre of our being from the heart-centre as at present to the eye-centre (Tisra Til or Nukta-i-sweda) and develop the 'Single Eye' of which Jesus speaks : "If, therefore, thine eye be 'Single,' thy whole body shall be full of light." This 'Single' or 'Third Eye' variously called by the sages as Shiv netra, Divya chakshu or Chashm-i-batin provides an ingress into the spiritual world—the Kingdom of God—now a lost realm to most of us. It is here that one has to tap within, and to knock and knock hard with fully concentrated and single-minded attention, as an undivided individual, in order to find the way-in and gain an entry into the astral world. Hence the exhortation: 'Now is the time to awaken and lovingly remember the Lord.' But how? We have not seen Him. And one cannot concentrate on and contemplate, the formless void as He is. In the same breath comes the sage's counsel as well. 'Learn of this (approach to the Absolute) from some God-man.' What does the God-man say? 'Fix thou thy attention at the eye-focus, the seat of the Lord Siva (the Shiva-netra), for then everything will follow of itself in due course, as you will gain experience of the 'self' in you.

The Masters tell us that the entire world is blindly groping in the dark, chasing the fleeting shadows, ever eluding and ever fading away into airy nothings as we draw nigh to them; while the fountain-head of all bliss and harmony lies untapped ~~within at the eye-centre which is the seat of the soul~~ in the body in the waking state. This centre, when located, gives an access to, and provides a supra-conscious contact with, the realms that lie beyond the farthest ken of the human mind. Equipped with the sense-organs, our only means of knowledge is through them. The soul is perfect without the senses for its action is direct and immediate and not indirect and mediate depending upon outer aids as knowledge of the world is. After obtaining this contact, one is led, step by step, to the true Home of the Father. This is life in fullness. Thrice blessed is man for it is given unto him the power to traverse the regions, both astral and causal, and to go into the Beyond (Brahm and Par Brahm), the region of eternal bliss outside the pale of repetitive creation, dissolution and grand dissolution. But so long as one does not withdraw himself from the world and from himself as well, from his body, mind and intellect, he does not draw any the nearer to God. "It is only when the outward man perisheth (the human in the body is transhumanised), that the inward man (spirit) is renewed, and the dizzy heights of the mount of transfiguration are gained and one becomes a living spirit freed from the body and its impediments; capable of getting inner experience of meeting the ancient Masters like Moses and Elijah" (Matt. Ch. 17), "and joining the Lord in the feast of Passover." (Matt. Ch. 26 and Mark Ch. 14). It is at

this place that the Lord awaits his disciples : "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock, if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20). All this experience that St. John reveals to us, he had when he was transformed into 'spirit,' and he speaks of the coming in of the Lord 'as a thief in the night' (in the darkness of the soul). Hafiz, a Persian mystic of great repute, also testifies: 'The Murshid comes in the darkness with a lantern in his hands.'

"The way Godward," says Prophet Mohammed, "is narrower than hair and sharper than the razor's edge." It is described by Nanak as 'khande-di-dhar' (sword's edge) and thinner than a hair; and one has actually to pass through a death-like experience. In this context St. Plutarch says : "At the moment of death, the soul experiences the same impressions and passes through the same processes as are experienced by those who are initiated into the Great Mysteries." But how many of us are prepared to experience the death processes while living? We are all mortally afraid of death. And why so, particularly when we know, and know so well that it is the necessary end of all created things ? The reasons therefor are not far to seek. In the first place, we have not yet learnt 'to die at will' while living. And secondly, because we do not know what happens after death ? Where do we go ? What lies beyond the death-trap ? This is why we have a horror of death ; and the mere idea of death holds us in a state of mortal terror :

The entire world is mortally afraid of death,
And everyone desires to have an endless life,

If by the grace of the Guru one learns of death-
in-life,

He becomes the knower of divine wisdom.
O Nanak ! he who dies such a death,
He gains for himself the gift of life eternal.

Death, after all, is not a dreadful incident. 'How charming is divine philosophy; not harsh and crabbed as the ignoramuses suppose; but sweetly melodious as Appolo's lute; and a perpetual feast of nectared sweet.' It, in reality, opens new vistas and new horizons of life beyond the grave, and the flames of the funeral pyre, that engulf, entomb and extinguish the mortal remains. 'Dust thou art and to dust returneth' was not spoken of the soul. The life-principle in us or in fact in any other living thing never dies. It is only the elemental parts that go through a process of change which we erroneously call death, and wrongly understand it to be an extinction.

'In nature, death feeds life and life illumines death.' It is the universal law that operates everywhere and on all planes of existence. 'The wise men discover that the perception of Reality comes with the annihilation of the self (the bodily self in which the spirit is incarcerated).' The moment the spirit voluntarily breaks through the fetters, something breaks in upon the spirit with a 'terrible illumination from the world behind the world' making It 'the Prophet of the Most High God.' 'It is at the Mt. of Transfiguration that one gets revelations and sees the mingling of heaven and earth.' It is

here that one finds 'the dark grows luminous and the void fruitful.'

Everyone has, as a matter of course, to die some day—man, bird, or beast; rich or poor, healthy or diseased, young or old. The soul which takes on the physical raiment has to shed it one day. Death alone is certain and real, while life (in this world) is uncertain. We seldom pause to think about the long journey which lies ahead of the inner being in us. We usually lament the death of others and mourn for them for days on end but are not wise enough to care for our own end and prepare ourselves for the final journey into the great unknown that lies beyond life's end. Before an analysis is offered of the death-process, practical and informative as it may be, it would be worth our while to know at least what we are? Who we are? Whence we come? Whither we go? And above all what is the meaning or purpose of life?

Man, as at present constituted, is an aggregate of body, mind and intellect with a great motor-power working from behind, called soul. Formed and environed, as we are, through the ages, our attention is continuously flowing outwards and downwards through the nine portals of the body—the eyes, the ears, the nostril nares, the mouth and the two passages below the waist. It is not that we wish it or do it voluntarily but it has just become a habit with us. We are not yet master of the house in which we live. We are being constantly dragged out by mind and the senses through the various sense-organs, into the vast and varied fields of sense-enjoy-

ments. It is this constant association of the self in us (attention) with the mind and the material objects that has not only debased us, but defaced us beyond recognition, and now we do not know what we really are. We have become so identified with our limiting adjuncts that we do not know anything independent of, and apart from them. Unless the self gets depersonalised by throwing off the mask of dross personality with which it has covered itself and becomes disrobed self, pure and simple; by dissociation from these countless limiting agents: (1) the mind comprising the faculties of hoarding impressions (chit), thinking (manas), reasoning intellect (buddhi) and egotism or self-assertiveness (ahamkar); (2) the sheaths or coverings : physical (ann-mai), subtle (pran-mai and mano-mai), causal (vigyan-mai and anand-mai); (3) the inborn and natural propensities of righteousness (satva), mercurial restlessness (rajas) and inaction born of ignorance (tamas); (4) the five elements (tattvas): earth, water, fire, air and ether of which the entire physical creation is made and (5) the twenty-five compounded elements in varying degrees of proportion (prakritis) which prepare the physical moulds or bodies in different shapes and patterns, shades and colours as a result of karmic reactions; the self imprisoned in so many meshes, cannot know its own real nature, much less its divine ancestry and the rich heritage, all of which come to light only when it comes to its own and realises itself as the self-luminous 'Self.'

Let us see what some of the English thinkers have to say in this context:

Man is a little world in himself, made cunningly of elements and angelic spirit. His God-like qualities have dappraved by the fall, and he is constantly visited by divine wrath—wars, plagues and thunder-storms. Yet, he can enjoy a civilised happiness, provided he treats the world as preparation for the next, and keeps the body subject to his soul.

—J. Donne

What is it to trust on mutability,
Sith that in this world nothing may endure.

—Skelton

There is within the all-comprehending ambit of animal instinct, some secret urge which drives the chosen men towards transcending of animal impulse. This transcending animal impulse manifests itself as complete disinterestedness (of all that is in the world without). The urge of animal ego is completely disregarded; and the evidence of this disregard is a willing submission to a 'self-sought death,' an acceptance of the annihilation of the animal instinct is arrayed against this acceptance... (till) nothing remains on the subjective side but pure consciousness, and one is transformed into a Superior Being whom he imagines (contemplates)...

Nothing ever becomes real till it is (actually) experienced—even a proverb is no proverb till your life has illustrated it. But how many philosophers have made this acquisition?

For this, the mind has to be reintegrated (made an undivided whole), as a faculty of sense, integrating which is a prelude to and a necessary condition to total detachment from it. The self must be whole before one can wholly detach oneself from it (body, mind and intellect). It is an all-seeing mind which embraces the totality of being under the aspect of eternity. As we gain our entrance into the world of Being, a total vision is ours.

—Middleton Murray

There is a communication between mystery and mystery, between the unknown soul and the unknown reality ; at one particular point in the texture of life the hidden truth seems to break through the veil.

—Ibid

How then is this inner urge to be fulfilled ? The process of getting fully into, and staying completely, in the eye-focus (the gateway to the so-called death), is akin to a part of the process of death. The process of withdrawal of the sensory currents from the body below the eyes is a voluntary one, and one comes to experience the mysteries of the beyond into which a Master-soul (Sant Satguru) initiates a disciple during his lifetime. He gives a first-hand inner experience of conscious contact with the holy Naam—the Divine Light and the holy Sound-Current (Holy Ghost) as coming from the right side, as the lowest expressions of the divinity within. One cannot by one's own unguided and unaided efforts have an access into the spirit world when one cannot hold on by himself even

in the physical world without the active aid and guidance of many teachers from the cradle to the grave. Herein lies the paramount need and importance of Satguru or Murshid-i-Kamil (Perfect Master, an adept in the science and art of soul), competent enough to disentangle the spirit-currents from every pore of the body, the plane of sensations as it is, and to raise it above body-consciousness to witness for himself the inner divine splendiferous glory.

With the process of withdrawal of the sensory currents from the body, the death-like process commences. You have not to do anything but simply to sit in a calm, composed and fully relaxed position with attention fixed at the eye-focus and engage in Simran or repetition of the charged names, which carry the life-impulse of the Masters through the ages and serve as passwords into the regions beyond. While so established in an easy posture (asan) in healthy surroundings, you forget yourself, entirely forgetting even the life-giving and life-sustaining pranas (vital airs) which will of themselves gradually slow down and grow rhythmic; and so do the entire respiratory and circulatory systems of the body. At first, the sensory currents begin to gradually withdraw from the extremities of the body—tips of the hands and feet and come upwards and gradually pass through the various bodily centres, each of which being the region of one of the five elements of which the body is composed, until taking off from the heart-centre they reach the throat-centre, the seat of Shakti, the Mother of the universe (the all-pervading energy); benumbing the entire bodily system below the eyes; and then proceed directly to the centre behind the eyes (Agya

Chakra). This is where the spirit-currents get collected and gain an entry into the fox-hole within (Brahmrendra or the hole of Brahma) and have a peep into the Brahmand or the cosmic universe. This is the tenth aperture in the body, the only inlet, apart from the nine outlets. This is the place where you have to knock and get admittance into the realms above—realms more vast, more glorious, self-luminous and self-resounding with rapturous strains of celestial Music, unheard of anywhere in the physical world which has been left below ; now no more than a great slum area fraught with miseries and tribulations ‘fading into a faint reflection of the world of ideas’ as Plato puts it. At this stage man becomes truly blessed, blessed at having access to the aerial region, the world of spirits. He is now at the threshold of the astral world in company of the Radiant Form of the Master (Guru Dev) with Gur-bhakti complete in every respect. When a disciple reaches the Radiant Form of the Master, his job of self-effort is over. The Guru Dev now takes charge of the spirit and trains the spirit in Shabd-bhakti in the real sense, or devotion to the Sound Current, which is his own real form (Shabd Swaroop). From here He takes the spirit along with Him on the spiritual journey that lies through countless regions of varying spiritual sublimity : the causal or instrumental plane, the seed-world, the ever pregnant Mother with vast and countless creations lying involved in its womb ; and then into the Super-cosmic Beyond (Par Barhmand) planes of Silence (Sunn) and Great Silence (Maha Sunn), and finally Sach Khand where dwells the Formless One of ineffable radiance (the Ocean of Consciousness) called Sat Purush, the primal mani-

festation of the Supreme Being. This holy process is simple, natural and does not involve any onerous austerities. It does not involve drastic control of pranas. The Masters have evolved this rare technique and termed it the 'Science of Soul' which can best be learnt under the able and competent guidance of some Master-saint, well versed in the theory and practice of life-current that exists in all created things, the creative and sustaining principle upholding all.

All the scriptures of the world bear testimony to this fundamental truth :

In the beginning was Prajapati (the Supreme Being),
 With him was Vak (the Holy Word),
 And the Vak (the Word) was verily the Supreme Brahma (Param Brahma).

—Vedas

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him ; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made. In Him was life ; and life was the light of men.

—John 1:1-5

Kalam or Kalma is the All-creative principle. God Spake : "Kun-fia-kun," let there be and from this fiat the whole creation sprang into being.

—Alquran

Shabd is the Creator of the earth,
Shabd is the Creator of the firmament,
Shabd is the Source of light,
And Shabd resides in the heart of all.

—Nanak

It is on this basic principle in all existence (Light and Sound of God) that the Master gives a practical experience to all those who come to him in search of Truth. The rare boon of holy initiation, explanation of the theory and demonstration thereof (shiksha and deeksha), into the esoteric knowledge and experience of the saving life-lines within, is not an end in itself but just a beginning, a preliminary step for starting on the long journey for the soul to the true Home of the Father. Those who have chosen to undertake this course of life are indeed fortunate and experience this rare phenomena of 'death-in-life' and thus become jivan-mukat or the liberated beings, while yet in flesh, leading life in fullness on whatever plane they like, but always remaining within the Will of God. Such a lucky one, fully entrenched in Godhead is in full control of his intellect, mind and senses. He is the master of the house and not a handmaid of his mind and intellect. Like a good charioteer, sitting in the chariot of the body, he directs his intellect aright which in turn gives a correct lead to his mind, and mind, when trained in the path of righteousness, refuses to be swayed by the senses which gradually lose their potency and cease to be attracted by the glamour of the sense-subjects. Thus is reversed the primal process of expansion and one gets settled in himself with the result that the sill waters of the mind begin to reflect the Light of

God, fulfilling the ancient maxim: Unless the senses are subdued, the mind is stilled and the intellect too is in a state of equipoise, one cannot witness the glory of God.

This rich experience of life in fullness is variously called the second birth, the birth of the spirit as distinct from the birth of the flesh. Led by the spirit, one now lives and walks in the spirit, abandoning the lusts of the flesh and cuts right across the inexorable law of cause and effect or karma, which keeps all others in perpetual bondage. With the day to day progress on this path, new vistas of indescribable joy and beatitude open up and new horizons loom into view, encompassing the totality of all that is, thus giving greater and greater awareness, first personal, then supramental, next cosmic and super-cosmic.

Hereafter the liberated souls, liberated from all the shackles of mind and matter, enjoy perpetual bliss in the life of the spirit with an outlook on life entirely changed; the vast creation now becoming the manifestation of the One life-principle pulsating everywhere in him and around him and in all things, animate and inanimate. The world that he now witnesses is totally different from the world known to him before. It now looks as the veritable abode of God and one sees God truly dwelling in it, nay in every constituent part of it; for all created things appear like so many bubbles in one vast ocean of life. Hereafter he lives unto the Lord and dies unto the Lord. Like St. Paul, he gets 'crucified in Christ' (fana-fi-sheikh) and Christ lives in him, and with

repetitive experience of the death process he triumphantly swallows death in victory—the Father and the Son becoming one. Though the outward man of flesh and bones still persists and continues to exist to spin out what remains of the web of life, yet the inward man (the spirit in man) is renewed—growing stronger and more sublime with time. Thomas A. Kempis therefore says :

Forsake the flesh for the spirit. Learn to die
so that you may begin to live.

In this context, we have from Kabir :

While the people are mortally afraid of death,
I welcome death as a harbinger of bliss.
Die and be thou dead to the world,
Such a death I experience many times a day.

In all the four Gospels, we come across so many references of like nature :

He that findeth his life shall lose it ; and he that
loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

—Matt. 10:39 & 16:25

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it :
but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake
and the Gospel's the same shall save it.

—Mark 8:25

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it : but
whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the
the same shall save it.

—Luke 9:24 & 17:37

He that loveth his life shall lose it ; and he that
hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto
life eternal.

—John 12:25

Dadu, a celebrated Saint says :

O Dadu ! learn to die ere death overtakes
thee,
What will it profit thee, when die thou must ?

Guru Nanak also says the same thing :

O Nanak ! practise suh a yoga as may teach thee
to die in life.

Prophet Mohammed too exhorted his ummat, or
the faithful, to practise the art of dying before death :
‘Before thy death, do thou die—Mautoo-qibalantu-
mautoo.’ The mystic Muslim divines like Khawaja
Hafiz, Shamas Tabrez and Maulana Rumi greatly
emphasised the importance of such unique experi-
ence :

So long as you do not transcend the plane of the
senses, you remain unaware of the inner life.

Thou hast raiments besides the outer (physical)
one without ;

Why then dost thou fear to come out of the
body ?

One can go on multiplying any number of
apothegms on this subject. We may close it with
a passage from Earl R. Wassermann :

Many are only imperfect individualisations of the One; and death permits the unindividualised, and hence unbounded, spiritual life. The post-mortal life therefore is a spiritual existence for death destroying the many coloured dome allows the soul to 'out-soar the shadows of night' instead of working inwards to destroy organic existence. What then appears to be physical destruction, proves to be spiritual immortality...What we call 'life' is a decay; therefore earthly confinement, the mortal atmosphere stains the radiance of Eternity...On the other hand, the resurrected soul, reincorporated in the One, not the shadow of death or physical matter, is discovered in the true sense, spreading itself throughout nature, for the final reality everywhere is spirit...Were the atmosphere of mortality removed, man would perceive that the 'One remains' and that 'Heaven's light forever shines;' and that day and night are one and so life and death, Lucifer and Vesper,... and that the ultimate reality of both earthly life and the post-mortal eternity is the Spiritual One;...and this realisation of spiritual identity of mortal and post-mortal life finally ceases the pairings of opposites like life and death... Since One glows 'through time and change, unquenchably the same.'

He then goes on to say:

Learn to go unterrified into the gulf of death,
for where mortal existence ends, the spiritual

existence begins. With death the resurrected soul out-soars the shadows of night, and is reincarnated into the changeless One.

Prophet Mohammed also speaks of death in life in much the same strain :

A death like this will not take thee to the
grave,
But it shall lead thee from darkness to light,
Learn then to die every day by transcending the
body.

When a man learns to transcend the human in him, the Master in His Radiant Form comes in to help the soul onwards to its true Home, guiding it on the higher planes, both in one's lifetime and even after when the mortal coil is finally cast off. In this connection Nanak says :

O Nanak! snap all the ephemeral ties of the
world and find thou a real friend in some
Saint ;

The former shall leave thee while ye live but the
latter shall stand by thee even in the here-
after.

Following the instructions of a Satguru, take
hold of Truth,

Be thou true to Him and He shall stand true to
thee unto the last.

A Muslim darvesh likewise says :

O brave soul ! take a firm hold of His hem,

For He is truly above all the worlds, here and above.

So we find in the Gospels :

Lo! I shall be with thee till the end of the world,
I shall not leave thee nor forsake thee.

In this way the highest mission of human life is achieved and the fullness of life experienced. This is the subject of contacting the 'Self' by the 'self' which disengages from the thorns and thistles of the worldly life, under the proper guidance and help of a Master-soul who vouchsafes this experience to all alike irrespective of sex, age, avocation, religious affinities and social orders based on blood, caste, colour and creed. The spirit has got to be divested of the false halo of the self-created and self-projected personal that one unwittingly weaves around himself. Unless one becomes a pure spirit divested of the love of all created things, one cannot enjoy the life of the Creator which is a life of fullness in beatitude.

IV

DEATH IN BONDAGE

In nature death follows life and life proceeds from death. Death as a cessation of life in one form is but a prelude to re-living in another, and generally at a higher level of existence than before, and in better and more congenial environs.

Evolution is the law of life and it consists in active flowering of the latent possibilities in the spirit-matter, and comprises in its compass, not only evolution of the spirit-matter which grows more plastic and translucent in its onward march but also evolution of forms from minerals to human entities and lastly expansion of self-consciousness. The so-called dead matter is not really dead though the energy in it may for some time be in a congealed state.

A worn-out garment, that has outgrown its utility is to be cast off and replaced by a new one, moulded in, a fashion one desires the most. Such is the law of Dame Nature, the handiwork of God. The kindly Father, it is said, hath ordained that His children may have what they ardently wish for.

In providing the essentials of life on the earth-plane, Love, Light and Life and the necessary adjuncts thereto, like earth, water, sun, air and space together with all the means of sustenance,

the Supreme Lord of the universe is munificent beyond measure, and provides the same freely to all though each one gets according to his need and measure of descent. His bounties are innumerable and inexhaustible, and for ages man has fed upon them in diverse ways. Not satisfied with the limitless gifts, man ever craves for more—more of silver and gold, more of amenities and conveniences of life and more of everything else, and he struggles and strives endlessly for them. Instead of being grateful to the Lord for all that He has, by His grace, provided for us, we curse ourselves, curse those around us in better and more affluent circumstances than us, and curse the innocent stars above and do not hesitate to cavil at and criticise in stinging terms our own fate or destiny which we have by our own actions, forged for ourselves. 'With all his possessions, one loses his head for just a pittance.'

Human life is a great privilege and a rare asset and blessing. It comes after passing through a long evolutionary process extending over time unending. It is an opportunity for amassing the riches of spirituality that lie hidden within us and of which we are hardly aware. But the majority of us are after ephemeral non-essentials—the sense-pleasures of the earth-life, and not real happiness. For these short-lived and fleeting pleasures, which we may or may not get, we, by all means, fair or foul, try to move heaven and earth, and more often than not pay dearly, even with our own life, and quit the stage of life with many a deep regret for one thing or the other and for the unworthy means employed and for the sorrows suffered in the attempt.

Nature is not extravagant in her design and purpose. As one thinks, so he becomes. Our feelings and emotions, thoughts and passions, desires and aspirations do not die with the death of the body. They constitute an inner vest, an undergarment (the astral body), below the physical cloak; and the spirit clothed therein, goes out to be covered by yet another mantle, drawing upon the karmic seeds lying in store in the seed-body, the precious treasure-chest. It is this causal or instrumental body with its vast resources that helps its inmate, the spirit, in fashioning a new mould, a fresh tabernacle of flesh, which may serve as a fitting vehicle for the fulfilment of what lies uppermost in the unconscious self. The curtain finally rises unfolding the entire panorama of life down to the minutest detail ere one passes out of sight from the stage of life. On death-bed one may get a glimpse of reality, but then it is too late to comprehend it. This process works on and on giving at the end of each span on earth, fresh momentum to the wheel of life and death with its natural concomitants of joys and sorrows, weal and woe—sometime up and sometime low, moving in interminable gyres, as one is never satiated with all that one gets in one's sojourn on earth, and goes on adding new hopes and new desires mixed with many a regret for what he wanted and did not get. He is thus unwittingly engaged perpetually in sowing the dragon's teeth, and life after life, he spends in fighting his self-started battles with the self-raised armed bands which, like shadows, follow on his heels as untamed furies or the avenging spirits. Nature, like the potter's wheel, provides the means in the form of many clayey pots, one after the

other, for slaking the insatiable thirst and expectation of each individual. Weighed down by countless desires from top to toe, one makes a slave of himself. Without them one could revel in his Godhood. What is man after all?—God plus desires. And conversely what is God?—Man minus desires.

The great philosopher-poet, William Wordsworth (1770-1859) draws a beautiful pen-picture of a growing child in his memorable Ode on Immortality :

The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar ;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do We come
From God, Who is our home :
Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy...
Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own ;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

This then is the sordid picture of life on earth as we witness from day to day. Ever having our fill, as preordained, we are yet hungry—ravenously hungry for more and more of pelf and power, more of

ephemeral pleasures and sense-enjoyments. Far from being thankful for what we have of the bounties of nature, 'we look before and after, and pine for what is not.' Nature cannot remain a silent spectator of our unappeased gluttony and with her magic wand turns us, Circe-like; into swines so that we may have our fill of the piffle and be done away with. It is only some wise Ulysses armed with a magic-flower from Mercury (the messenger of gods) who can fight the enchantress on her own ground and rescue his followers, getting them reconverted from swines into men and along with them, all others held in captivity by the sorceress in many different forms, each according to his or her innate nature. It is the type of the ruling passions that determine our course of life, not only here right now in the living present, also in the hereafter.

Now let us have a look at the inevitable process of change called death. This transference from one state of life to another is a necessary adjunct of life; and takes place in its own good time but with a swift and stunning suddenness the more so when it is least expected. Death knows no calender, and no one can predict it nor can anyone escape from it with all his cunning and wit. Each living thing has its own allotted span of lifetime. We all live, move and have our being in time and when, the sands of time run out, this change comes and continues to do so, time and again, until one gets beyond the farthest bounds of time and arises into timelessness.

Death then is something terribly real and unavoidable. It perhaps seems to be the only real thing in the midst of the unrealities of the world. Everyone,

rich or poor, king or beggar, young or old, healthy or diseased, has to pass through the death's trap-door, whether one likes it or not. One may live long or short, a hundred years or just a while; but one cannot live on eternally in one and the same life form which in course of time is sure to decay and become wearily burdensome, a millstone around the neck as it were, and one in sheer desperation may cry out in anguish for a quick riddance from the heavy load hanging around the self in him :

Neither kings nor beggars remain,
All go, each one in his own time.

—Ramkali M. 1

A Muslim darvesh therefore advises :

All thy life thou hast bemoaned the death of
others,
Why not thou sit for a while and ponder over
thy own fate ?

Is death a painful process? is the next question. Generally speaking it is so with most. The scriptures tell us of the excruciating pain that a dying person suffers at the time of death. In the Bhagwad Purana, it is said that one experiences the horrors of death-pangs as if one is bitten by a million scorpions atonce. The holy Quran likens the throes of death to the condition of a person when a thorny hedge were to be pulled through the alimentary canal from one end to the other. The Sikh scriptures also speak in much the same strain : The life-currents are wrenched out. All such statements are merely illustrative of the immensity of the torture that one experiences when .

the demons of death appear to forcibly take the spirit out of the body. What actually happens at that time it is only the dying man who knows. No one after the actual experience of death has ever returned from across the borders of the death-land to tell us of the exact nature of his sufferings. Each one suffers unto himself and becomes silent forever. To be on the death-bed is a veritable nailing on the cross, and the death-chamber is a charnel-house. One can hardly stand unmoved, when some people toss restlessly for days on end with a death-rattle in their throat, writhing in extreme agony on the death-bed. Who can assuage the tortures of death? All stand helplessly by; the best of physicians administering drugs to the last, the attendant nurses standing on toe-tips, the nearest of kith and kin with tearful eyes and woebegone looks and sombre faces, awaiting the inevitable end. Who hears the piteous cries of the poor victim and his life companions, his wife and children?

As the wife with hairs dishevelled moans,
The solitary spirit wings its way alone.

—Kabir

Of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.), king of Macedonia and conquerer of the world as known at the time, it is said that it had been prophesied that he would die only when the earth would be of steel and the sky of gold. As neither of these two phenomena could be possible, the king was lulled into a false sense of perennial security. He imagined and believed that like the Olympian gods, he was immortal. After long and wearisome campaigns in the far east, as he was passing through the desert near

Babylon, on his way back to Greece, he was stricken with fever. Being unable to hold on to the saddle, he was helped to dismount and one of the generals spread his steel coat-of-mail on the ground lined as it was with velvet on the inside and made the king lie thereon and held up outstretched his gold-embroidered umbrella over his face to protect him from the scorching rays of the fierce desert sun. It was then that the great hero of many a battle, the invincible conquerer, realised that his end was near, for he was now lying on the steely ground with a golden awning over him. He was overtaken by consternation. Addressing the best of the physicians who were attending upon him he, with tearful eyes, begged that something should be done to save him for the time being, so that he could reach home and meet his mother whom he greatly loved. But one and all expressed their helplessness. He offered to them at first half his kingdom and then the whole if they could by their medical skill procure for him that much of respite. But who could help to stay the divine decree? On the tenth day of illness, as his generals one by one, passed through the tented chamber of the dying king, he bade them good-bye and directed that at his funeral, both his hands be kept out of the shroud so that all could see that a great emperor was leaving empty-handed just the way he came into the world.

Similarly, we hear of the sad story of a great and talented queen who ruled over vast dominions. She was adored by her people for her dazzling beauty and admired for her sagacity. She had ruled wisely and well for quite a long time. Brought up in the lap of luxury, with hundreds of attendants, she could not

for a moment believe that there was such a thing as 'death.' When her end came, she was stricken with great sorrow and overtaken by poignant grief. The royal physicians by her bed-side could do nothing to assuage her fears and torments. As death stared her in the face, they tried to console her and advised her to prepare for the last journey. 'What,' in her horror She exclaimed. And where was she going? she wondered.

'Alas! to the land from where there is no return,' was the simple reply.

She could not believe her ears. 'Am I dreaming?' she enquired.

'No, you will have to go, your majesty.'

'Is there a land of no return? and if so, where is it?'

'It is far off from this world,' said the courtiers.

'Could not you locate it for me in time? And what preparations have you made to make my stay over there comfortable?' asked the queen.

'None, your majesty.'

'How many of you will accompany me to that land?' enquired the terrified queen.

'You will have to go alone and by yourself madam,' said the courtiers.

'How many attendants will I be permitted to take with me?'

'None, not one.'

Such indeed is our ignorance of the realities of life. We are clever, very clever, in the workaday affairs of the world. But strange as it may seem, we know next to nothing of the stern retribution that awaits all of us and we have, like all others, to go all alone and empty-handed.

‘Naked I came into the world, and naked shall I go,’ says the hymnologist. That indeed is the inevitable fate of all. Weeping we come into the world and weeping we depart from the world. To come weeping is understandable. A new-born babe does weep as he emerges from the chamber of the womb for he is severed from the Light of lights, the Light of life that has been sustaining him right through the period of gestation in that chamber, suspended upside down. This is why we generally keep some sort of light on for a few nights after the birth of the child, and whenever he cries, we turn his face towards that light, or at times, we play the rattle to amuse the baby and quieten him. But why should we weep at the time of departure, when on the the way back to the parental care of the loving Father? It was open to us to relink the strands of life in us by consciously working for that end. This we, willy-nilly, do not care to do, and the human existence from cradle to the grave runs waste. Once this opportunity is lost, we go down in the scale of existence. To fall from the top rung of the ladder, more often than not, proves fatal. Snapping ties with acquired relationships of the world, spread over a number of years, is painful and the departure terrifically poignant, the more so as we are quite unprepared for the quit notice that is sprung on us. We do not know how to quit the rented house

and where we are to go? The prospect of being thrown out into the unknown as we take the life after death to be, bewilders us. All this works up a state of horror, unimaginable horror of the worst type. This is why it is said :

Remember thou the day you came weeping
into the world to the jubilation of those
around thee ; Live thou a life that you may
depart laughing amidst the weeping and
wailing of all.

Francis Quarles (1592-1644), a mystic poet, speaking of death tells us : "If thou expect death as a friend, prepare to entertain it ; if thou expect death as an enemy, prepare to overcome it ; death has no advantage, but when it comes a stranger." Herein lies the difference between the eastern and the western thought on death. St. Paul, describing death as 'the last enemy of man' said that he died daily 'swallowing death in victory' and mockingly asked : 'O grave, where is thy sting?' The eastern savants hail it as an occasion for union with the Beloved. The conclusion, however, is the same in both cases ; viz., that death claims an advantage over us only when it comes suddenly and swiftly as an unexpected stranger, neither as an expected friend nor as a dreaded foe, and we are entirely unprepared to receive it or to meet its challenge. Those who are prepared for it and are ever ready, they receive it, welcome it, taking it as a home-going and a means of union with the Beloved. A true lover of God even when condemned to death for heresy cheerfully lays his head on the block and beseechingly calls the executioner, pray-

ing, to make a short shrift of his body with his sword as he sees reflected in it the Light of his Beloved (God). After all, what is death? "Death," says Euripides "is a debt we must all pay." This being the case, why not pay off the debt and be forever free from the obligation? The body is the ransom or the dower which the soul has to deliver to obtain ultimate release from the Law of Retribution.

To have some idea of what happens after death, let us have recourse to the scriptural texts. The Masters divide mankind into four categories. In the first place, there are those who have not had the good fortune to take refuge in any Sant Satguru and these form a considerable bulk. They have to go all alone, each a solitary soul by itself, without any friend and companion. All such souls have to appear before, and abide by the decrees of the just-god (Dharam Rai), who dispenses stern and strict justice on the principle of 'as you sow, so shall you reap,' without compassion or commiseration. This is what is called the inexorable law of karma that works relentlessly. This law does not take any count of extraneous circumstances and admits of no exceptions: "Castes and colours avail naught there; One gets his meed according to his deeds." (Asa M. 3). "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the hearts." (Prov. 21:2). At the appointed time of which no one is aware, good angels (Ramgans) or bad angels (Yamgans), as the case may be, come to forcibly take the spirit out of the body and one has to go along with them. They escort the spirit to the judgement-seat so that each has to render account of his thoughts, words and

deeds. "Fool thinkest thou that because no Boswell is there to note thy jargon, it therefore dies and is buried. Nothing dies, nothing can die. The idlest word thou speakest is a seed cast into time which brings fruit to all eternity." (Carlyle). Jesus in no uncertain terms has declared: "And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof on the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified: by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. 12:36-37).

All thoughts, feelings and emotions, all words uttered intentionally or unintentionally and all deeds done premeditatedly or casually leave indelible impressions (*samskaras* or *naqsh-i-amal*) on the tablet of the mind and the account has to be rendered after death. It is all a summary procedure but just, with no provision for logic-chopping or argument or appeal to any higher power nor can there be any chance of release therefrom. The one who has indulged all his life in sinful doings is sent to hell (*Narak* or *Dozakh*) to undergo the penal servitude for a particular length of time as his deeds may merit and thereby rid himself of the evil impressions, and understand the law that works for his ultimate good. When the allotted time runs out, he once again takes birth so that he may have another chance to lead a reformed life freed from the evil now washed off, and make a fresh start avoiding the pitfalls of the past. If one leads a life of righteousness, he is assigned a place in heaven or paradise (*Swarg*, *Baikunth* or *Bahisht*), where he for some time enjoys the fruits of his good deeds, after which he too, once again, comes down to the earth-plane. Thus all

persons ensconced in the karmic wheel of life move up and down by the ceaseless momentum of their own deeds. There is no escape from this ever-revolving giant wheel until one, by a stroke of good fortune, meets some Sant Satguru and the latter accepts him and helps him to a way-out and to the God-way. The spirits on coming out of the nether world of Pluto, gradually work their way up from the mineral to the vegetable kingdom and then to the world of insects and reptiles and on to that of the feathery fraternity and next to the quadrupeds and finally to human beings :

After passing through the wheel of the eighty-four thou hast gained the top,
O Nanak ! now take hold of the Power of God,
and be thou eternally free.

—Shri Rag M. 5

Even the Devas or Deities, the various gods and goddesses who are said to reign in regions of bliss are there on account of their highly meritorious deeds on the lower planes. As soon as they exhaust the merit gained, they have also to return to the physical world. The blessed Lord Krishna, the adorable one, once explaining to Udhav, a devoted disciple of his, about the working of the law of karma, pointing to an insect crawling in the filth said : “O Udhav, this insect that you see before you, has oft times been Indra, the god of thunder and rain, and has oft times been grovelling in dirt as at present. Such indeed is the fate of all.”

Even the Avtaras or incarnations, the embodi-

ments of the Powers of God are not immune from the inflexible working of the karmic wheel and are called to judgement. Like a soldier in the army, an Avtara is not immune from liability under the civil law in addition to his obligations under the military law governing his profession. Even if he may be doing his duty under the command of his superiors which is law unto him under military regulations, he may incur a civil liability under the civil law. His is a two-fold responsibility : one under the army law—to wit, to obey implicitly what the officers order him to do on pain of being court-martialled and the other under the civil administration if, in the discharge of his duties, he is found to have exceeded the limits.

Gods and goddesses, and the incarnations of various God-powers are, therefore included in this category, so far as the law of karma goes. With all their privileged position, they, and the entire hosts of angels, are under the law and not above the law. This is why they too seek human birth in which lies the possibility of escape from the toils and struggles on to the abode of peace-eternal and life ever-lasting. Even the great Rishis with all their austerities and penances when their end draws nigh, wish and aspire for a human body in preference to celestial abodes in heaven as the shining ones (Devas). They do so because it is in this way alone that they stand the chance of contacting a Satguru, getting instructions from Him and rising above the inexorable law of causation or action and reaction.

Heroes like Arjun and the Pandva brothers

except Yudhishtira, the dharam-putra (the embodiment of dharam), as he was commonly known and believed to be, were cast into the nether regions for engaging in a war, though of righteousness, and enjoined by no less a personage than the blessed Lord Krishna, because in doing so they could not, with all His exhortations divest themselves of the idea of doership.

Again, of Lord Krishna himself, it is said that he met his death by the chance arrow of a bhil, thus requitting his past karma committed ages before as Rama, who killed the invincible Bali, a forest prince, by the artifice of shooting an arrow from behind the cover of a tree. Rama and Krishna, it may be mentioned, were both incarnations of Lord Vishnu in different ages.

Similarly, of King Dasrath, the father of Rama, it is said that one night while hunting in the forest, he heard the gurgling sound that appeared to him to be of some wild animal lapping water close by among the rushes and the reeds. Guided by the sound, he directed his arrow in that direction, hitting a young man, Sarvan, who had gone to the river-side to fill a pitcher with water for his blind and thirsty parents whom he was carrying in a pannier across his shoulder, and had just left them at some distance. Hearing the piteous anguished cry of his victim, the king rushed towards the dying man who told him of his plight and begged him to take the water to his parents. Full of grief, the king went to the aged couple and told them of the mishap. They could hardly bear the shock and died bemoaning

their lot, wishing the same fate as their's for the unknown perpetrator of the crime. In course of time, the king also met the same fate, when he died in bitter agony caused by the pangs of separation from his son Rama who had been exiled for fourteen long years. This is how Nemesis overtakes each one in his turn, meeting out what is due unto him. Thus each one comes in his own way into the world and goes out of it into the valley of death under the compulsive force of karma.

In the second category fall all persons who come in contact with a living Perfect Master, are accepted by Him, and initiated into the esoteric science of the soul but, for one reason or another, are not able to develop Communion with the Holy Word to any appreciable extent, be it on account of indulgence in sense-pleasures or because of sloth or lethargy or something else. They stand on a different footing from those in the first category. At the time of their death when the soul-currents begin to withdraw from the body, or a little earlier, the Satguru in his Radiant Form appears within, to take charge of the departing spirit. His Radiant Form gladdens the heart of the devotee and he gets so absorbed in Him that all attachments of the world fall off like autumn leaves, and he fearlessly and joyously follows Him into the valley of the shadows of death. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadows of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me," says the Psalmist. (23:4). And this indeed is His troth—'Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide; In thy most need to go by thy side.' Again, 'So...I shall not leave thee nor forsake thee till the end of

the world.' The Master constantly keeps a watch over the affairs of the disciple. He is ever with him in weal or woe. "He stands by him even before the judgement-seat of God," says Nanak. With the darveshes, there is no reckoning of deeds of their disciples. The Master is all in all, the sole judge and arbiter of the disciples' deeds, whether these be righteous or unrighteous, and deals with them as he thinks best. "The Father hath life in Himself ; so hath He given to the Son to have life in himself ; And hath given him an authority to execute judgement also, because he is the Son of man." (John 5:26-27). It is because of such a deep solicitude for the disciple that Nanak so emphatically declares :

Love thou the true Master and earn the riches
true,

He who believes in Him unto the last, the
Master rescues him true.

Like wandering sprites, the mind-ridden roam
up and down,

Animals in human form—devoid of light through
and through.

Malar War. 1

Distance does not count with the Master. The Master-power does come at the last moment, or even earlier, no matter where the disciple may be—far or near. He apprises him of the impending inevitable hour of his exit from the world and accordingly comes to escort him. The Subtle Form of the Master is resplendent, and leads the spirit into higher regions and assigns each one an appropriate place to which he

may be entitled according to his sadhna or the practice of the Holy Word during his lifetime; and imparts to him the necessary instructions for further and fuller development on the spiritual path. "In my Father's house are many mansions; and if it were not so, I would have told you ; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2-3). In case one is to be chastised for his laxities, He Himself administers the necessary chastisement but never lets him into the torture of hell-fire. The divine balance-holder (the king of shadows) who judges each according to his deeds, has no authority over the apt disciples of the Master, for they live in 'the name of Lord (which) is a strong tower.' (Ps. 18:10). It is not given to him to pass and execute judgement on them. In all such cases the Master Himself decides and does things as He thinks best. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." (Ps. 147:11). Again, "For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth (accepteth)." (Heb. 12:6). In brief:

Those who love the Master, are never alone,
 Nor are they answerable to any nor do they
 suffer pain. —Gujri War M. 3

But such initiates who have no love for the world, they are not reincarnated on the earth-plane, unless for some particular reason the Master deems it necessary to do so and in that case such a one does not slide down the scale but is reborn in some family

of pious and religious parents so that the new-born easily gets into touch with a Master-Saint and resumes on his path Homeward from an early age without any let or hindrance, for the seed of the Word sown by the Sower (the Master) ever remains within the depths of his soul and cannot but, in time, sprout, blossom and fructify by the Water of Life that he is sure to get from the Master of his age : "None can take away the gift of the Guru ; He who has bestowed it, knows how to ferry across." (Maru M. 1). "Once the seed is sown by a Sant ; None has the power to singe it." (Soami Ji). Hafiz, the mystic poet of Persia, says :

On the day of reckoning, thou shalt know for certain,

In the land of darveshes, there is no count of deeds.

Shamas Tabrez, another great mystic of Persia, says :

Death breaks down the cage liberating the spirit,

Death has no sway over phoenix that dies to soar again,

Why should I not fly back to my own home ?

Why should I tarry in the clayey mould ?

Again :

The lovers know where and how to die,
They accept and relish death as a gift from the Beloved :

With inner eye opened, they see the glory of God,

When others are forced blind-fold into the blind alley.

While the lovers wend their way happily to the Lord,

The ignorant ones die a horrifying death.

Those who pass sleepless nights in fear of God,

They have no regrets in life nor any hopes and fears ;

While here they seek His glance of grace,

Merrily do they go in His holy presence.

The third category comprises such persons as make the most of the instructions imparted to them by the Master but have not yet attained Perfection though they are well on the way to it. Such souls knows of the time and day of their departure in advance of the event. Since they are fully conversant with the death process and every day undergo its experience, they are not afraid of death and know its shadowy character. On the contrary, they wishfully and wistfully await the appointed time and voluntarily throw off the worn-out mortal mantle just in the same way as they had put it on, on their advent into the world. They know some of the higher planes of the spirit-world which they traverse day in and day out along with the Master-power, and know the particular plane to which they are ultimately to go for sojourn after death. There they live for some time and work for their way up to still higher regions. They live all the time consciously in the love of the Master, and the Master-power ever abides in them. He is

their mainstay and support and they owe no allegiance to anyone else. "Led by the spirit they are no more under the law." (St. Paul).

Last, but not the least, come the Perfected Souls. They, while living, are liberated beings (jivan-mukats) and lead a freed life of the spirit. They know full well, far ahead of the time, as to when they have to go back to the Mansion of the Lord and gladly await the hour, and welcome the manner, in which they are required to quit the bodily frame—be it on the cross or the gibbet, on the red-hot iron plates or on the executioner's block. With no will of their own, they live in the Will of God, and joyously embrace death as a means of reunion with the Beloved, unmindful of the swift or lingering process of death, as may sometime be ordained by the religious zealots and tyrannical pontiffs and potentates, for that is the moment of highest jubilation for them. Thenceforth they live out their span of life from moment to moment. They care not if they are flayed alive, hacked to pieces or burnt at the stake or made to drink the cup of hemlock or nailed to the cross along with felons. They give a hearty handshake to death as it comes in their way, no matter what form it may assume. This then is the way that Gurmukhs, the Saints and the Prophets follow.

Of Guru Amar Das it is said that when the time of his departure drew nigh, he called for the Sangat (congregation) and addressed: "I am going back to the Hari (Lord). No one should weep for me. He who will do so, will incur my displeasure. After I am gone, be ye all engaged in the silent Music of the soul."

Similarly, Shamas Tabrez said : "On the day of my death, as my bier slowly moves along, never for a moment feel that I am going with any regrets in life. When you see my coffin, utter not a word of separation for then alone I am in union with the Lord. When I will turn my face away from the world, I will then be facing the eternal Reality."

Hazur Baba Jaimal Singh Ji Maharaj had foretold of his approaching end long before it actually came about. When he was nearing his earthly pilgrimage, he said : "I am going back to my native place and none should press me to stay on. My mission in this life is over and I have amassed immense spiritual riches. Happily I go to the Mansions of the Lord."

It is a sacrilege to lament and bewail the passing away of Saints for verily do they go back to their own home. One may, if he likes, shed copious tears at the death of a worldling who is forcibly ejected from, and dragged out of, the body by the Prince of the nether world and passes through devious processes up and down : "O Kabir, why weep for a Saint who goes back home : Weep, if you must, for a worldly-wise who tosses from hand to hand."

Saints, when called back, on completion of their mission are given an honoured place in His Court. To die such a death is a rare privilege and a real blessing which may be envied by mighty kings and emperors.

V

WHAT AFTER DEATH ?

“And God said, let there be light ; and there was light.” (Gen. 1 : 3). And this is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. And light is the life of men.

In memorable words like these all the scriptures describe the genesis or creation of the world and of all that is in the world. Rays of Light vibrating with the Music of Life, emanating from the Formless Absolute Existence came to manifest the world in its variegated colours in countless shapes and forms.

As above, so below. The Spirit and Power of God manifested in the vibrating holy Light, pervades all the four Grand Divisions of universe : Sach Khand, the abode of Truth or the Changeless Permanence in Its pristine purity, with the material cause (the mind) yet hidden and involved therein; the Brahmand or the egg of Brahman, the second Grand Division of the universe brought into being by the universal mind of elemental essence by the Will of the Supreme Being; and the next, Und, or the third Grand Division, called the astral world with mind-stuff in its subtle state; and lastly, Pind, or the physical world, the fourth Grand Division, the handiwork of the gross mind.

During our sojourn on the earth-plane, we work

out our destiny or fate as planned with great precision and exactitude by what is called Prarabdh Karmas which determine in broad outline the general framework marking the duration and course of life in each case. This plane is a big counting house or a clearing office, so to say, in which each one has to square up his or her accounts, coming down the ages, and in doing so, we willy-nilly open fresh accounts and raise credits and debits to be paid off and cleared in the distant future, and no one knows how and when and in what form and in what manner. Thus, while reaping the harvest sown in the past, we prepare the ground for fresh sowing, in season and out of season, with seeds good, bad, or indifferent; and all this we do promiscuously, prompted by mind and the senses.

The sages call the earth-plane as 'karam khshetra' or the field of actions where sowing and harvesting automatically go on all the time, under the superintendence, direction and control of Dharam Rai, the king of shadows who measures and judges each thought, word and deed, however trivial and insignificant it may appear to be, rightly and justly and administers justice to each at the end of one's life-span. Nanak calls this region 'Dharam Khand,' for each pilgrim-soul coming to this region has to realise in fullness, the existence of the 'Law of Retribution and Requit,' which governs all alike with no favours and no exceptions. Each is weighed with the weight of his own acts and deeds and learns, sometime with hard blows, and heavy knocks, the grand lesson of Brahman, the Lord of the three realms : the gross or physical, subtle or astral and

causal or instrumental (Pind, Und and Brahmand) ; all of which are the mind-zones of the universal mind with numberless planes and sub-planes including inter alia various hells and heavens with intermediate stages as one may create by one's senses, sensibilities and susceptibilities, likes and dislikes, loves and hatreds, prides and prejudices, born of desires of one kind or the other. Each one thus builds his own habitat and not only here but also in the hereafter; the astral and mental worlds where one stores up his impressions gathered from time to time, in different incarnations from the beginning of time. All these linger in the soul in the form of general latencies in the folds of the karmic body ; and a part of them at the time of rebirth prepares an etheric body in advance of the coarse, dense body. Thus 'destiny is cast into the mould before the physical vesture is prepared,' to work out the causes involved therein.

Similarly, at the time of death the departing soul carries with it all the life-impressions, deeply engraved on the tablet of the mind and the ruling passions of the entire lifetime, now singled out in blazing colours which determine the course of its future destination in the astral and/or mental world of spirits. Stripped of the physical mantle, each soul displays its subtle individuality, as it were, in the light of the noonday sun. Men may deceive themselves here for any length of time, by wearing pious looks and dressing in attractive clothes. They may for the time being succeed in deceiving others; but none can play the hypocrite in the astral world where one is denuded of the solid outer covering, the gross garment of the flesh :

O Nanak ! it is there that the divine mystery is
finally revealed,
The Perfect are they who worship Perfection,
And the imperfect are perfected over there ;
Such, as dying come to be born again are yet
imperfect.

The astral world is the world of spirits or disembodied souls—souls having cast off the physical body and yet enfolded in the subtle and mental coverings. It is also called 'Pitri Lok,' the place of the Pitris or manes of the deified souls of the departed ancestors. Here the souls are imprisoned in the seven-shelled encasement of the astral world, drawing subtle material from each of the seven sub-planes existing therein. It is here that they work out the causes which they set going on the earth-plane, by undergoing certain purificatory processes in the divine crucible so as to make them worthy of the land of the shining ones after the dross is burnt off. Mrs. Annie Besant (1847-1933), a pupil of Mme. Blavatsky, in her famous study 'The Ancient Wisdom,' has given a graphic description of the various sub-planes in what she calls 'Kam Lok,' a lower sub-plane in the astral world. As the name indicates, it is a 'place of desires' and is said to contain seven sub-divisions in it, each peopled by persons of varying natures and temperaments. The scum of the society, the vilest of the vile, the murderers and marauders, ruffians and profligates and persons with bestial tastes and brutish appetites who, while living on earth, shaped for themselves bestial astral bodies, now appear, after death, in savage forms in their natural likenesses and native hideousnesses, in

the lowest strata of the infernal region, roaming about, roaring, raving and raging, fiercely and furiously, pret-like wandering in search of means for the gratification of their insatiate desires. In these gloomy and loathsome surroundings, they reap the harvest of their own sowing and learn the much-needed lesson which they failed to learn during their lifetime as they were whirled away on the tide of lusts and desires. Nature's lessons are bitter and sharp but merciful in the long run, designed, as they are, for their ultimate good.

To the next sub-plane go such souls as quit their bodies with some deep anxiety weighing heavily on them or such who had implacable appetites or desires for self-enjoyment and gratification.

Then there are two sub-planes for those who are educated and thoughtful people chiefly occupied with worldly affairs during their lifetime on earth. Their attention is directed more onwards than backwards because they belong to the progressive types.

From the fifth sub-plane onwards the environ changes considerably becoming astral in the true sense of the word, i. e., truly starry, studded as it is with stars and the surroundings are cheerfully inspiring. These three sub-planes are euphemistically termed heavens—heavens of a lower type, sometime spoken of, as by the later Jews, as infernal heavens, being situated in the infernal world as distinguished from supernal heavens.

The religious and the philosophic busy-bodies

find their way to the materialised heavens in the fifth region which they desired and coveted while on earth: like the Happy Hunting Grounds, the Valhalla (the final resting place of the illustrious dead and the heroes slain in battles), the joy-filled Bahisht or paradise of the Muslims, the golden Jewelled-Gated New Jerusalem or the Lyceum-filled Heaven.

The souls of the more advanced type like artists find a place in the sixth sub-division. The seventh or the highest sub-division is entirely for the materialistically-oriented intellectuals like politicians and administrators and men of science who were pronouncedly materialistic on earth and wedded to the ways of the world in acquiring knowledge.

Life in Kam Lok is said to be more active, forms more plastic and the spirit-matter more highly charged and more subtle, and intangible and imperceptible though transparent or translucent. The thought-forms here appear and disappear with kaleidoscopic rapidity because of the great velocity of the vibrations generated by sensations, feelings and emotions.

A spiritually advanced person with a purified astral body merely passes through Kam Lok without delay. The pure and the temperate though less vapid in his plight, dreams away peacefully through it. Others, less developed still, awaken to consciousness in the region similar to the one in which they worked in their lifetime. Those whose animal passions still cling to them (prets) wake up, each

literally and exactly 'to his own place' in the appropriate region to which he belongs.

This plane is treacherous and tricky, and as such those who are initiated by a Perfect Master of the time into the divine mysteries of the Beyond are not permitted to tarry lest they be bewitched here. On the contrary, they are quickly led under cover through it, to higher regions for gaining maturity and stability so as to be able at a later time to face it with confidence and to stand the tempting witchery and delusive and illusory charms of the place, and do not get stuck-up in their march upwards in the spiritual region.

From the astral world of desires, some of the souls pass on to another world, the world of thoughts. It is a mental zone (*mano-mai srishti*) created by the thinking mind or *manas* as it is called. Thoughts have tremendous energy and each person, while on earth, creates his own dream-land by flights of imagination and fancy and to this, the soul, after death, is gradually led on to experience 'the castles built in the air' as the saying goes.

Mind at every stage from the universal Brahman with His pure mind-essence down to the individual, weaves a world of its own and takes delight to live in it as a spider caught in the web of its own making and flits up and down, right and left, of the gossamer texture so artistically set up with a light filmy substance coming out of its own body, So do the thought-patterns and thought-images of each individual go out to make a wonderful thought-

kingdom, far in advance of the time that the thinker in the body is freed from the prison-house of the physical existence in the material world.

As you think, so you become. This is the law of nature, and no one can escape from its operation. In this world of thoughts, thought-vibrations are the only channels of communication between soul and soul, and all the souls live in close communion with each other. There space and time do not matter. If at all there is any separation between them, it is only due to the lack of sympathy and not for anything else. All in all, life there is richer, fuller and more advanced than in any of the foregoing regions, but it continues to be delusive, it being the outcome of the mind-stuff of each and no one here can totally escape from delusion, though each one enjoys in full, his own heaven-world, vast and expanding or shallow and restricted according to one's own mind-stuff, but all the same each one retains in him, a sense of reality in the midst of surrounding illusion.

A sanctuary of special interest in the mental world is Dev Lok, the abode of the Devas or the shining ones—people highly enlightened in their time and greatly advanced in their researches. Here are located the Svargas and Baikunths of the Hindus, the Sukh Vati of the Buddhists, the heavens of the Zoroastrians and Christians, the Arshas of the less materialised Muslims and the Supernal Paradises or Pleasure-grounds of the later Jews. Here lies the garden of Eden from where man was expelled and excluded by God for his first disobedience of His commandments. John Milton (1608-74), a great

poet and genius of his age, and a profound political and spiritual thinker has, in his immortal classics, 'Paradise Lost,' and 'Paradise Regained,' given a wonderful account of the Fall of Man and his Resurrection and return unto Him through the intercession of the Son of Man.

Without wading through the scriptures of various religions, dealing with post-mortal existence of man in the various realms, we would do well to once again refer to Brahma Vidya or the Divine Wisdom rightly termed by the Greeks as 'Theosophia' which provides an adequate philosophy, embracing in its fold, the wisdom of the east and the west. Turning, again, to the great occultist, Mrs. Annie Besant, we find the mental plane inhabited by human beings after they cast off their physical and astral vestures. Purged of the selfish animal passions, each one enters into this region to reap the harvest of his good deeds, whatever the same may be, large or small, according to the measure of good thoughts of personal self—aspirations and ambitions, hopes and fears, loves and interests. "We cannot have more than what we are, and our harvest is according to our sowing. Be not deceived; God is not 'mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians VI:7). It is a universe of the 'Good Law,' mercifully just, and brings to each, the exact wages or meed of his work on earth. Everything thought of, every aspiration worked up into power, frustrated efforts transmuted into faculties, struggles and defeats becoming pillars of strength and power, sorrows and errors forged into shining armour; now find fruition in one of the seven sub-planes or

heavens in the land of midnight sun where self-consciousness awakening, makes one fully conscious of his non-self surroundings ; with memory spreading out into the hitherto unknown past, bringing to view the causes that worked out his life on earth and the causes that are wrought by him likewise for the vast future. The past, the present and the future now present to him an integrated view of life, like an open book, with nothing to hide and withhold. Here he develops for himself an all-seeing eye and becomes a perfect seer so far as his individuality is concerned, in the true sense of the word.

In this heaven-world, the lowest part is assigned to the least developed souls with sincere and unselfish love for their families and friends, an admiration for nobler, purer and better persons than themselves. The measure of their meed is accordingly narrow and shallow, the cup of their receptivity being small; but still bubbling over to the brim with joy, purity and harmony; and they are reborn after a while on this plane with improved powers and faculties.

Next, come in men and women of religious faith with hearts and minds turned towards God—the personal God of their own choice, with any name and any form they had faith in, and to them the Nameless and the Formless appears in the said likeness in which they lovingly worshipped Him, overwhelming them with devotional ecstasy according to their mental and emotional capacity. The Divine veils Himself in the form familiar to His devotee. It is really strange that men forget that all deities reside in the human breast. We have but to turn

inward to get a glimpse of the Formless in the very form in which we adore Him the most. It is therefore said: "Formless is He and yet all forms are His; Nameless is He and yet all names are His; Call Him by any name thou wishest; And He turns to thee."

To the third plane, come devoted and earnest souls who see and serve God in man and worship Him in His manifested creation. At this place they are perfected into great philanthropists of times yet unborn, and endowed with a rich power of unselfish love for mankind.

The souls of Master-minds in fine arts, like music, sculpture and painting; the researchers and discoverers of the laws of nature; eager and reverent students delving into the depths of knowledge, get an opportunity in the fourth sub-plane for developing into perfect Teachers of mankind in the ages to come; and when they do come, they serve as torch-bearers and leave their footprints on the sands of time.

Next, there are three lofty regions of formless heavens. A large number of souls simply reach the lowest reaches, have but a brief stay, and a flash of insight, according to their sowing and then they come back to the earth-plane with a dip into the great unknown. But souls with deep thinking and noble living correctly and immediately perceive truths, see the fundamental causes and the underlying unities and learn of the changeless working of the divine law in all harmony in the midst of the most incongruous effects as appear to untrained eye—And where, "though all things differ, all agree." (Pope).

More advanced souls with memory perfect and unbroken, find their way to the sixth sub-plane and after garnering the riches of the divine mind (Brahmand), return as great pioneers of mankind to justify the ways of God to man and to glorify God. The 'mighty dead' of ages gone by here get a taste of the 'glorious living,' seeing and witnessing as they do, the working of the Will of Brahman in Its fullness with no link missing in the chain of causation.

^ In the loftiest sub-plane come the souls of the Masters of Brahma Vidya and their initiates (Brahmacharis) for none but an initiate can find the 'strait gate' and the 'narrow path that leadeth unto life' and so the chosen few enter into the land and life of Brahman. They enjoy their self-consciousness to the highest point but are not yet endowed with cosmic consciousness.

In the end, Mrs. Annie Besant sums up the position thus : "Such is an outline of the 'seven heavens' into one or other of which men pass in due time after the 'change that men call death.' For death is only a change that gives the soul a partial liberation, releasing him from the heaviest of his chains. It is but a birth into a wider life, a return after brief exile on earth to the soul's true Home (Home of the universal mind), passing from a prison into the freedom of the upper air. Death is the greatest of earth's illusions ; there is no death, but only change in life conditions. Life is continuous, unbroken, unbreakable ; 'unborn, eternal, ancient, constant,' it perishes not with the perishing of the bodies that clothe it. We might

as well think that the sky is falling when a pot is broken, as imagine that the soul perishes when the body falls to pieces.”

The run of mankind after death finds no rest in the three worlds: the physical, the astral and the mental. The souls freed from the physical vesture are carried on, up and down, in the giant Brahmanic wheel of life by the momentum of their own thoughts, words and deeds. It is all a play of the individual mind with its vast field of ramifications spreading out from the lowest, the physical, to the mental worlds wherein one builds his own tabernacles in the hereafter, for a temporary stay, long or short, according to one's needs for learning the lessons of Brahman; as he advances on the path towards Perfection, and each soul gathers as rich a harvest as he can; before exhausting the causes set in motion through the external stimuli from powers that be in his surroundings in the various planes in the three worlds thus described.

The causal or the seed-body of the human soul, the innermost vest, has yet two more very subtle and sublime linings underneath respectively called the buddhic (the vigyanic) and nirvanic (the anandic or blissful). It is only a brave soul, very brave indeed, like that of prince Sidharatha, who may enter into Buddha-hood and become Buddha, the Enlightened one and enjoy the bliss of the Creator of the three universes; and comes to the earth-plane to give the Law—the Law of Dhamma or Dharma unto the world with emphasis on desirelessness so as to free the mind of all attachments and then to tread the

eight-fold path of righteousness leading to Perfection. Again, it may be a Jain Tirthankara, the Mahavira, the bravest of the brave, who could dare approach the divine throne of Brahman and give out to the world the Law of Universal Love and Ahimsa, love for all creatures from the tiniest insect, helplessly crawling in the dust and the water and air spirits floating in countless numbers, in their respective spheres, invisible to the naked eye.

In the Buddhic plane, one develops the intellectual side of divinity in him and begins to see and realise the self-same Self in him, as in all around him, and he is as much in that Self as others are. Thus he comes to the great fundamental unity of existence, the 'Sutra Atma,' carrying everything from an ant to the elephant as so many beads on the string of a rosary ; in spite of the differences in shape, size and colour, both within and without, due to climatic conditions, and mental make-up and inner development and growth. Now the human monad, the outbreathed life of Brahman, dwells in the in-breathed life of Brahman, with divine powers and attributes, and aspires for the bliss-aspect of the divinity in him—the Atmic or the Nirvanic consciousness of Sat-Chit-Anand—the heart and soul of the universe, which now becomes his, and he is one with It.

It is indeed a long and weary process to understand correctly the Brahm Vidya and then to successfully practise it, and to traverse the Brahmand from end to end, stage by stage, from the physical world of coarse matter to Brahm Lok proper, the

region where maha-maya in its finest and most subtle form reigns. The Brahmand is the manifestation of the Power of God, lodged in Om, the most sacred syllable in the Vedic lore ; hence It is the akar or form of Om (Om-kar). It is the Logos of the Greeks and Ek-Onkar of the various scriptures.

This is the ultimate end of human attainment, says Vedanta—the highest teachings as given by the later Vedic teachers and scholars (the Rishis of old), as a result of their intense meditative experiences in the snow-capped mountain fastnesses or in the thick forest dwellings. Brahman is the very life of the universe, comprising, as it does, the three worlds described above with all that exists in each - the Triloki Nath, the lord of the three-fold panoramic life in its fullness. Their words of wisdom, we find in aphoristic form, as gems of 'purest ray serene,' in their valuable treatises known as Upnishads which are rightly considered as Vedantas or the final rungs or parts of Veda, the efflorescence of divine wisdom ; which ends with the Maha Vakya (the great Truth) : 'that thou art' meaning that man is Brahman in his real nature and essence and when one realises this fundamental truth, he involuntarily proclaims "aham Brahm asmi" or 'I am Brahman' or 'I and my Father are one,' or 'I speak nothing on my own but as my Father bids me do.' The greatest lesson that one derives from Vedanta is—we are all one ; one in our origin, one in our make-up, both inner and outer formation, one in our potentialities and powers, however latent and involved they may be, but equally capable of developing the same, may be sooner or later, but the process of development or unfoldment of the self is

essentially the same for all; and then the goal too is one for all mankind, for all of us are worshippers of Brahman. In this way, the out-breathed life constituting as it does, the individual mind merges in the in-breathed life of the universal mind or Mahat, 'the great mind of the cosmos'—the third Logos or Divine Creative Intelligence, the Brahma of the Hindus, the Mandjusri of the Buddhists, the holy Spirit of the Christians, and Allah-hu of the mystics and Sufi darveshes.

Here in Brahm Lok souls live for long, and in close proximity to Brahman, imbibing the love, the intelligence and the bliss of that Being or Power and again so long indeed is the stay, that one is prone to believe and call it a veritable salvation, 'the flame merging in the flame (of Brahman).' But the stay there, however long it may be, is not eternal and it lasts only till the Brahmand itself dissolves, and the universal mind rolls up its life, absorbing all the souls in its fold wherever they may be. This drama of infolding and unfolding of life called Brahmand is repeated again and again; and the grand play continually goes on in and through eternity. The divine philosophy deals with it so beautifully:

How charming is divine pilosophy,
Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose ;
But musical as is Appolo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweet.

It is from Brahman that there spring the three great powers (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva), creating, sustaining and dissolving all that is of the

matter or maya in one form or the other. These three offsprings or powers come into being by His Shakti or Maha-maya called the Mother of Universe, not in the sense of sex as we ordinarily know it to be, but once again we have to take the simile of the spiders' light firm substance that comes out not from without but from within the spider's body or the cocoon or a silky case as is spun by a larva from fine threads of its own making to protect itself as a chrysalis especially as a silkworm ; wherewith we in course of time prepare all sorts of silken garments of so many designs and colours to cover our nakedness and take delight to stunt in borrowed clothings.

Nanak, speaking of the working of God's creation, also refers to the triple principle concerned with creating, sustaining and destroying it—all working according to the Will of the Supreme Being, as Vicegerents, only exercising delegated authority ; and strange as it may seem, it is not given to them to know Him, since they are but the part of the objective creation and He, the Supreme Being, is subjective and formless :

The great Mother, conceiving, brought forth
three regents ;

The first creating, the second sustaining, and the
last destroying.

What He desires, they perform,

They work under His Will.

But great the wonder, though He watches over
them, they behold Him not.

Hail, hail to him alone,

The Primal, Pure, Eternal, Immortal, and
Immutable in all ages!

As to the vast and stupendous work connected with the running of the three worlds in the creation, including all sorts of hells and heavens in them, Vishnu, the second counterpart of Brahma, in the great triumvirate or trimurti, wields the power of administration. Once questioned as to how he (Vishnu) could manage such a big show and make elaborate arrangements for the innumerable souls entrusted to his care for providing all sorts of comforts and woes in the supernal and nether worlds in his domain, he just smiled and said: "Oh! I have nothing to do at all, for whosoever comes into any of my worlds, he brings with him his own load of pains and pleasures, thereby creating his own hell or heaven both on the earth-plane and thereafter. Whatsoever each one needs in any of my realms, he arranges the same for himself and I simply look on unconcerned at the human drama, tragic or comic or trago-comic as the case may be, unfolding the infold in himself." Thus runs the divine machinery automatically, all on its own and by itself but all under His Will.

Brahman is a great power, too great for the human mind to conceive, and of the Beyond, none but the Saints know of and can speak with authority—not the formally canonized saints as we know of but Saints of the status of Sant-Satguru, authorised and commissioned by Truth—the Truth that was in the beginning, the Truth that now is, and the Truth that shall remain hereafter—to teach mankind and initiate such aspiring souls into the mysteries of the

Beyond and beyond the Beyond state; as may be ripe for the purpose of understanding correctly and properly the Causeless Cause of all the causes that operate down below, in each of the worlds; and are ready to live the life of the spirit as *jivan mukats* or liberated beings while yet in flesh: "A *jivan mukat*," says Nanak, "is one who knows and practises the art of 'death-in-life' and when he finally quits the stage, he quits it for good, never to return again." This is what *Pra Vidya* or the knowledge of the Beyond teaches.

Apart from this, there are many categories of teachers of *Brahma Vidya* which is 'Apra' in character and paves the way for the 'Pra,' and all of them teach people in the ways of Brahman, each according to his own capabilities. The Prophets and the Messiahs generally prophesy the coming of great events, train mankind to live a godly life and bring to them the tidings and messages of God (Brahman). The *Avtaras* are incarnations of the various powers of Brahman and their function is to keep the world agoing in a balanced and orderly manner, holding the balance of the social order aright between righteousness and unrighteousness. The yogis and yogishwars remain within the sphere of their *yog-maya* (mind-force) and lead their initiates up to the highest point within their yogic powers.

The *Brahm Lok* has many sub-loks called *Puris*, *Bhavans*, *Tabaqs* or Divisions, each allotted to one or other of the powers of Brahman like *Brahma Puri*, *Vishnu Puri*, *Shiv Puri*, *Indra Puri*, etc., to each of which the souls of the worshippers of these powers collectively called Brahman are irresistibly attracted

and drawn in course of time, each to his own destination in the place to which he belongs.

The ancient Greeks speak of this three-fold aspect of Divinity as the 'Three Sisters of the Spinning Wheel'—one engaged in spinning the thread of life for each, the other in adorning and embellishing the thread of life and the third in cutting the said thread of life when the allotted time comes to an end. Similarly, in the Christian theology we have first Logos, the creative principle in nature, the second Logos and the third Logos, who carry on similar duties of their own. This is the famous Doctrine of Trinity : the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Where all the philosophies of the world end, there the true religion begins. It is only after soul, the 'dweller in the body,' sheds its dross personality comprising as it does, the three vestures or vehicles of body, mind and intellect, and becomes an entity in its pristine simplicity, an undivided whole, the great immortal tree, evergreen and ever fresh in its native essence, in spite of the ever-changing panorama of life around ; it can break through the magic hall of multi-coloured mirrors and transcend the trigun-atmac egg of Brahmand and escape into the Beyond. One has to be born anew like a new-born phoenix, arising out of the ashes of its own previous self with renewed youth and vigour, so as to be able to live through the life of the spirit that lies ahead.

To cross the mental world is not so easy as it may seem to the untrained in the mysteries of the Beyond. It is the most delusive world where even the

Mahatmas and the Rishis with all their learning and tapas, fail to hold on to their own ground. What is there in that vast universe which Brahman would not like to offer to those earnest souls who try to escape through his domains and reach the true Home of their Father ! At every step, be it in the physical world, the astral or the mental, he tries to block the way of the aspiring souls. The great Prophets and Messiahs and all others have given their experiences of the fierce encounters that they had with Satan, Mara, Ahirman; the evil spirits,—Asuras, Demons and their agents in countless ways, fair or foul, whereby they try to obstruct the way, to win over the seekers after Truth by assurances of worldly kingdoms and principalities; and if they do not succumb to these temptations, then by threats of violence by fire, thunder, earthquakes, heaven-splittings, cloud-bursts, lightnings and what have you. It is in predicaments like these that one can only stand these trials and tribulations when one has by his side, his Guru or Murshid, for the Guru-power then draws and absorbs the disciple soul into Himself and takes him along the path of 'Ringing Radiance.' For each soul the Brahman stakes his all, and does not yield, unless he is convinced that the seeker clings to the protection of the Master-power (Akal or the Timeless). Do we not see even in the material world that the rulers and governments of one state seal their borders to prevent unauthorised emigration of their subjects, and devise laws to control such outflow ?

Great indeed is the power of Time and none can
conquer it,
And yet Time itself is in mortal dread of the

Timeless Music,
Lest He himself may get lost in the Divine
Harmony.

We had exegesis of Dharam Khand by Nanak elsewhere in these pages. After that the great teacher goes on to describe the journey of the pilgrim-soul through various regions culminating in Sach Khand. The next two regions, he respectively calls Gyan Khand (the realm of knowledge) and Saram Khand (the realm of ecstasy). In the former, the soul's horizon expands immeasurably for It comprehends at once the manifold nature of all created things with infinity of forms and phenomena and understands the immutable laws of the workings of nature. In the latter, the soul becoming attracted by the Power of the Word, gets a taste of, and insight into the real nature of things.

Next comes Karm Khand or the realm of grace. With the purification wrought by the Holy Word, soul is freed once and for all times of even the faintest, vague and indefinite traces of the dross in the form of vasnas, and matter no longer blinds the vision, and one becomes fully conscious of Him, coming as he does, face to face with the pure Essence of the Word, the Light of Life, giving birth to Brahmand and all the worlds included therein.

Finally, the soul reaching Sach Khand - the abode of Truth, realises in fullness, complete oneness and harmony according to His Will—'All hearts filled with God, they live Beyond the reach of death and of delusion...All destined to move according to His

Will...Such is the beauty that to describe it is to attempt the impossible.' This arising of the soul into Super-conscious awareness is termed as said before, life everlasting from which there is no return.

What Nanak has described above, falls within the realm of Vijnana (subjective inner experience, direct and immediate), as distinct from jnana or theoretical knowledge which the Master expounds and imparts to the disciple through a correct rendering of the scriptures. A Perfect Master is all the scriptures combined and something more. The scriptures after all are the records of the experiences of holy men who appeared from time to time to teach mankind in the ways of God. We can, no doubt, read the scriptures if we are proficient enough in the ancient and archaic original languages in which they are written; but cannot get at their true import nor can we reasonably reconcile the apparent differences and explain the discrepancies in the scriptural texts of various religions. He who has an access to the inner fountainhead of the life and spirit of all these texts, which of course is common to all men, with his first-hand inner knowledge, makes things easily intelligible to us all in a way simple enough both for himself and for us.

In the company of a Saint, it is said, God comes nearer to man, for God Himself speaks through him. As we all are scripture-bound in one way or the other, the Master takes full advantage of these different scriptures which come in handy to him as aids in his work of spiritual regeneration to lead

different types of people aright along the line of least resistance in each case.

A Murshid-e-Kamil is not content with imparting mere theoretical knowledge. He gives a practical demonstration of what he says and therein lies his greatness. One who cannot grant on soul-level some actual experience of what he asserts on the level of the intellect, is not a Master in the true sense of the word and his words cannot carry weight and conviction.

A Satguru is verily Truth personified, God in the garb of man. His mission is to lead human souls to the True Home of His Father (Sat or Truth) called Sach Khand or the abode of Truth, the first Grand Division that came into being by His Will and hence the region of pure Spirit, eternal and indestructible.

The Path of the Masters is a grand road leading from merely physical material world to the purely spiritual realm, beyond all duality and pairings of opposites. The Satguru says :

Move ye in the vast sea of Light substance,
In your hearts is your perfection.
Go on, and on and on, until there is not a
vestige of the human left.
The Light substance knows no limit.

His is the path not of hells and heavens, nor of toils and sorrows, but one of flowery boulevard 'studded with heavenly lights and soul-stirring strains of Divine Harmonies;' and above all, He himself as an

unfailing friend and an unerring guide comes, in all his glory in full radiance, and accompanies the pilgrim-soul into the great Beyond, instructing in the life of spirit, as he proceeds along, explaining the beauties and mysteries of the way, guarding against pitfalls and warning us of the sharp turns and twists that lie en route.

The disciple, from the very beginning is taught how to withdraw from the body and rise above body-consciousness into higher regions. The inner man is to draw himself from his coarse bodily encasement, as a hair is drawn out of butter ; for it is the soul in the 'luciform body' to use the Neo-Platonist phraseology, that rises to find the Self. Mandukopnishad tells us :

Not grasped by the eye, nor by speech, nor by the gods (senses), nor by austerity, nor by religious rites and rituals and ceremonies, but by serene wisdom, the pure essence doth see the Partless One in meditation.

So do the western scholars say :

True happiness never comes through the avenue of senses as it lies beyond the senses. Boundless joy can be ours, only if we know how to rise above the senses and catch the sublime vision which comes to the pure.

The divine wisdom, in short, is at once the Science and Art of soul and only a Theocentric Saint, well-versed in both, can solve for us the riddle of life and death by giving us a first-hand experience of

‘death-in-life’, thereby demonstrating beyond the least shadow of doubt :

Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us.

What has life and death to do with Light? In the image of My Light, I have made you. The relativities of life and death belong to the cosmic dream. Behold your dreamless being.

Creation is light and shadow both, else no picture is possible.

The darkness grows luminous and the void becomes fruitful only when you will understand that you are nothing. It is only at the Mount of Transfiguration that you will get revelation and see the mingling of heaven and earth.

To worship Perfection is the highest education in life, and only a Perfect one can, by transmitting his own life-impulse, release the soul from its trammels of mind and matter and grant a vision of the sublime Reality. He who can, at the very first sitting, open the inner eye more or less to a glimpse of heaven’s Holy Light and unstop the inner ear to the Music of the Spheres, alone is entitled to be called a Perfect Saint and a True Guru. It is of such a one that Shankara says :

No known comparison exists in the three worlds for a true Guru. If the philosopher’s stone is assumed to be truly such, it can only turn iron

into gold and not into another philosopher's stone. The venerated Teacher, on the other hand, creates equality with Himself in the disciple who takes refuge at His feet. The Guru is therefore peerless, nay transcendental.

Guru Arjun speaking of his Master, Guru Ram Das, says: "I have searched the enrire Brahmand but have not found one who may come up to my Master." And finally he said: "Hari (God), it seems to me, has taken for Himself the appellation of Ram Das."

In the workaday world, we are all very busy, very busy indeed, too busy to think of God, much less to practise the presence of living God and still less to live in His holy presence. If, at all, at odd moments we speak and talk of Him, worship Him, and offer our prayers to Him, we do so not to win Him for His own sake or to reach unto Him for our own sake but just to seek favours from Him and to get an easy and quick riddance from our difficulties and to escape from trials and tribulations.

Again, if we at times, feel serious about God, we try to find Him in the earthly surroundings about us, the snow-covered mountain caves, the burning desert sands, the depths of sacred pools and rivers. worshipping Him in the elemental powers of nature like the rising sun, the vacuous expanse above, the thundrous clouds, the Lucifer and the Vesper, and worse still, in the hollows of trees, in the fish of the sea and the fowls of the air ; and no wonder that with all our efforts we do not find Him.

God Himself has declared : I am so big that the entire world cannot hold Me, nor the heavens can provide an adequate support to Me, nor the earth can provide Me a seat ; but strange as it may seem to you, I reside in the heart of Holy Men. If you desire to see Me, seek Me there and you shall find Me. Kabir also tells us :

How can you find the Reality, where It is
not,
Seek thou the Real, where Reality dwells,
Take hold of him who knows the Real,
He shall hie thee to Him in no time.

This then is the way to self-illumination. The process though seemingly complicated and lengthy is simplified by the grace of a Perfect Master (Sant Satguru). He provides the magic wand, the 'Open Sesame,' that does the trick and enables one to get access to what is inaccessible :

He who goes beyond the Sat Lok,
He knows the Incomprehensible and the
Inexpressible.
It is in the Nameless that the Saints live,
The slave Nanak finds peace in Him.

Thus we see that if one could learn to die while living, a voluntary death at will, one gains life everlasting, free from the endless cycle of births and deaths and rebirths. Saints, therefore, sing praises beyond measure of such a death and teach us how to transcend the various planes, and to traverse into the

Beyond and gain the Kingdom of God which is our birthright now lost to us. It is within our reach if we but listen to them, accept their teachings and follow them diligently and with willing obedience.

After death, each one of us has to go blindly in a state of utter destitution and helplessness. The scriptures, all the world over, place a high premium on crossing the borderland between life and death on this side of the world and then death and life on the other side :

Where thou hast to go after death,
Why not gain a foothold while alive ?

—Sri Rag M. 1

O Nanak ! learn to die while there is yet
time,

For verily this indeed is a real yoga.

—Suhi M. 1

Die thou and remain dead to the world,
A death like this I experience many times a day.

—Kabir

With the grace of the Master, one may ride
over the mind ;

By vanquishing the mind, you meet the Lord for
certain.

—Kabir

Be ye dead while ye live and be fearlessly
free,

With a competent Master by thy side, there will
be nothing to rue.

—Kabir

You will get rich dividends should you know—
How to die before death overtakes you.

—Bulleh Shah

Shabd or the eternal Life Current is the only help
on this path :

In Shabd we die (get absorbed), in Shabd we
live eternally with no fear of death,

This is the true Water of Life that a rare soul may
get with His grace.

—Sorath M. 3

What does the Master give ? He makes manifest the eternal Sound Current which is the life of the universe and in which we all live. By riding on this Audible Life Stream we, while living, can at will transcend the various planes of existence ; and come back into the physical when we so desire :

Without the aid of Shabd thou cannot get out
of the clayey mould. There is no other way
besides.

—Soami Ji

Salvation or life-everlasting cannot be earned by deeds howsoever righteous or commendable in themselves they may be or in the eyes of the world. It is purely a gift of grace from a God-man with the Power of God working in him to the full. "For by grace ye are saved...and not by yourselves ; It is a gift of God ; Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2 : 8-9). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

(Titus 3 : 5). "Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other Name, under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4 : 12). "And the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," (Titus 2 : 11) and His grace shall continue to appear hereafter so long as God exists and His creation continues to people the earth.

This then is the way to eternal life, by living in the life-principle itself, ever in Communion with the Holy Word, the Will of God (Hukam) ; and there is no way other than this, try howsoever hard one may. But the revelation of the God-way in the living life-lines within (the Holy Light and the Voice of God) solely depends upon the grace of some God-man, a Word-personified Saint, 'unto whom all things have been delivered by the Father,' and of whom it is said, "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father, neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." (Matt. 11 : 27).

Time and again great souls come into the world to remind us of our true Home. They tell us with clarion call that this world is not our natural habitat. We are here just for a brief span as travellers in a caravanserai and must therefore prepare to quit, and sooner we do it, the better it would be. We must, therefore, work for the kingdom of heaven and gain life-eternal. 'May Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.' And of this kingdom, it is said : 'The Kingdom of God does not come by observation. The Kingdom of God is within, and verily this body

is the temple of the Holy Ghost and the Holy Ghost dwells in it.' This is why all the sages and the seers exhort us :

The place which thou hast to quit in the end
has gripped thee most,
Little doth thou know of the place where thou
hath to dwell for good.

—Nanak

Arsh (Heaven) is thy true abode, my soul,
Fie on thee, thou art entangled in clayey
mould.

—Shamas Tabrez

Thou my Lord dwelleth in Thy native land,
While I am here grovelling in dust.

—Nanak

Your place is where earth is not,
Why doth thou cling to the earth ?

—Soam Ji

Human life is just as a vapour,
Why not live in Communion with the Eternal
Word ?

—Kabir

Those who have Communed with the Word,
their toils shall end,
And their faces shall flame with glory,
Not only shall they have salvation,
O Nanak! but many more shall find freedom
with them.

—Nanak

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وہ تم تیرے ہی دل میں پرتھکتے۔ کم نظر اسکو دیکھ رہے ہیں

There is wisdom in the very folds
of thy mind.

With eyes closed, whither do thou
then search wisdom?

خیالی انسان آرمی کی نشانی ہے۔ نہیں ہے آدمی جو آدمی بن رہا ہے

Humility is the back most of
the human,

Human is no human when he
stands with pride.

میری قسمت دشمنوں پر غلبہ ہے۔ تم کو جب منظر میں میرا پریشان ہے

Why looking on the stars for malignity
The stars are not to be blamed.

Erratta—Mystery of Death

<i>Page No.</i>	<i>Errata</i>	<i>Should Read</i>
2 Line 1	flickerin	flicker in
42 „ 15	witnout	without
51 „ 25	misery	mercy
51 „ 25	untemperd	untempered
64 „ 19	very	every
66 Last line	sill	still
68 Line 6	in	is
69 „ 10	suh	such
69 „ 14	dot hou	do thou
72 „ 17	personal	personality
92 „ 14	shou	thou
93 „ 15	knows	know
100 „ 20	of	off
113 „ 6	fimly	filmy
114 „ 20	trago-comic	tragi-comic
123 „ 7	enrire	entire

List of books
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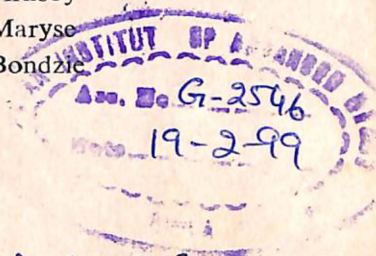
Arnsy
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Maryse
Bondzie

A Thought for Today

*Life is a long lesson in
humility. —J. M. Barrie.*

*The entire universe stained by the
might of Thy Will,
O Thou! grant me the strength
to share by Thyself.*



Definition of death

FLORANCE (Italy), Jan. 13.
Soviet medical researcher V. N. Negovsky said yesterday a man is dead when all activity in his brain stops.

Mr. Negovsky spoke on the second day of the world conference on "Death and Reanimation" in the Pitti Palace Art Museum here.

Renowned scientists, theologians and philosophers are attending.

The noted director of the Moscow Academy of Sciences' Reanimation Institute said: "The irreversible changes in the cortical function would be the leading feature in the definition of a human being's death."

Controversy over the criteria for pronouncing death has been

Search for soul

HOUSTON, Feb. 22.

Dr. Denton Cooley of Houston, one of the American pioneers in heart transplant surgery, has said that man's soul is in his brain.

"I think we should not think of death as a single event, but a process," Cooley told a gathering of several hundred medical students.

"The process being when the man dies when brain dies."

Other parts of the body, such as the heart, may not die until minutes later, he said.

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BOOK REVIEWS

LOGIST OF ADE

ly Life' people have attempted to write a history of this period based on authentic accounts. For even outside the German context, the period has been of considerable importance in shaping post-war Europe. The French historian Alfred Grosser has published two volumes on the Bonn democracy, and Walter Henkel of "Frankfurter Allgemeine" has drawn innumerable sketches, sometimes funny, sometimes serious, of the personalities who dominated politics and social life in Bonn during this period. Dr. Adenauer's "Memoirs" are also available in the meantime. But no one who was directly connected with the regime, had published his memoirs. That is why the recent publication of the memoirs of

To himself every one is an immortal; he may know that he is going to die, but he can never

Think it over

— SAMUEL BUTLER

Today

His Holiness Sant Kirpal Singh ji Maharaj is one of those blessed Souls who come to fulfil the purpose of God on earth.

The life of a great Master-Saint is integral to His Teachings, for what He has to teach is more than a system of Philosophy—it is a way of life, a state of being and the validity of His Teachings manifests itself in His own life and in the experience of His disciples.

Born in a simple rural household in the Punjab on Feb. 6, 1894, He, from His early years, displayed a remarkable zeal for solving the mystery of Life. Having found a True Guide in Hazur Baba Sawan Singh ji Maharaj, He showed an equally remarkable application for attaining the difficult Goal, and after having attained it, He has, since the passing away of the Great Master in April 1948, displayed an equally keen solicitude for the Spiritual Welfare of mankind. The President of the World Fellowship of Religions and the first non-Christian to be honoured with the ancient chivalric Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, He yet lives a life of complete simplicity and is always accessible to the humblest of seekers after Truth, no matter how busy He may be. To fulfil His Spiritual Mission, He has already undertaken two extensive world tours, successfully piloted all the three Conferences of World Religions held so far and has put hundreds of thousands of aspirants on the Spiritual Path.



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