

A GREAT SAINT
BABA JAIMAL
SINGH

His Life and Teachings



KIRPAL SINGH

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*This music streams from a transcendent plane
within
And is caught by a soldier Saint.*

SHABD 9, SAR BACHAN



Sant Kirpal Singh Ji (1894-1974)

*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*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In human history we find only a few glimpses of lives that differ from the majority.

The ideal and the possibility of the Godman – he who has become one with God and is “perfect even as his Father in heaven is perfect” – is found in all religious traditions; and most religions derive from the life and teachings of one or more of these outstanding personalities, whose life work consists of demonstrating to us that we also have the capacity to become like them.

But never it was the intention of those great teachers to create a religion. They had living knowledge about the true nature of man, whose aim is to return to his source – God, and by their teaching every individual, even the despised one, could regain his inherent value and dignity. Sant Kirpal Singh did not bring a new faith either. He revived this original knowledge which is to be found in the core of all religions, and His life was the embodiment of His teaching.

Sant Kirpal Singh was born on 6 February 1894 in Sayyad Kasran in a part of the Punjab, which now belongs to Pakistan.

After a career of a civil servant in the government of India, He went to Delhi in 1948, according to the instructions of His Master Hazur Baba Sawan Singh. Soon He had disciples all over the world. His books have been translated in several languages.

During three world tours in 1955, 1963 and 1972 He visited major cities in the Western world, where He met religious leaders, politicians and personalities of the society. Everywhere He conveyed the importance of self-knowledge and God-knowledge and emphasized the need for selfless service. His efforts to create understanding from man to man, for peace in the world and for tolerance among the religions have been recognized by many honours.

During fourteen years He was repeatedly elected president of the World Fellowship of Religions and, due to His universal view, could create mutual understanding among different faiths.

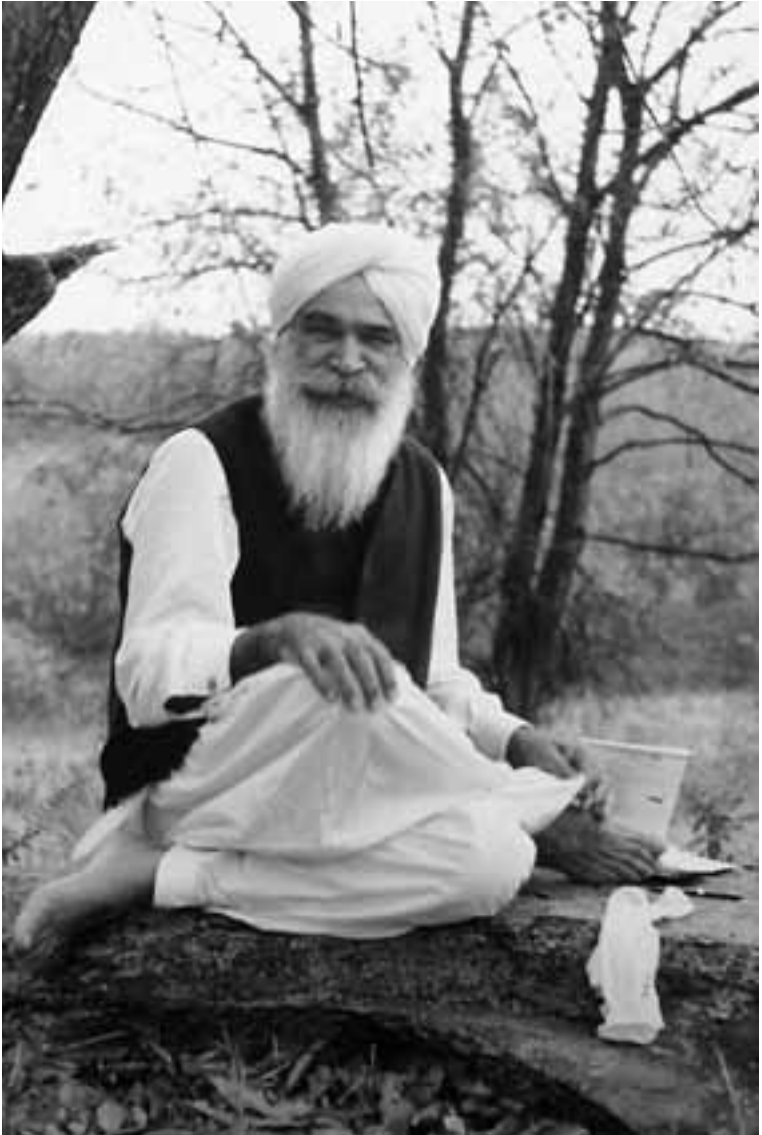
His efforts reached a summit, when in 1974 Sant Kirpal Singh convened the first World Conference on Unity of Man, which took place in Delhi from 3 – 6 February 1974. Religious, political and social leaders from all over India and delegates from approximately 30 nations participated in the conference. This World-Conference was the beginning of UNITY OF MAN.

At the invitation of the government to hold an address to the Indian Parliament, Sant Kirpal Singh spoke to the members of the Lokh Sabha on 1 August 1974.

Before His physical departure on 21 August 1974, Sant Kirpal Singh commissioned His disciple Dr. Harbhajan Singh with His further work, UNITY OF MAN.

Together with his wife, Surinder Kaur, Dr. Harbhajan Singh is leading the project Kirpal Sagar.

It was the last wish of Sant Kirpal Singh to lay His work into the hands of conscious people to put a stop to all isms and sects. Like all the competent Masters of the past He taught that there is only one doer – that Power which is the sustainer of all, i.e. the Godpower, Christpower or Masterpower. Those who see this Power working never create any groups or formations but bring the right understanding that we are all one, and enable man to rise above the narrow shackles created by himself.



Sant Kirpal Singh Ji (1894-1974)

FOREWORD

Sant Kirpal Singh, the author of this book, needs no introduction. For the last decade and over he has been at Sawan Ashram, Delhi, and throughout the length and breadth of the country and abroad, carrying aloft the torch of pure spirituality for the uplift of humanity. The call comes to many; but few choose to be chosen. All of us are so absorbed in meeting the demands of mundane existence on physical and mental levels that we have little time and thought left for higher things of the spirit. Talk of self-realization and God-realization more often than not sounds as mere empty verbiage with no rational content and substance. The world is too much with us.

A book like this can be truly helpful in awakening in us the desire for treading the path that leads to enlightenment and liberation from the cycle of birth and death. It is not merely a brief life story of a great man, but of a Godman whose impeccable purity, deep humility and ceaseless devotion to the God-Path at the bidding of a great Master, which lifted him to peerless spiritual heights, can serve as an inspiring example for innumerable souls puffing and panting in the struggle of life, and wishing to be freed from the bondage of mind and body.

A truly great man needs no other tribute than an account of his life and work. An attempt has been made to collect in this volume the main events of Baba Ji's life history and an outline of his teachings as they have been recorded in his letters and in published and unpublished accounts left by his disciples and admirers, chief among them being Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji, his spiritual heir, Baba Surain Singh, Gyani Partap Singh, etc. It is a story marked by an amazing intensity of spiritual yearning in its first movement, an equally amazing application and one-pointed concentration in the next, and a no less remarkable humility and selflessness allied to supreme spiritual exaltation in its last and concluding phase.

The author characterizes the Sant Mat practiced and preached by Baba Jaimal Singh Ji as a Science, and well he might, because he himself is

a distinguished exponent of it, who has been initiated into its mystique at the feet of a great Saint; and whose mastery of it is widely acknowledged and acclaimed, as demonstrated by his election as President of the World Fellowship of Religions on the crest of a wave of universal ovation and applause in which the sages, scholars and savants from several parts of the world lustily joined. The book is an endeavour to present, for the first time in English, the biography of one of the most outstanding Saints of our times, one who deserves to be better known than he is. The story is a memorable one, and is of permanent value in the annals of man's spiritual history. It deserves to be read by every seeker after God. I am confident that those who read this book will not fail to be inspired and uplifted, and will begin to see that spirituality is not what it is generally supposed to be, but is a Science whose Masters have appeared at all times and in all places, and which may be learned at the feet of an adept wherever he may be found, irrespective of sects and *gaddis*; the final touchstone of his competence being his ability to give direct inner experience to his disciples here and now, and not in some future life.

New Delhi
RADHA KRISHNA KHANNA
August 8, 1960

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Swami Ji Maharaj Shiv Dayal Singh (1818-1878)

PART ONE

THE GREAT TRADITION

The Godway

The way back to God is not of man's making but of God's, and it is free from artifice and artificiality. God draws man back to Himself through His chosen elect – the Godman – to whom the secret of the Path (the Godway) is revealed directly or made manifest by some *Sant Satguru* for the benefit of the people.

The Masters, the Messiahs, the teachers and prophets all the world over fall into two categories with a separate mission assigned to each. There are, on the one hand, those whose sole purpose is to keep the world going harmoniously; and on the other hand there are those who are commissioned to lead back souls who are ripe for home-going, and yearn for an early return to the Source Spiritual from which they parted long ago before drifting downward to the material plane. In the first category fall all the reformers, and in the second such *Sants* and *Sadhs* as are competent to reveal the knowledge of God and to make manifest the power of God in man.

The process of ascent back to the Source is just the reverse of that of descent down to the physical plane, and one has therefore to reintegrate oneself, to gather up all of his wandering wits at the still point of the soul – in between and behind the two eyes – where time and Timelessness intersect, before the spirit comes to its own and launches upon the Sea of Life for an inner journey homewards. This, in fact, has been the sole theme of all sages and seers everywhere. None of them, however, wanted to set up any new creed or institutionalised religion. While referring to the existence of so many religions and creeds in the world, all bristling with bewildering theories and conflicting dogmas, Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj used to remark, “There are already so many wells all over, why should one dig any more pitfalls and make confusion worse confounded?”

God made man in His own image; and man made religions, each in his own image, and in his zeal made fetishes of them all. True religion in its inception is fresh and simple, like a newly-born babe bubbling over with vital life, but in course of time, like any other thing, it develops into an Institution; and with that it begins to deteriorate, tends to lose its native vital elasticity born of the living touch of the Master-spirit, and gradually comes to acquire a socio-economic appearance. Instead of serving as a silken bond of love between man and man, it becomes a source of constant strife, rancour and ill will, tearing class from class and nation from nation and country from country.

When the cup of human misery is filled to the brim, then comes the Saviour with the message of hope, redemption and fulfilment for strife-torn humanity. He tries to dress the festering social wounds and preaches oneness and equality to man in order to restore the equilibrium in the scales of human values. Alongside this, his main objective is to save human souls for a higher purpose: a true life of the spirit as distinguished from that of the flesh. Such indeed has been the goal of great Masters like Zoroaster, Mahavira, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Kabir and Nanak, each in his own time, according to the then prevailing conditions and people's aspirations; for they always try to lead them from the line of least resistance, and dole out the basic goodness in terms that may readily appeal to, and fit in with, their mental make-up for a step higher in the process of evolution or unfolding of the spirit. This is what Saints do for the general run of mankind, deriving their inspiration from the great reservoir of the spirit within, which is the same for all.

The Rich Heritage

In the religious thought of modern India the period from the middle of the fourteenth to the middle of the fifteenth century is one of outstanding importance. It is an era in which an attempt was made to reorient religion and present it in its simplest form: the form of true faith, universal love and

single-minded devotion as against the rigors of priestly ritualism and fanaticism leading to intolerance and bigotry. Among the great teachers of the period we find figures like Ramananda, with his principal disciples drawn from various walks of life (Raja Pipa, Ravidas the cobbler, Saina the barber, Kabir the weaver, Dhanna the jat, Narhari, Sukha Padmavati, Sursura and his wife, etc.); Vallabhacharya, the famous exponent of the Krishna cult; Chaitanya Mahaprabhu of Nadia in Bengal, with his characteristic stress on *Hari-bhole* or chanting of the Lord's name; Namdev, the calico printer in Maharashtra; and the great Kabir and Nanak in the North. None of them laid much stress on idol worship and observance of outer religious forms and symbols. Self-purity, love and inner yearning were their constant themes.

Namdev said:

*Love for him who filleth my heart shall never be sundered;
Nama has applied his heart to the True Name.
As the love between a child and his mother,
So is my soul imbued in God.*

Kabir likewise said:

*It is needless to ask of a Saint the caste to which he belongs;
The barber has sought God, the washerman and the carpenter;
Even Ravidas was a seeker after God.
The Rishi Swapacha was a tanner by caste.
Hindus and Muslims alike have achieved that End, where remains no
mark of distinction.*

Again he proclaimed:

*It is not by fasting and repeating the prayers and the creed
That one goeth to heaven;
The inner veil of the temple of Mecca
Is in man's heart, if the Truth be known.*

So spoke Nanak:

*Abide in the pure amidst the impurity of the world;
Thus shalt thou find the way to religion.*

This movement, however, attained its greatest heights at the hands of Kabir (1398-1518) and Nanak (1469-1539) both of whom lived almost at the same time, for the two were contemporaries for a pretty long time. Both of them rose above the fetters of the world and transcended religious barriers and so were acclaimed alike by Hindus and Muslims both. Their teachings mainly centred around God and man and the relationship between the two. Both of them were exponents of the *Surat Shabd Yoga* (Yoga of the Sound Current or communion with the Holy Word), and their writings extol this as the crown of life. If we study the essential core of any of the religious teachings in its pristine purity and truth as it appeared in the original sayings of the Masters – what they themselves actually practiced and what they gave to their chosen disciples, the *Gurmukhs* or apostles – we cannot fail to get an insight into the reality that they were, one and all, in one form or another, votaries of the transcendental seeing and hearing, no matter at what level; though to the laymen they gave their subtle thoughts in the form of parables only, as otherwise they would not hear and much less understand their teachings. Such world teachers serve as beacon lights in the stormy sea of life and try to save humanity from floundering in the quicksand of time. Children of Light as they are, they come to dispel the darkness of the soul and are naturally called *Guru*, the dispeller of darkness – darkness born of ignorance of the true values of life. They have unbounded love for all religions and religious heads and have equal respect for all scriptures. Theirs is a universal fold that takes in, in one long sweep, the entire humanity with all its variegated patterns and colours, and steeps them equally in the love of God.

Kabir tells us in this context:

*All our sages are worthy of veneration,
But my devotion is for One who has mastered the Word.*

He further tells us that He, with His divine message, incarnated from age to age for the benefit of the people. He appeared in all the four *Yugas* or cycles of time: first as Satsukrat, then as Karunamae, again as Munindar, and finally as Kabir in Kali Yuga, the present phase of time.

Guru Nanak also ceaselessly tells us of the great importance and supreme efficacy of the method of Surat Shabd Yoga as the means of salvation.

*Like a lotus standing aloft out of the muddy pool, or
Like a royal swan that flies high and dry out of water,
So does one by communion with the Word cross unscathed
the fearsome sea of life.*

This in brief is the grand message coming down to us from the dawn of creation, chanting out the path Godward. All the Indian Saints and many Christian mystics practiced the inner Science and contacted individual souls with the saving lifeline within.¹ Time and again, as people forget the reality, God's grace materializes Itself in a human body, called a Saint, to guide erring humanity in the time-honoured eternal way. It is the privilege and the prerogative that the Most High confers, and this authority is passed on according to His behests. "The wind bloweth where it listeth" and no one can lay down or predict any rules of succession, place or time. This rich heritage goes from eye to eye and refuses to be bound to traditional *gaddis* (so-called sanctified seats and sacred places), nor does it depend on human sanctions of temporal or clerical character. Guru Nanak, with his seat at Kartarpur, passed on his spiritual heritage to Bhai Lehna, who, as Guru Angad, shifted to Khadur Sahib; while his successor Guru Amar Das was obliged to transfer his seat to Goindwal. With Guru Ram Das, Amritsar came into being, and later on became the headquarters of Guru Arjan. Thus we see that there is nothing special about places as such. They owe their sanctity to the sanctifying influence of the Saints who pass their time at one place or another. "All is holy where devotion kneels." It is not the places that grace men but men the places.

Rediscovering Lost Strands

The stream of life rolls on ceaselessly in the endless course of time; the power of the Timeless appears and disappears in the realm of relativity.

Before proceeding with the life sketch of Baba Jaimal Singh Ji, it would be worth our while to have a peep into the background that made him what he was. It was indeed the power of Soami Ji that flowed through him in whatever he did and wherever he worked, for he was wholly lost to himself and given over to the Divine in him.

In order to understand things in their proper perspective and link up the history of our spiritual heritage, we will have to go back to Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), the last of the ten Gurus in the line of succession to Guru Nanak.

The *Rani* (Queen) of one Ratan Rao Peshwa, accompanied by Bhai Nand Lal, came to the feet of Guru Gobind Singh for refuge.²

Guru Gobind Singh travelled widely, penetrating the Himalayas in the North and going to Deccan in the South. During his extensive travels, he met and lived with the ruling family of the Peshwas and initiated some of its members into the inner Science. It is said that one Ratnagar Rao of the Peshwa family was initiated and authorized to carry on the work by Guru Gobind Singh. Sham Rao Peshwa, the elder brother of Bajji Rao Peshwa, the then ruling chief, who must have contacted Ratnagar Rao, showed a remarkable aptitude for the spiritual path and made rapid headway. In course of time, this young scion of the royal family settled in Hathras, a town thirty-three miles away from Agra in the Uttar Pradesh, and came to be known as Tulsi Sahib (1763-1843), the famous author of *Ghat Ramayana*, the Science of the inner life-principle pervading alike in man and nature. The *vita lampada* of Spirituality was passed on by Tulsi Sahib to Soami Shiv Dayal Singh Ji (1818-1878).

The link between Tulsi Sahib of Hathras and Soami Ji of Agra is likely to be overlooked, but there can be little doubt of it. From the manu-

script account of Baba Surain Singh, the *Jivan Charitar Swamiji Maharaj* by Chacha Partap Singh, and the book entitled *Correspondence with Certain Americans* by Shri S. D. Maheshwari, we learn that Soami Ji's parents were the disciples of the Hathras Saint and frequently visited him at his home for darshan and attended his discourses whenever he visited Agra. It was he who named the sons of Lala Dilwali Singh Seth; that is, Shiv Dayal Singh, Brindaban and Partap Singh. Before the birth of the eldest child he prophesied that a great Saint was about to manifest himself in their home, and after his birth he told the parents that they need no longer come to Hathras for the Lord Almighty had come in their midst.³

The Hathras Saint took a keen and lively interest in casting the life of Soami Ji in his own mold. He initiated the young child at a very early age and Soami Ji, on the last day of his life, told his disciples that he had been practicing the inner Science from the age of six.⁴

Soami Ji's veneration for the Hathras Saint becomes abundantly clear from his life. He held Tulsi Sahib's disciples in great respect, honouring among them especially Sadhu Girdhari Dass, whom he supported during his last years. Once when the Sadhu fell ill at Lucknow, Soami Ji hurried there from Agra and helped him to contact the inner Sound Current, with which he had lost touch (owing presumably to some past karma), before his death⁵ and helped him to contact the inner Sound Current before his demise, with which he had lost touch owing presumably to some past karma.

Again, Soami Ji very often gave to his followers instances from the life of his great predecessor, to teach them the importance of virtues like patience, forbearance, forgiveness and Godliness.⁶

Before his passing away in 1843, Tulsi Sahib bequeathed his spiritual heritage to Soami Ji. For six months Tulsi Sahib lay in a state of *samadhi* (spiritual trance) lost in Divine consciousness. It was only after Soami Ji had paid him a visit that Tulsi Sahib left his mortal frame. Baba Garib Das, one of the earliest disciples of Tulsi Sahib, confirmed that the spiritual mantle had been entrusted by his Master to Munshi Ji (as Soami Ji

was then known on account of his great learning in Persian).⁷ Soami Ji was to spend fifteen years of his life in almost incessant *abhyasa* (spiritual practice) in a small closet.

After the passing away of Tulsi Sahib, Soami Ji continued to visit Hathras to honor the memory of his preceptor. On one such occasion, we are told, when Soami Ji went to Hathras, the heat was so great that his disciples Rai Saligram and Baba Jiwan Lal had to carry him between themselves over the last lap of the journey where no transport was available and the ground was very uneven.⁸

The great respect that Soami Ji displayed for the Granth Sahib embodying the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors seems ultimately to have been derived from family tradition. The recitation of the Sikh scriptures was an article of faith in the family. His father, Lala Dilwali Singh (a *Sahejdhari Khatri* Sikh, belonging to the order of Nanak Panthis), was devotedly attached to Jap Ji, Raho Ras and Sukhmani (Sikh scriptures), which he read from day to day with great religious fervor and deep reverence. A copy of Sukhmani in Persian script, in the hand of Soami Ji's grandfather, Seth Maluk Chand, at one time Diwan of Dholpur State, is still preserved in the archives of Soamibagh.⁹ The essence of Sant Mat thus came to permeate the very being of Soami Ji. In later years, at least on one occasion, while discoursing on the Jap Ji at his home in Punni Gali, Soami Ji clearly acknowledged his spiritual debt to the Punjab, referring to Nanak and his successors as the fountainhead of Spirituality and to Paltu Sahib and Tulsi Sahib as great subsequent exponents of the inner Science. We will deal with this incident while tracing the life of Baba Jaimal Singh Ji in the succeeding chapter.

His younger brother, Rai Brindaban Singh, a postmaster in Ajodhia, was a close disciple of Baba Madhudas of Mahant Dera Rano Pali in Ajodhia. He, like his elder brother Shiv Dayal Singh, had a firm faith in and a great regard for Gurbani. He was continually engaged in the sweet remembrance of the Lord (*Bishambar*) whose praises he chanted with a

beautiful refrain, as is evident from his compositions under the caption *Wah-e-Guru Nama* in his Urdu book *Bahar-i-Brindaban*.¹⁰

*O Brindaban! Leave aside all else and do the
Japa of the great name Wah-e-Guru.
It shall not only purify your body, mind and soul,
But give you salvation, peace and happiness besides.*

Again, we learn that when the end of Lala Dilwali Singh drew near, his son Shiv Dayal Singh (Soami Ji), sitting near his bedstead, began reciting the Gurbani, so as to keep his father's attention steadily fixed therein at that crucial time.

Giani Partap Singh, basing himself on Baba Bhola Singh's *Radha-soami Mat Darpan*, tells us in his study of world religions¹¹ how Soami Ji in course of time became a frequent visitor to the holy Sikh shrine of Mai Than at Agra, commemorating the visit of the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur; where Sant Mauj Parkash, originally known as Didar Singh of the Nir-mala order and a great Sanskrit scholar, used to give lucid expositions of the Gurbani or Sikh scriptures. It was because of his close association with Sant Mauj Parkash that Soami Ji learned Gurbani and its significance in Surat Shabd Yoga, and he began using this very shrine for his discourses on Gurbani. Chacha Partap Singh in his life sketch has given in rapturous terms a graphic description of one such discourse:

“It was about eight in the morning that the Maharaj one day went to the Gurdwara in Mai Than. After reciting a shabd or two from the Granth Sahib, he began expounding the subject. In a rich and sonorous voice, the sublime thoughts seemed to flow from him like endless waves from an inexhaustible reservoir within. I was so overwhelmed by the sweep of his words that all at once I felt lifted above the body and bodily environments, lost to all that was of the world. From that very day I was a changed man altogether, with an intense longing for the Divine, fully convinced of the greatness of Soami Ji and of his holy mission.”¹²

After some time Soami Ji shifted the venue of his teachings to his private apartments in Punni Gali and continued his discourses from the Granth Sahib (the copy he used was brought by Hazur Sawan Singh Ji from Agra and is still treasured in the archives of Dera Baba Jaimal Singh at Beas in the Punjab). This system of addressing private gatherings at his home continued for quite a long time; but on Basant Panchmi Day in the year 1861, the floodgates of Surat Shabd Yoga as revived in this age by Kabir and his contemporary Guru Nanak, and firmly entrenched by his successors in the Gurbani, were now thrown open by Soami Ji to the general public.

Lest there still be any doubt lingering in the minds of the skeptics, Soami Ji who till the last continued initiating people into the secret of the traditional five-melodied Melody (*Panch Shabd Dhunkar Dhun*), significantly enough on the last day of his departure from the earth-plane, cleared his position beyond the least shadow of doubt by declaring:

*My path was the path of Sat Naam and Anami Naam.
The Radhasoami faith is of Saligram's making,
but let it also continue. And let the Satsang flourish and prosper.*

Among Soami Ji's trusted and devoted disciples was Rai Saligram Sahib Bahadur, popularly known in later times as Hazur Maharaj, after he came to occupy the spiritual headship. While Hazur Maharaj, after the passing away of Soami Ji, continued his discourses at Pipal Mandi in the heart of Agra city, Partap Singh, the younger brother of Soami Ji, generally called Chacha Sahib (respected uncle), carried on the work in Radhasoami Garden, three miles away from Agra city. Another disciple, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji, one of the earliest and most spiritually advanced disciples of Soami Ji, as directed by the great Master himself, settled down at Beas in the Punjab to revitalize the work of Spirituality and to repay in some measure the debt that the world owed to Guru Nanak. We will now examine in some detail the life and work of this distinguished spiritual son of Soami Ji.

PART TWO

BABA JI – A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Early Years

It was in 1838 that Baba Jaimal Singh was born in the village of Ghuman in the Gurdaspur District of the Punjab, to a family of pious Sikh cultivators. Ghuman was as any other village in the region. If it was distinguished in any way, it was by its having a shrine known as Dera Baba Namdev, in memory of the great sage Namdev who, many centuries earlier, had spent his last days there. Legend holds that when the Saint arrived and wished to pray inside the local temple, he was refused admission because he was an outcaste. Undeterred he went and sat down behind the back wall and was soon lost in samadhi. The Lord, unhappy at the insult offered to His disciple, turned the face of the temple toward the place where Namdev sat, and all the priests and brahmins fell at his feet asking for forgiveness. It is from that day that the local village is said to have taken the name of *Ghuman*, a Punjabi word signifying “to turn around.” The village folk visited the shrine to offer devotion, and many a wandering sadhu often came there to pay his homage to the great sage. Bhai Jodh Singh and Bibi Daya Kaur, the parents of Jaimal, were frequent visitors, and the latter, while there, would often pray for a saintly son. Great souls seldom come unannounced and one night Bibi Daya Kaur was visited by the great Namdev in a dream who told her that her prayers were granted; and ten months later Jaimal was born amidst domestic festivity and rejoicing.

The history of a Saint is the history of a soul’s pilgrimage. It is a story which to be spiritually complete covers innumerable years and countless lives. The final enlightenment may seem sudden, but its preparatory stages are long and arduous. Like Buddha and Jesus, Jaimal showed remarkable spiritual precocity from a very early age. When visiting the

shrine of Baba Namdev with his parents, unlike other children of his age, he would sit calm and attentive; and even as a child of three he could repeat many of the verses he heard at spiritual discourses. The villagers wondered at his prodigiousness. He was soon nicknamed *Bal-Sadhu* or “child-saint,” and his rural admirers pressed his parents to give him an opportunity for education.

So when Jaimal was five, he was put in the charge of Bhai Khem Das, a learned vedantist who lived close by. In those times education in India did not concern itself with training for a vocation. It was pre-eminently a mental and spiritual discipline based on the study of the scriptures. The young child displayed keen aptitude for it and soon mastered the Gurmukhi script. Within a year he had already read carefully the *Punj Granthi* or five basic Sikh scriptures, including the Jap Ji, the Sukhmani Sahib, and Raho Ras. In another six months he had the key passages of these spiritual treasures by heart, and by the age of seven he had grown into an excellent *pathi* or one who could recite the scriptures in a melodious way with professional mastery. The next year was spent in studying the Dasam Granth – the scriptures compiled by the last of the Sikh Gurus.

Jaimal showed great respect for his teacher who was delighted with the boy’s application and rapid progress. The two would spend long hours together, and the lad would hear Bhai Khem Das with great attention. His hunger for knowledge was insatiable and the reading of scriptures only fired his imagination still further. One day, picking up the Jap Ji, he began reciting the twentieth stanza, and after finishing the recitation, turned to his teacher and asked: “Sir, what is the meaning of Naam, of which Nanak has said, *When one’s mind is defiled by sin, it can be cleansed only by communion with Naam*, and of which all the other great ones have sung such praises in the rest of the Granth Sahib?” Khem Das was touched by his pupil’s questioning spirit and discrimination, but was unable to enlighten him on the subject as he himself was not conversant with the mystery of Naam.

A day later, Bhai Jodh Singh, seeing that his son, now eight, was old enough to help him, went to his guru with an offering of a silver rupee and jaggery in traditional style. After laying it at his feet, he expressed his desire to have Jaimal released from his studies in order to tend his flock of goats. Khem Das raised no objection. "He is your son and you may dispose of him as you consider best." But his young ward could not wish him farewell so easily. "Sir," he assured him, "I shall work for my father all day, but in the evening I shall come to you and continue the studies."

Jaimal proved true to his word and kept unbroken his association with his learned teacher. Proud of his perseverance and piety, Khem Das initiated him soon after into the Japa of *Sohang*, which he himself practiced. The boy would get up long before daybreak, have his bath, read the scriptures and sit for meditation. He would then lead his goats into the fields. His young friends soon observed that while the goats grazed over the meadows, he did not hang around, idly looking on, but kept reading and reciting holy texts and often sat down cross-legged for meditation. At sundown he would return with his herd, have some milk and food, and then proceed to his guru. There he would sit attentively, learning how to read and interpret the scriptures. After he had mastered the Granth Sahib, he began, at the age of nine, the study of Hindi and the Hindu texts. Studies over, he would visit the shrine of Namdev and return home late at night. Often, while away in the evening, he would sit down and be lost in meditation, so much so that once he was away for the whole night while his parents searched frantically every part of the village in vain. This intense application did not go un-rewarded, and the boy once told his teacher that he could see stars and moon within and glimpse inner Light – the first spiritual experience of the mystic soul.

Bhai Jodh Singh was far from satisfied with his eldest son's unworldly ways. However religious-minded a man may be, he is seldom happy to see his son turned a renunciate. Jaimal was growing up, but instead of showing any interest in family affairs, he was moving in the opposite direction. He not only spent a great deal of his time reading scriptures, prac-

ticing spiritual *sadhans* and visiting his teacher, Bhai Khem Das, but also began passing long hours in the company of the sadhus and holy men who came to the village to pay homage to the shrine of Namdev. Wishing to curb his son's inordinate religious inclination, his father thought it best to send him away from Ghuman and its visiting sadhus. So at the age of eleven years and eight months Jaimal was sent off with his flock to the home of one of his two sisters, Bibi Tabo, who lived in the village of Sathyala.

At his sister's, Jaimal continued his old schedule of religious practices and goat-grazing. Many a month passed away in this uneventful manner. Then one day while following his herd he met a yogi who had just arrived at the village. Happy to find the company of the holy, he bowed in reverence, milked his goats and offered the yogi a drink of milk. The man in saffron was touched by the lad's piety and began to question him. Jaimal told him of the scriptures he had read and the intense desire for enlightenment they had sparked in him. The sadhu was very pleased by the account and offered to train him. He told him frankly that as regards the mystique of Naam he knew little, but whatever he himself practiced he would freely impart. So next morning as instructed, Jaimal proceeded, without having eaten anything, to his newly-discovered guide for initiation. The yogi was an adept in pranayama and instructed his young disciple into its secrets.

Having found a spiritual guide, Jaimal was once again lost to the world. His old holy indifference to family ties and worldly affairs returned, if anything with redoubled intensity. He would often sit for three hours at a stretch in meditation. The yogi, pleased by his devotion, stayed on in the village and Jaimal was more often than not to be found in his company. These developments caused his sister much concern, and anxiety finally drove her to send word to her father to take the boy away. Bhai Jodh Singh soon arrived on the scene and ordered his son back home. The two set out homeward early next morning, but while they were on the point of leaving the village, Jaimal, his eyes moist with tears, begged his father to

permit him to see the yogi for the last time and bid him farewell. His father agreed and the boy, with an offering of fresh milk, hurried to his preceptor. He sadly related how his father had arrived and of their intended departure that day. The yogi smiled, blessed him and bade him be of good cheer. "Continue your sadhans at home as before," he said, "and all will be well. I myself shall see you there some day."

At Ghuman Jaimal revived his association with Bhai Khem Das and continued to greet visiting sadhus as of yore. He was now in his fourteenth year and continued with unmitigated zeal the practice of the sadhans he had learned. But he soon began to hunger for more. The yogic practices he had mastered failed to satisfy him, and on reading the Granth Sahib he became convinced of a higher reality, to be attained by different means. As he progressed on the path, he became progressively more detached from the world. He noted all the esoteric hints and references to the five-worded Word, the *Panch Shabd*, to be found in the Sikh scriptures, and kept pondering over them, asking every new yogi or sadhu he met if he could explain them to him; but all in vain.

At this stage of his search, he and his family suffered a sad bereavement. He was not yet fourteen when his father fell ill and died. The family was grief-stricken but Jaimal's spiritual discipline worked as a protective shield. Quoting from the scriptures, he comforted his mother and his two younger brothers and discouraged any weeping or wailing. If the soul was deathless and if all was according to the Lord's Will, then why any mourning?

The Great Search

Had Jaimal's interest in Spirituality been only a seed cast on rock or sand or a sapling yet tender in its fibre, had it been no more than the mere curiosity or the spontaneous piety of a simple village lad, the passing away of his father would have rung the death-knell of his quest. As the eldest male member of the family, the burden of domestic responsibilities fell on his shoulders; and perhaps more souls are lost to heaven by the

sense of duty to earth than by downright sin and evil. But Jaimal's urge was a plant of tougher roots and stronger fiber. Undaunted and unmoved, he divided the outdoor duties among his brothers, kept up his old exacting routine, and in six months' time mastered the *Yoga Vashishta* and *Vichar Sangreh* (two standard works of Hindu theology).

There arrived in the village about this time a sadhu of the Udasi sect. As was his wont, Jaimal went to see him and inquired of him the meaning of the passages he had noted down from the Granth Sahib. The sadhu explained that he could initiate him into at least the mystery of the *Ghor Anhad* or deep reverberating sound referred to in the Sikh scriptures, if not into that of the Panch Shabd. Jaimal, keen to learn whatever he could, offered himself as a disciple. But the Diwali festival was at hand and his new teacher wanted to celebrate it at Amritsar. Reluctant to miss this opportunity, Jaimal went to his mother and begged her to allow him to join the sadhu and go forth on his quest for truth. But Bibi Daya had to see to the welfare of the family and would not hear of her eldest son going away. She reminded him of his duties. "Your father is no more," she said, "and you must carry on in his place. If you are gone, what will become of us?"

"I am not insensitive to what you say, my dear mother," replied her son, "but the Lord is above us, and he who sustains his creatures even on the rocks and in the sea will not forsake us in our need. Man's primary duty is to seek his Creator and all other duties are secondary. Be not afraid but be of good cheer; and let me proceed with your blessings."

Deeply religious herself, Bibi Daya was touched by what Jaimal said with such conviction. Seeing his determination and being too fond of him to break his heart, she at last relented. "I know I cannot stop you. Nor do I wish to do so. But if you must go, promise to return home when your quest is over."

Giving his word of honour, Jaimal departed and his mother and brothers bade him a tearful farewell. He had hardly entered his fifteenth year

and he was already embarked on a quest that was to carry him through many cities and was to involve him in great toil and travail. It was a time when the railroad was still unknown in India (1853), not to speak of modern motorways and airways. The rich could, of course, ride on horses, but the humbler folk had to depend on the sturdiness of their own feet. Travel was difficult and arduous. The British had only recently conquered the Punjab and stability was still to be established. The Great Mutiny was only a half a decade away, but the people were growing restive and the country was beginning to seethe with discontent.

It was in such conditions that Jaimal set forth for Amritsar. Three days after reaching there he was initiated by the Udasi sadhu in a local garden into the science of the Ghor Anhad. Like his contemporary Sri Ramakrishna (1836 - 1886), Jaimal Singh was destined to sit at the feet of many intermediary masters before meeting his True One. Like him he was destined to learn many a sadhan and make rapid headway in each. And like him he was destined not to be bound, like other yogis, to any of them, but to press ever forward toward a higher and still higher goal. His early mastery of the Granth Sahib stood him in good stead. It worked as an infallible touchstone with which to test every new attainment and to know that his real goal lay still further ahead.

Having practiced japa and pranayama, and having delved into the ecstasy of the Ghor Anhad, the quest for the secret of the five-worded Word became Jaimal's overmastering passion. While at Amritsar, he did not fail to contact other yogis and sadhus, questioning them for the clues of that which he sought. Someone suggested that he might discover the object of his search at the feet of Baba Gulab Das, then residing at the village of Chatyala. The boy needed no further prompting and not long after was seeking permission of Gulab Das's disciples to see their master. The request was granted and he appeared before the revered sadhu. A lively discussion ensued which, because of the newcomer's tender age, irritated some of the older disciples standing around. But Gulab Das assured them that Jaimal, if young in years, was mature in mind and was a true seeker of God. He tried to satisfy the boy as best

as he could, explaining that Naam was no more than the sound vibrating in the pranas, initiating him still further into the secrets of the *pranva* or the pranic yoga. Jaimal, though ready to learn whatever he could, was not convinced by the sadhu's interpretation which, as he pointed out to him, failed to explain (a) the number "five" used time and again in the Granth Sahib in connection with the inner Shabd; and (b) the fact that the Sikh Gurus repeatedly asserted that the path of Naam was distinct from other yogic forms which could not give the highest liberation.

From Chatyala, Jaimal's quest led him to Lahore. There were Hindu sadhus and Muslim fakirs of all descriptions there. The young Sikh lad sought their company at all hours and incessantly mingled with them. But try as he might, he could discover no clue. Finding himself in a great city, having trudged many a mile, with no money in his pocket, hardly ever certain of his next meal, he was not a little discomfited with his predicament. He lived in the hope of solving the secret which none could unravel for him. Weary of foot and heavy of heart, he set out for Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak and a place of holy pilgrimage for the Sikhs.

But at Nankana Sahib Jaimal failed once again to find what he wanted. The ways of Providence are mysterious. A seeker's way may be cluttered with countless obstacles which may almost seem to break his heart, yet at the very moment when the spirit is on the brink of collapse, it whispers a word of encouragement and flashes a ray of hope, saving him from the giant despair and putting him on the road to New Jerusalem. And so the boy, now fifteen, met at Nankana Sahib Bhai Jodha Singh of the Namdhari sect who directed him to Baba Balak Singh of Hazro, a village beyond Attock in what later came to be known as the Northwestern Frontier Province. With undeterred resolution, Jaimal set out on the long journey. He first halted at Aminabad whence he proceeded to Shah Daulah. From Shah Daulah his journey took him across the Jhelum river to Tila Balnath, and thence to Rawalpindi. He spent a few days in each of these towns and never failed to get in touch with the fakirs and sadhus to be found there. Being not very far from Panja Sahib, the famous shrine marking one of Guru Nanak's most memorable miracles,¹ he proceeded there

even if it lay somewhat off his route. There he sojourned for a while, enjoying the natural scenery and the clear water gushing from the sacred fount. He journeyed from there toward Attock and at last arrived at Hazro, his destination.

He was very happy to meet the venerable Baba Balak Singh who was impressed by the young visitor's keenness of mind and intensity of spiritual yearning. They passed some delightful days together reading, reciting and discussing the Granth Sahib. Balak Singh was a man of great wisdom and piety, but as far as Spirituality was concerned he, like Gulab Das, was only conversant with japa through prana, and knew little of the *Panch Shabdi Naam* spoken of by Kabir and the great Sikh Gurus. However he gave his young friend hope and directed him to Chikker to a householder Sikh of great spiritual eminence.

Jaimal arrived from Hazro in the village of Chikker and began inquiring for the man he sought. He seemed to find no clue till he met an old retired Sikh who asked the young stranger if he could assist him in any way. Jaimal related from where he had come and the object of his quest, and asked to be guided to the local saint. The old gentleman, who was himself the man he sought, kindly replied that no such saint lived in that village as far as he knew, but offered to do for him whatever little lay in his power.

Jaimal's long and exacting search now at last began to yield some fruit. The householder mahatma at whose home he now found himself gave him the first definite clues of what he sought and put him on the first rung of the spiritual ladder. Shortly after his arrival the God-intoxicated boy received initiation. His earlier assumptions were confirmed and he now knew it for certain that the path of Naam had little to do with other yogic practices. But after initiation he pointed out that the scriptures spoke of the "five-worded Word" and he had been imparted only two. On hearing this, his host and preceptor related to him the story of his own initiation:

"It was many years ago that I went to Peshawar. There I met a great mahatma and wished to be initiated by him. He accepted me as a disciple and unlocked to me the mystery of the first two Shabdhas, bidding me to

come back again as early as possible. I proceeded to my village and intended to return soon. But such are the traps of Maya that I was unable, due to some unexpected piece of business, to fulfil my wish. Two months went by in this way, and when I did at last reach Peshawar, my Master had passed away, taking with him the key to the remaining phases of the Divine Naam.”²

Jaimal had no choice. He had to be content with what he got. He stayed on with the Sikh mahatma for some time, enjoying his hospitality and inspiring company, and sedulously cultivating the gift he had received. Then a day arrived when he bade his latest teacher a touching farewell and set forth for Peshawar to pursue his unfulfilled quest. He had the satisfaction of being put on the right road, but he was not the man to rest till he had attained his goal. At this ancient frontier city he once again, like a keen huntsman, began seeking the trail of some man of full God-realization. But Peshawar was not the place where his quest was to be crowned with success and his thirst satiated. While wandering among Pathans through its many streets, a *mastana* Sikh, lost to the everyday world of rational behaviour by divine intoxication, stopped him and accosted him with the words: “Why do you expend your labors in the North when your day is to dawn from the East?” Though he could extract nothing more from the strange counsellor, his advice drove home and soon after Jaimal began retracing his steps to the Punjab. On reaching Rawalpindi he decided to visit the famous Kashmir Valley and the popular hill resort of Murree. A lover of Nature’s beauties, he greatly enjoyed his hilly tour and in Kashmir met many a sadhu. His sightseeing over, he finally turned homeward. With tatters on his back and barely any shoes on his feet or money in his pocket, he at last reached Ghuman to the great joy of his fond mother and his affectionate brothers.

The family celebrated the homecoming in traditional style, offering thanksgiving to the Almighty, arranging scriptural recitations and the singing of hymns, distributing sweets among the neighbours and offering food to the poor. Jaimal Singh, now sixteen, took up the family duties once more and gave himself up to the consolidation of what he had learned

in his recent itinerary. Soon after his return, the Sathyala yogi who had initiated him into Pranayam three years earlier arrived, true to his parting promise, at Ghuman to see his young disciple. Jaimal Singh received him with reverence and humility and his former teacher offered to instruct him in the other practices of traditional yoga. But the youth was no longer a child. His wide travels and the varied accompanying experience had given him a new maturity. What had seemed desirable once no longer seemed of much value, for his contact with many a yogi had convinced him of one thing at least: the *kriyas* of Hatha Yoga might give strange physical and occult powers, but they could not bestow full inner peace and freedom. Every fresh day only strengthened his old conviction that the path of complete *mukti* or emancipation lay some other way, and all that he now sought was initiation into the mystique of the Panch Shabd.

Time rolled on its mercury wheels, but Jaimal Singh was not the man to sit idle or be content with only the second best. “Awake, arise and stop not until the goal is reached,” enjoined an ancient Vedic text, and his life was a living embodiment of this precept. Barely eight months had elapsed since his return when the urge to resume his quest for the holy Naam became too powerful to be resisted, and he began pressing his mother for permission to set out once more.

“How can you expect me to let you go again? You were a child then, but now you are a grown up man and understand your responsibilities.”

“Ah, mother, at my birth you prayed for a saintly son. Then why stop me now?”

“How can you talk this way? Have I ever checked you in your religious inclinations? Surely you can pursue your devotional practices and spiritual disciplines while living at home?”

“How can godliness and worldliness go together?”

“But you yourself have seen how others have encroached upon our lands after your father’s death. We barely get enough to eat; and when you are gone, your brothers being so young, what will prevent them from forcibly occupying the rest?”

“Let them take whatever they will. This world is not ours, and even if these lands are not taken away from us we will have to leave them some day when our life span is over. We have only to sustain ourselves. What matters if all our property is lost? The Lord has given us sinewy arms, and with his grace we shall earn a respectable living.”

He whom nothing could dissuade while yet a child could not be deterred now, and Bibi Daya had no choice but to let him go. Thus at the age of sixteen years and nine months Jaimal Singh once again set out on his spiritual explorations. Having well nigh exhausted the Punjab and the Northwest, with the words of the Peshawar Sikh still reverberating in his ears, he bent his footsteps eastward. The times were insecure and the British had not yet fully entrenched themselves in their new northern conquests. Night travel was therefore prohibited, and sentries were stationed at night on the chief highways to prevent any stray travellers. But Jaimal Singh was too eager to be thus restricted. He would spend the first half of the night resting and sleeping and in the second, while the sentries were drowsing and dozing, continue his journey as quickly as possible.

At Vairach, a village on the banks of the Beas not far from home, he met a sadhu named Kahan who was engaged in collecting bricks. “Good day, holy one,” said the youth. “What is it that keeps you so busy?”

“Nothing, my son, nothing; I am only collecting material for your future dwelling,” smiled Kahan, and once more got lost in his work. When others of the village would question him in like manner, he would reply with characteristic brevity, “A temple will rise here one day,” and relapse into his usual silence.

Jaimal Singh, not knowing where to go, directed his steps toward Hardwar on the banks of the sacred Ganges, a favourite haunt of the holy. Travelling by night and by day, he footed the distance with commendable speed and in twelve days reached the Ganges. He explored the ghats of Hardwar, then a small town almost entirely populated by pandits and sadhus, hearing learned yogis, questioning them and discussing his problems with them. From the main town he travelled alongside the river, visiting

all the sacred spots in the neighbourhood. At Tappo Ban he heard of a very old sadhu of about a hundred and fifty years who dwelt not far away in the heart of a thick jungle and possessed great powers but seldom spoke to those who came to see him.

Undaunted by the yogi's reported silence, Jaimal Singh wended his way into the forest and at last found the hermit's dwelling. The sadhu was busy with his spiritual practices and paid no heed to those that came to see him in order to be blessed by his sight. The evening drew near and the sky and the branches overhead burst into life with the twitter of homing birds. All the visitors departed: the forest would soon be dark and who could tell what wild creature might be prowling in the thick foliage awaiting its chance. Jaimal Singh alone stayed on. Night fell and yet the yogi took no notice of him. He at last got up, walked to a swing hung from a nearby branch and took his stand, resting his arms on its wooden seat. Hour after hour slipped by but the ascetic stood on motionless, displaying no signs of fatigue. At last darkness began to break and brought an end to his nightly feat of endurance. He left the swing, disappeared into the jungle and returned after bathing. Jaimal had been keeping night long vigil and had kept watching the unusual behaviour of the strange man before him. When the sadhu came back after his bath, he at last showed some signs of being aware of his visitor's presence. He asked him who he was and what he wanted. The youth told his name, the place from whence he came and added: "Holy one! For many years I have been in search of true spiritual enlightenment. I heard of your fame and your great powers and have come as a supplicant to your door. I have watched with interest your strange practices and if indeed they grant full liberation from inner restlessness, then I pray, please, instruct me into their secrets."

The sadhu made no reply. He sat silent and closed his eyes. After a while he opened them and answered: "My son, my discipline is difficult and bestows many powers. But as for inner spiritual freedom, I am afraid it has not secured me that."

Jaimal Singh wished to question the yogi still further, but the latter became silent and receded from the world of outer consciousness into that of meditation. The sun ascended the heavens and the day passed by. Some devotees came to have a glimpse of the famous yogi, bowed reverently at his feet and, leaving some food for Jaimal Singh and some offerings for the ascetic, departed as on the previous day. Once again the night fell and once again the youth from Ghuman sat on. The yogi at last rose from his seat and spent the second night in the same manner as the first. When day broke, he went for his bath, and on returning beckoned Jaimal to his side. "My son, I cannot tell you much," he said. "But in my meditation I saw that the Guru you seek dwells with his wife in Agra. He is indeed a great soul and discourses from the Granth Sahib. He shall unlock to you the treasures of the Panch Shabd. Proceed there and I myself will follow as soon as I can to partake of his bounty."

What a burden fell off Jaimal Singh's back! How many nights had he spent tossing and praying, wondering if God would ever grant his wishes! The stranger at Peshawar had given him hope, but his words were vague, and nothing was certain. Now at last a definite clue had been given to him and success appeared within sight. The Lord was indeed kind and did not ignore his humble servant's supplication. Refreshed in spirit and confident in mind, the youth, with a heart overflowing with inexpressible gratitude, bowed before the yogi now wrapped in silence and humbly took his leave.

The Consummation

Barely ten days had elapsed before Jaimal Singh, passing through Hapur and the holy town of Mathura, arrived at the gates of Agra. It is a city famous since the days of the great Moghuls; and many a tourist from far and near, from beyond the Atlantic and the Pacific, has had glimpses of its magnificent Taj Mahal and other historic monuments as well as its sultry heat and dusty streets. But the youth from the Punjab had not come to view its historic splendour; he had no flair for its gorgeous and massive

mausoleums, forts and palaces built by Akbar and his illustrious successors. What he sought was not the reminiscences of time but the enlivening breath of the Eternal. Instead of visiting the Taj Mahal he explored the local shrines and temples in search of the boon that had been promised him.

But try as he might, his explorations seemed to lead nowhere. He could find no clue to the man he sought. Were his hopes baseless? Was the promise given him at Peshawar and confirmed in the heart of a forest on the banks of the sacred Ganges only a hoax and a delusion? Perhaps there had been error? Perhaps he was not yet ripe for the gift? Many thoughts crowded Jaimal Singh's mind as he sat contemplating on the banks of the Jamuna one morning after having bathed in its waters. While he sat this morning, two men approached him, discussing personal matters. At first he took scant notice of them for many came daily for a dip in the sacred river. But then a word shot through his ears and he was all attention. Yes, they were talking of a "Soami Ji," a great sage, who often discoursed on the Sikh scriptures at his home to a small audience. Jaimal Singh was on his feet. He accosted the strangers, inquired of them about the great man of whom they spoke and begged to be conducted to his dwelling.

As soon as the two devotees had finished bathing, they set out with Jaimal Singh for Punni Gali where lived the great Soami Ji. When the three reached their destination, the Master was speaking on the Jap Ji, expounding its profound meaning and unearthing the spiritual treasures hidden in its lyrical ecstasy. There were only a few listeners and Jaimal Singh slipped quietly into a corner. He heard the discourse with rapt attention, drinking in every word that fell from the lips of the Saint.

When the morning assembly was over, Soami Ji welcomed his new visitor and asked him what he wanted.

"I am in search of the gift of Naam and a Saint who can bestow its blessing upon me," replied Jaimal Singh. "I heard of your greatness and have hastened to your door."

“I am afraid you will find no Saint here,” smiled the radiant Soami Ji. “I am only a mere servant of the Saints. Even the great Nanak regarded himself as no Saint; then how can a mere nothing like myself be of any consequence?” He then welcomed Jaimal once more, assuring him that he could stay there as long as he pleased, for all were free to share the bounty of the *Sahib*, the Lord above.

Later that day Soami Ji spoke to Jaimal Singh again. Pleased with his deep immersion in the Grant Sahib, he asked him to recite one of his favorite hymns. The youth began melodiously to chant the piece beginning:

*Karam hovae Satguru milae
Sewa Surat Shabd chit lae
By the grace of God one can meet a Master
who puts him on the service of Surat Shabd Yoga.*

RAG MAGH M. 3

The recitation was moving. It was clear that the speaker had himself felt with deep intensity what he chanted. When it was over, Soami Ji asked him if he understood the full meaning of the verses he had just rendered.

“O Holy One!” came the answer, “if I had understood their true import, why then should I wander lost in this fashion?” And as he spoke these words and recalled his long journeys and the many vicissitudes he had, Jaimal Singh’s eyes brimmed with tears and silently overflowed.

Soami Ji placed his hand lovingly on the youth’s back and reassured him. “Be of good cheer,” he said, “we are old comrades and there is no cause for worry.” Then taking up the hymn that had been just recited, he expounded its spiritual meaning at length, weaving with subtlety the threads of personal effort and divine grace essential for the salvation of the human soul.

Next morning Soami Ji resumed his discourse on the Jap Ji. When it was over, he turned toward Jaimal Singh and suggested, “If you have any doubts or questions, why not clarify them now? Speak your mind fully.

I am only a humble servant of the Lord, and one may say anything to a servant – anything – high or low; don't be afraid, but speak frankly. I would be only too happy to be of some assistance to you for I regard this as my service to my Guru.”

Later that afternoon Soami Ji once again requested Jaimal to recite a hymn from the Sikh scriptures, and the Sikh youth began chanting:

*Utpat, Parlae, Shabde hovae
Shabde he phir opat hovae
Creation and dissolution is caused by Shabd and
the creation again comes into being by Shabd.*

RAG MAGH M. 3

The afternoon talk centred around this hymn, and the Master took up at length the theme of Shabd or Naam, answering one after another Jaimal Singh's as yet unvoiced questions on the subject. He showed how the Word was the primal cause of creation as well as of its dissolution; how it was at once the agent of the Almighty Absolute and itself the Absolute. Without its power nothing was created, and only through contacting it could one reach back to one's heavenly home.

When all had departed and Jaimal Singh was left alone with Soami Ji, he drew closer and began to question the Saint on the way to salvation. He was convinced that the Agra sage was a true Master, but the fact that he was not a Sikh and smoked the hookah caused him some uneasiness. But as Soami Ji took up the subject of salvation and began revealing how Shabd was the only means of *mukti*, how its contact could be given only by a *Puran Sant*, a perfect Master, how man without it could never fully escape the meshes of Maya, and how its practice and mastery lay within the reach of all regardless of their differences of sect and custom, Jaimal's doubts were dissipated and he begged to be initiated. Soami Ji then began to instruct him into the theory and practice of Surat Shabd Yoga, and when the instructions were over, asking the youth of seventeen to sit down for meditation, he left the room.

As soon as Jaimal Singh sat down for meditation, he got lost in samadhi. The night came and passed away, the day broke, but he continued motionless, lost in the inner bliss he had discovered. Another day saw itself swallowed by the night, and the night saw itself replaced by another day, and yet the youth sat lost to the world around him. When some forty-eight hours had thus gone by, Soami Ji asked some of the disciples if they knew where the visitor from the Punjab disappeared. "We saw him two days ago at the Satsang," they said, "but we have not seen him since." Soami Ji smiled and proceeded straight to the little room where he had left his latest disciple and which none had entered for two days. He placed his hand on Jaimal Singh's head, and when the latter's soul returned to normal physical consciousness and he opened his eyes, he saw his Guru beaming at him. "Do you, my boy, still doubt if your Master be a true Sikh or not?" he asked with a twinkle in his eye. The lad wished to fall at his feet but the long spell of samadhi had left his joints numb and still. Soami Ji suggested that he rub his legs, and when Jaimal could move, he conducted him outside. There he gave him a drink of milk with his own hands, and gazing at him fondly, he said: "You too shall do one day the work I carry on now. Our path is not concerned with outer forms and rituals and each of us must live by the best traditions of the community in which the Lord has been pleased to place us." He then began commending the teachings of Nanak and the Sikh Gurus and said that those who were their followers needed little instruction. "Always abide by the injunctions of the Granth Sahib," he continued. "Abstain from meat and drink. Never depend for your sustenance on others but live by the labour of your own hands. Whatever you earn share freely with the needy and remember to serve the holy and the poor. And above all never be proud of your own good deeds or critical of the actions of others, but know yourself to be in error, and never step outside the virtue of inner humility."

Jaimal Singh heard with reverent attention his Master's advice and ever afterward tried to model himself on the same. He devotedly attended the daily Satsang and assisted in whatever manner lay within his reach. His past training had disciplined him well for his spiritual sadhan, and he

would devote himself untiringly to Bhajan. Under Soami Ji's guidance and with his phenomenal inner progress, new mysteries were daily revealed to him, the mysteries of which Nanak, Kabir and Tulsi had so ecstatically sung.

In those days during the mid-fifties, Soami Ji did not have a large following. He had not yet begun giving public discourses, and confined his meetings to small private audiences at his home in Punni Gali after having discontinued his talks at the Mai Than Gurdwara. Seven or eight of his disciples were especially devoted to him and constantly sought his company and there was great affection and harmony. Every morning the Master gave an inspiring talk, displaying before his listeners' eyes the spiritual treasures hidden in the Granth Sahib or the writings of Kabir and other great Saints. After the morning Satsang those present sat down for their meals. The food was cooked by Soami Ji's wife, Srimati Narain Devi, who came subsequently to be addressed as Radha Ji as a mark of public respect and adoration; while Soami Ji personally served the food to all with loving attention to each. In the afternoons and evenings there would often be informal conversations and discussions and at times regular discourses.

A month and a half passed by in this way. Jaimal Singh was happy to live at the feet of his benevolent Master. It was the year 1856, and a regiment of Indian sepoy, including several Sikhs, was about this time stationed at Agra. At the instance of Soami Ji, Jaimal Singh joined up as a recruit. He would attend his morning parade and, duties over, hasten to his Guru's door. There he would attend the Satsang, hear Soami Ji, sit for meditation and return to his quarters in the cantonment at night. His army colleagues would often ask him where he spent so much of his time. When he told them of the greatness of Soami Ji, some of his Sikh friends wished to meet the illustrious Saint, and one day accompanied by six of them Jaimal Singh set forth for Punni Gali.

Soami Ji was discoursing on some hymn from the Granth Sahib when the group from the cantonment arrived. Chacha Partap Singh good-hu-

mouredly remarked that the Punjab seemed to dominate the Satsang that day. Soami Ji turned to him and said: "The people of that land above all others have a right to the spiritual riches of which I speak. Who can ever do justice to the glory of Punjab that bore a soul like Nanak? He above all taught us that freedom does not lie in idol-worship or in rituals, and while we in these parts are still lost in ceremony and idolatry, insensitive to the message of Kabir and Nanak, the souls of Punjab are free from such evils and need only a spark to set them ablaze. Mark my words for they are worth remembering: the gift bestowed upon me by the Lord shall flower one day on the plains of the Punjab." Then turning to his visitors, he welcomed them, entertained them as best as he could, bade their leader Jaimal Singh to be regular in his army duties, and when the time came for their departure, wished them farewell.

The light army duties left Jaimal Singh ample time for meditation. If he had no night duty, he would get up at 2 A.M., bathe, and sit down for meditation. During the day, as soon as the parade and other normal duties were over, he would engage himself in like manner or hasten to the home of Soami Ji. He was known for not wasting a single moment on pastimes popular among his fellow soldiers. He visited Punni Gali with great regularity, and often acted there as Soami Ji's *pathi* or reciter; and many of his friends, because of his impact, became his Master's disciples. Life was peaceful and happy and was bearing steady fruit. But a day arrived when the regiment was ordered to move from Agra. Heavy of heart, Jaimal Singh met his Master and sadly related the news. "Oh Sir!" he said, "how I yearn to enjoy the blessings of Satsang a little longer." Soami Ji smiled and replied, "Well, let us wait and watch for the Will of the Sahib." Next day fresh orders arrived cancelling the departure of the regiment.

Jaimal Singh was making speedy inner headway. He often told Soami Ji of his various spiritual experiences and his Guru was pleased with his progress. Once when he told him of his ready access to Daswan Dwar (the Tenth Gate – the third major stage of the mystic soul) but his inability to penetrate beyond it, Soami Ji exclaimed: "Ah! That is quite under-

standable. We have worked at this spiritual exploration together before, and in your last life you mastered up to the third stage. Hence your ease in progressing thus far and your subsequent difficulty.” He however reassured his young disciple and encouraged him to keep up his effort.

When the latter one day reported still higher ascent, Soami Ji was mightily pleased and declared enthusiastically: “Continue in this fashion and you will soon be ready to help other souls to salvation. You have been born to help mankind, and between you and me is no real difference.”

“I am not worthy of such honour. Oh, let me be humbly at your feet, far from the fangs of pride.”

“Fear not, a true Saint can never be proud.”

“Oh Sir, keep me at your feet, the servant of the servants of Saints. That is all I ask.”

“You shall indeed have a Saint’s service: saving humanity, bringing it to truth and spiritual liberation. What is the giving away of a million cows to the saving of a single soul?”

“You may do as you judge best, but as for myself I know only too well my worthlessness and limitations.”

The six months for which the regiment’s departure was postponed were over and Jaimal Singh had to go. He took leave for the last three days and spent them in the company of his Master. When at last the time for bidding farewell drew near, Jaimal Singh could bear it no longer.

“My heart breaks at the thought of parting. If you so will, I can have my name struck from the army rolls.”

But Soami Ji would not hear of such a thing: “Build your love on the Shabd within. That is your real Guru and is ever at your side. All else is transient and must be left behind. You must earn your living for if you depend on the labour of others, you must pay for it with your mental peace, and your understanding will be clouded. If you have to work, then why leave the army?”

Jaimal Singh had no choice but to bow before the superior wisdom of his Master. At parting, Soami Ji spoke of the nature of Sainthood and the conduct of Saints. He related anecdotes of their great humility and, when bidding farewell, said: “Your regiment is now leaving. If you ever meet a true seeker, put him on the inner path, but remember always that you are only a humble instrument of the Saints.” Tears filled the young soldier’s eyes as he fell at the feet of his Guru and bade him adieu.

The Soldier Saint

From Agra the regiment moved to Delhi. Jaimal Singh, deprived of his Master’s company, began looking for some spiritual seeker with whom he could associate. He soon discovered one Baba Karam Singh, also in the army, who was a great devotee of the Lord. He began visiting him frequently and would sit at his quarters enjoying the elder’s company. When one day Baba Karam Singh asked Jaimal Singh what attracted him to his place, he very simply replied, “I come here because since my childhood I have loved sitting at the feet of the lovers of the Lord.” Baba Karam Singh was delighted to find a fellow spirit so young in years, and a lively discussion on Spirituality ensued. It turned out that Baba Karam Singh, like Baba Balak Singh of Hazro, mistook the pranic rhythm for the principle of Naam sung of in the Granth Sahib. The young soldier, who had not yet attained his majority, began with great humility to correct his error. He quoted relevant passages from the Sikh scriptures to show that the Divine Shabd was the prime energy activating everything, even prana, but was not to be identified with prana. He dwelt on the fact that all great exponents of Sant Mat or the Path of the Masters had clearly and unequivocally declared that in our time pranayama and other such practices could not bring inner emancipation. He then spoke of his great teacher at Agra and of his inspiring teachings, and helped Baba Karam Singh to get on to the right path to God.

After the great Rebellion of 1857, the regiment in which Jaimal Singh was employed was disbanded. He had not met his family for a long time

and proceeded straight home. His mother's joy at seeing him again knew no bounds. But he was not destined to be with her for long. On receiving the news that a 24th Sikh Regiment had been formed at Peshawar, he bade his family farewell and proceeded to join it. After some time in the Northwest Frontier Province the regiment was transferred in January 1858 to Ambala. In September of the following year it was transferred to Sagar, a city on the banks of a large lake in central India. By now Jaimal Singh's fellow soldiers had got used to his rigorous spiritual discipline; but during the days the regiment would be marching, they were surprised to find him excavate a small dugout in which he would then sit in a reclining posture, his back resting against the earthy embankment, and pass the entire night in meditation.

While stationed at Sagar, Jaimal Singh one night requested Soami Ji in meditation that the regiment be transferred next to Agra so that he could have the benefit of sitting at his holy feet. A man of God-realization can work strange miracles, being at one with the Will of God; and a Guru's love for a true disciple is so great that he denies him nothing.³ Jaimal Singh's prayer was granted; and next morning he casually observed to Bhagwan Singh, his mate and a devoted admirer, that as and when the regiment would be transferred it would be moved to Agra. On that occasion Bhagwan Singh took little notice of what was said, but when the news of its next stationing was received, the story of the prophetic soldier spread through the regiment like wildfire.

The orders for moving to Agra had not yet been received when Jaimal Singh applied for annual leave. The leave was granted but when he reported before departure, his superior informed him that he had to rejoin, not at Sagar, but at Agra. The sepoy was so overcome with the news, that instead of going home he went straight to Agra. Soami Ji received him with great affection and Radha Ji especially prepared halwa to mark the occasion. The great Guru regarded him as a *puran Gurmukh*, a true disciple, and recited to him some of the mystical poems he had composed during Jaimal Singh's absence from Agra and which were later collected by Rai Saligram Ji, another noted and distinguished disciple, along with

many of his own compositions, in the volume entitled *Sar Bachan*. One of the verses he read referred directly to his disciple:

*Yeh dhun hai dhur lok adhur ki
Koyi pukre Sant sipahi
This music streams from a transcendent plane
within and is caught by a soldier Saint.*

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Jaimal Singh made the most of his time with the Master. He attended the Satsang regularly and often chanted the verses on which Soami Ji later discoursed. Meanwhile the 24th Sikh Regiment moved into town, but he continued to stay at Punni Gali for he still had some leave to his credit. One night Soami Ji asked him to carry a number of sheets and clothes and accompany him to a poor locality. There he personally distributed to the needy according to their wants the gifts he had brought for them. The recipients were full of gratitude and enthusiastically thanked and blessed the magnanimous stranger. But Soami Ji was not the man to draw praise for himself even when it was his rightful due. "Oh," he exclaimed to those who flocked around him, "do not thus burden me with thanks. I am only an agent of my generous Master. It is to him that all credit is due."

When the nocturnal mission was over, the great teacher turned to his disciple and said, "Jaimal, my son, always serve the poor in this way, never claiming anything as your due."

Jaimal Singh went back to duty when his annual holiday was over. But he made it a point not to miss any opportunity of visiting his Master. He would often arrive at Punni Gali at noon and stay on till late in the evening. One day, lost in Satsang and Bhajan, he forgot completely that he was on duty at night. It was early in the morning that he reached the army quarters and went straight to his mate.

"Have you completed your duty?" asked Bhagwan Singh.

"Why, was I on duty last night?" ventured Jaimal Singh.

“Are you being funny? As if I didn’t see you going out dressed for duty last night!”

Jaimal Singh made no further reply. He was musing on the unfailing care of his Master and wondering what exactly had happened. If he still had any doubts about the miracle, they were soon dispelled. The Havildar above him, on meeting him shortly after, also referred to his night duty and that his attendance had been duly marked in the night register. As soon as he could get away, he hastened to Punni Gali and fell at his Master’s feet. “How little we erring mortals deserve the grace you shower on us!” he exclaimed, and related the strange happenings of the preceding night.

“I hope you have not spoken of them to any of your army friends.”

“Sir, I was too dumbfounded to utter a word.”

“Excellent! Excellent! Now keep it to yourself. And mark if any such thing ever happens in the future, remember to restrain yourself and not make a public fuss about it.”

This miracle was to be repeated when a similar situation arose not long after.

The year and a half that the 24th Sikh Regiment spent at Agra passed on like a happy dream. Before the regiment departed, Jaimal Singh spent three days with Soami Ji. On the last day when he had to bid farewell, he humbly fell at his Master’s feet. Soami Ji raised him from his feet, pressed him fondly to himself, and observed, “There is no difference between us whatsoever for we are alike permeated with the power of Naam.”

From Agra the regiment proceeded to Peshawar as is the wont in army life. The 24th Sikh Regiment kept moving from one cantonment to another every two or three years. Among various places at which it was stationed, the most important were Rawalpindi, Abbotabad, Mianmir near Lahore, and Jhansi. While at the last mentioned station, Jaimal Singh was promoted to the rank of a Naik (corporal).

In October, two years later, he was once again on his way to Agra to spend the annual leave with his Guru. Who can describe the beatitude to be experienced at the feet of a Divine Teacher! The time slipped by and before he could even realize it, Jaimal Singh's day of parting arrived. He went to Soami Ji for blessings and to bid him farewell. "This is going to be our last meeting," observed the Master. "My mission on earth is almost over. I need hardly repeat that I have cast you in my own mould and you are of my very essence." When Chanda Singh, who was also at Punni Gali at that time, heard that Soami Ji intended to leave the world in a short while, he exclaimed, "What will become of us?" and begged him to leave someone behind to carry on his work in the Punjab. Soami Ji smiled and replied, "Your prayers have already been granted by the Almighty, and Jaimal, whom I have already given authority for Initiation, has been deputed for the task." Then turning back to Jaimal, he said: "Put all seekers that come to you on the path of Naam; but see that your steer clear of sects and creeds. Ours is the path of Nanak and Kabir. Whosoever is fired by spiritual zeal, whether of this faith or of that, has a right to it. Carry on in all humility, and whatever you do, do it as a servant of the Saints." He then turned to Radha Ji and placing his hand on Jaimal's back declared, "He is indeed our Gurmukh son," and taking a *saropa* or headdress he lovingly bestowed it as a parting gift to his apt and faithful disciple. This great love and honour was too much for the humble Gurmukh and, overwhelmed, his eyes were filled with tears. His heart was heavy as he left, thinking of the approaching end of his Master's earthly sojourn and the difficult burden that was being placed on his shoulders.

From Agra, Jaimal Singh returned to his regiment at Jhansi. The rest of his story as a soldier is simply told. It is unnecessary to enumerate the many places at which the 24th Sikh Regiment was stationed from time to time. Whatever happened, wherever he went, Jaimal Singh let nothing interrupt the routine of his spiritual sadhans. Like a lover in the frenzy of love, he was forever centred in the joy of the inner life. Even when his regiment was in action in the North-western Frontier during the Anglo-

Afghan War in 1879, he would leave his quarters at night, go into the wilderness, dig a pit and, with his rifle tucked under his knees, get lost in meditation. Enemy snipers would often spot him, but seeing his Radiant figure make out that he was no ordinary soldier but some great fakir, and leave him untouched. At times when he arose from his sadhan, they would even bow before him in reverence.

As Jaimal Singh, who had been 18 when he had first entered the army at Agra, grew into a mature man and passed from youth to middle age, he slowly but steadily won the hearts of all around him. At first some of his companions might have sportively dismissed him as an orthodox nonentity who did not know the art of enjoying life, but was lost in the reading of scriptures and tedious spiritual sadhans. But as the years passed by, they realized that they had among them no ordinary mortal. His prediction to Bhagwan Singh at Sagar of their regiment's next posting got wide currency and won him many admirers. While stationed at Jamrud during the Afghan War, his mate Bhagwan Singh, who had gone with a convoy, suddenly fell ill and died. At the very moment his spirit was leaving its physical frame, Jaimal Singh, many miles away, abruptly exclaimed, "*Wah wah nipat gaye,*" that is, "Well, well, it is at last over."

Inder Singh, who had joined the regiment at Jhansi, and had developed an intimate attachment for his revered senior, becoming his first initiate, was sitting with him. He was not a little surprised by this dramatic outburst, and asked his teacher what it meant. Jaimal Singh was reluctant to declare himself. "Why bother about that which does not concern you?" he said, but when Inder Singh persisted he told him that Bhagwan Singh had passed away. The young soldier noted the time and date and when the news of his colleague's death arrived, he found it to be correct.

Such strange happenings were not infrequent where Jaimal Singh was concerned, and with the passage of time he became an institution in the regiment. Everyone respected him, and even the English officers held him in great veneration, calling him "Lord Bishop." All those spiritually inclined sought his company, and no less than those who suffered from

some worldly affliction. Thus, Subedar Kharak Singh, who had been married for many years without issue, begged him for the blessing of a child. Jaimal Singh observed that he was not destined to have a child, but when Kharak Singh continued to press him, his prayer was granted. The child was born, but the happy father failed to give away in charity the sum of Rs. 500 which Jaimal Singh had strictly enjoined him to distribute. Not long after, the Subedar fell seriously ill. Jaimal Singh was called, but he said that it was too late now and the evil was past any remedy. A few days later, Kharak Singh passed away.

Was it mere chance or was it because of Jaimal Singh that the members of the 24th Sikhs showed an extraordinary interest in spiritual matters? It is not an unusual phenomenon that the true holy men spread an aura of peace wherever they are, drawing the devotees of the Lord toward themselves and influencing those around them. This regiment became known for its religious inclinations and many a sadhu would pay it a visit wherever it was stationed. Jaimal Singh was always invited whenever any sadhu paid a visit to the regimental centre or when any of its members went forth to meet them. When once some of the young Sikh soldiers had to be baptized as adults into their faith, he was unhesitatingly chosen to conduct the ceremony and gave an illuminating discourse on the inner spiritual significance of the ritual. His recitations from scriptures began gradually to be attended by more and more people, and in later years Jaimal Singh, who by then had come to be popularly addressed as “Baba Ji,” “Bhai Ji,” or “Sant Sepahi,” often discoursed briefly on their true import. His magnetic personality, his impeccable character, his spiritual mastery and his growing fame gradually drew around him a small circle of very devoted followers from the regiment, men like Inder Singh, Bagga Singh, Bhagwan Singh, etc., who became his earliest initiates.

But Baba Jaimal Singh’s military career was conspicuous not only for its rigid adherence to a high spiritual ideal, but also for its equally remarkable performance in the field of army duties. True to his Master’s behest, Jaimal Singh was extremely regular in his official routine. Nothing could keep him away from his work except, perhaps, his absorption

in the Divine, on which occasions Soami Ji miraculously filled up the gap. He was known for his honesty and impartiality and, though a strict vegetarian himself, did not hesitate to have meat distributed to his fellows as duty bound when once he was called upon to do so. Once an officer asserted that his vegetarianism was in all probability undermining his capacities as a soldier and suggested that he should take to non-vegetarian food to develop more stamina and muscle. Jaimal Singh was unconvinced and challenged any “meat-eating toughs” to surpass him on the field. He was later requested to explain the grounds for his abstinence, and gave a full discourse to the entire regiment developing at length the reasons why meat should be avoided and exploding the popular myth that vegetarian food is in any way deficient in vitality. His service roll, covering 34 years of active service, proves the truth of his assertion. It records not a single instance of hospitalisation.

Like his great Guru, Jaimal Singh was unassailable both in *swartha* and *parmartha* – worldliness and godliness. His exemplary regularity, sobriety and courage, his readiness to shoulder responsibilities, and his honest discharge of all his duties, for all his quietness and unobtrusiveness, did not go unnoticed. In January 1869 he was awarded a medal for the rank of a Naik while at Jhansi. In Mianmir on the same day, three years later, he became a Havildar (sergeant); and when the 24th Sikhs were at Multan from 1880 onward for three years, he received a second medal for loyal and meritorious service. He retired on 15th August, 1889, after full 34 years of faithful and creditable service; and when he bade his regiment farewell, the hearts of all were heavy – juniors, colleagues and seniors – for they lost in him not just a steady, hard-working comrade, but a friend, a teacher (he taught Gurmukhi to the officers) and what is far rarer, an unflinching and inspiring moral and spiritual guide.

The accounts of Baba Ji left by his army colleagues and others are of a piece with the rest of his life and character. Reading through them we learn of a man who, while lost in the Divine mysteries, was yet not lost to the world. A fellow soldier who happened to be placed under him while he was a Havildar was surprised that in all the three years they were to-

gether, he did not once notice or hear of his being out of temper. He was always sweet-spoken and refrained from harshness and vulgarity. All his life he remained a strict vegetarian and an equally strict teetotaler. And to these we may add his rigid *brahmcharya*, for he remained a celibate all his years. Wedded to devotion to God, he never experienced the urge to marry, and stoutly resisted any attempt to cajole him into matrimony. When his youngest brother Jiwan Singh also entered the army and expressed his desire to marry, Jaimal Singh did not object, but only said, “Why enter into this web when our family is not destined to continue?” Jiwan Singh was married and a year later a son was born who died shortly, followed by his mother. Dan Singh, the second brother, who managed the farm, also had no issue, and Jaimal’s prediction was thus fulfilled.

Other qualities that marked Jaimal Singh out of the general run of men included an inexhaustible capacity for service, charity and generosity. Like Soami Ji, he often distributed clothes and other necessities to the needy and the wretched. He had no enemies and looked upon all as his friends. His love however was especially directed to the poor, and even more so to sadhus and devotees of the Lord. While others were idling or busy with sport, he sought out the company of such devotees, ministering to their needs or discussing spiritual problems. Neither in his army life nor even afterward did he distinguish between creed and creed, but treated all – Muslims, Christians, Sikhs or Hindus – on an equal footing. While ever ready to help materially or spiritually, he always avoided the lime-light. Even as a child he had been known for his modesty; his shyness being sometimes made a subject of ridicule. If he met sadhus, he contented himself with listening to what they said; he rarely contradicted or criticized. If he met a genuine seeker, he was ready enough to discuss and explain, but he attributed whatever he knew not to any virtue in himself, but to the grace of his peerless Master.

His dress and appearance were as simple yet elegant as the man himself. Of medium height, some five feet and six inches, he was sturdily built. He had a knotty protrusion on his forehead above the right eye and a lotus mark (*padam*), symbolic of true spirituality, on the sole of his right

foot. He had fine features, *wheatish* complexion and a glowing face whose ruddy colour was set off by a rich freely flowing beard which retained its lustrous blackness to the very end, except for a few straggling streaks of white. When not in army uniform, he wore a white turban in Jat style, a white muslin *kurta* (loose shirt), and tight-fitting pyjamas of the same colour. While in his quarter informally among his fellows, he would usually wrap a khadi sheet about himself tucking it on the left side, cover his hair (which when unloosed fell to his waist) with a towel, and move about in *kharaon* (wooden sandals) or *jooti* (Indian shoes). He was simple in his habits and frugal in his needs. Milk was his favorite item of food and he was particularly fond of goat's milk. He spent little upon himself and his earnings were mostly spent in charity or in sending allowances to his brother.

The Torch Bearer

Baba Jaimal Singh, on retiring as a Government pensioner from the army, decided to visit the home of his incomparable Master. Soami Ji had passed away in 1878 as he had himself foretold, but Baba Ji was greatly attached to his family and his disciples. So, in 1890, he took train for the old Mughal capital, and on reaching there proceeded straight to Punni Gali. Radha Ji was overjoyed to see Soami Ji's beloved disciple once more while Chacha Partap Singh, his youngest brother, was delighted and gave him a cordial welcome.

Word was sent to Baba Gharib Das, then apparently at Agra, and he hastened to meet the great soul from the Punjab.

Who can describe the deep joy that was theirs as they greeted and embraced each other and remembered the great Master, who, no longer in this physical plane, was yet spiritually ever with them? Who can fathom the feelings of such Master spirits? The old spiritual comrades radiated love as they greeted each other and to see them meet was itself a lesson in the truth that God is love. Radha Ji brought forth a red turban and an

aasan or prayer carpet which Soami Ji had left with her before his passing away as a last gift to his gurmukh disciple. Chacha Partap Singh then brought a gaddi and begged Baba Ji to be seated. But he would not hear of it and commenting, “I am only a dog of this house blessed to be admitted within its walls,” kept standing. Chacha Partap Singh protested and persisted, but to no avail. At last Radha Ji intervened and ended the controversy by saying, “Jaimal Singh is indeed a *khatau* (worthy) son of Soami Ji, who has made the most of the capital entrusted to him. He has bestowed him with the Lordship of Sat Lok. So why should he care for earthly gaddis?” When meals were over, Baba Ji insisted on washing the utensils. “This home for me is a temple, for it was here that I got enlightenment. My only ambition is to serve this house.” But Radha Ji would not hear of it. “You may do as you please some other day,” she declared, “but today you must abide by what I say.”

Next day accompanied by Chacha Partap Singh and Baba Gharib Das, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji proceeded to Rai Saligram – a beloved disciple of Soami Ji – who had been entrusted after him with the work at Agra and carried on his discourses at Pipal Mandi, where he was popularly known as Hazur Maharaj. He rejoiced at the visit and received the honored guest from Ghuman with respect and affection. The two embraced after which Hazur Maharaj drew Baba Ji toward the gaddi on which he had been sitting in order to seat him next to himself. But with characteristic humility, he declined the honor and seated himself on the floor.

The third day Hazur Maharaj presented Baba Ji with a rich silken robe embroidered with gold. He, however, would not hear of it. “What has a simple farmer like me to do with such precious fabrics? Khadi suits me better.” “How can you say such things,” protested the host, “when Soami Ji has made you a king of Spirituality and entrusted you with his mission in the Punjab?” Seeing that Baba Ji would not give way, he finally suggested: “Very well, if you will not accept this robe, at least do me the honor of putting it on once, after which I would keep it as a prized souvenir.” On hearing this, Chacha Partap Singh declared that he had a pri-

or right and should be allowed to have the dress after Baba Jaimal Singh had donned it. At last Radha Ji stepped in and interceded. How could Jaimal Singh resist any longer? Such love! Such honor! What mortal could deserve it? It was all the grace of his Master. With tears in his eyes, he took the robe from Radha Ji's hands and placed it reverently on his head, reciting the verses from the Granth Sahib, beginning:

*Maen av-ghun, gun nahin koi ...
I am unworthy; and no virtue is in me ...*

A week passed by in this fashion and, having paid his homage to the place where he had received spiritual illumination, Baba Jaimal Singh prepared to depart. He invited Baba Gharib Das to join him, and the latter graciously accepted the invitation. The party set forth for the Punjab and when they arrived at Ghuman, scriptural recitations and discourses were arranged in their honor. Jiwan Singh's marriage was at hand, and there was feasting and rejoicing. The villagers keenly enjoyed the talks given by the two spiritual friends and the days rolled by till Baba Gharib Das had to leave. Jaimal Singh accompanied him to the Beas Railway Station and bade him a touching farewell as he left by train.

Baba Ji continued to be on very friendly terms with Soami Ji's disciples and with the members of his family. There was great mutual respect and esteem and Baba Ji's visit to Murree in 1894 was made at the invitation of some Agra satsangis. But after the passing away of Hazur Maharaj Rai Saligram Ji, things began to undergo a change. A move was made to bring all activities under the control of Pandit Brahm Shankar Misra, (alias Maharaj Sahib) through the creation of a Central Administrative Council at Soamibagh. Baba Ji was nominated along with nine others for the first panel of the Council. The letter sent to Baba Jaimal Singh by Chacha Partap Singh from Allahabad on the occasion, dated 4th August, 1902, nominated him as such, is on record.⁴

Baba Ji, however, was reluctant to join the Council as he felt the change that were taking place about this time among the Agra satsangis were not in consonance with Soami Ji's teachings. He also objected to and opposed

Maharaj Sahib's plan for building a magnificent samadh in memory of Soami Ji, because he felt that so humble a spirit as that of his Master would never have countenanced such a project. When he went to Agra about this time, he openly explained his point of view but Maharaj Sahib was not to be dissuaded. Finding himself no longer well received and his words of no avail, he returned to Beas and decided to remain aloof from the activities of the Council at Soamibagh.

During his military career Baba Jaimal Singh, whenever he had any leave, spent part of it at Ghuman. Though detached from worldly ties, he was yet very fond of his mother. On one occasion he was to tell a devoted disciple that in their past three lives, he and his mother had enjoyed the same relationship. On such occasions when he came to his ancestral home, it was his wont not to waste time in needless gossip and idling, but to proceed to the banks of the Beas and sit hidden in the gullies that the wayward river had created by its freakish changes of course, and continue lost in spiritual devotion for days, subsisting only on a few dry chapatis that he brought from home and hung on a kikar tree. At other times when he was at home he would walk down to Dera Baba Namdev and carry on his meditations there or in a dugout in the courtyard of the family house. This house and dugout were preserved long after Baba Ji's death, and his successor, Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj, would sometimes take his closest disciples to Ghuman and show them the spot where his great Guru used to sit for meditation. In particular he would point out the peg on the wall behind the dugout where Baba Ji would tie up his hair in order to ward off sleep during *abhyasa*.

Just as his fellow soldiers learned in time to respect and revere Baba Jaimal Singh, in like manner the inhabitants of Ghuman came gradually to recognize his great spiritual stature. His early childhood devotion had already become a local legend; and whenever the Sant Sipahi came, the local folk flocked to see him and his company was sought by young and old, whosoever was spiritually inclined. Mistri Elahi Baksh and Bhai Lehna, who had been his boyhood friends, were the first to seek his spiritual guidance. He commended their zeal, but said that the time was not

yet ripe for their instruction. Many years later when he felt that the hour had come, he put them on the inner path and they were among his earliest Ghuman disciples.

After his retirement Baba Ji, on coming to his native village, continued his old habit of going to Beas river-side for his sadhans. The years immediately following the close of his army life were largely spent in this manner. Once while at Amritsar with Hakim Nand Lal, he mentioned that he was in search of a quiet place in the wilderness where he could settle down and carry on his meditation. Lala Khazana Mal, a money-lender who was also present, suggested that such a place could be found between the villages of Vairach and Balsarai on the banks of Beas where he carried on his business. Baba Ji, who had already been attached to the area, accepted the suggestion. This was the place where Kahan, a God-intoxicated man, met Baba Ji in his early life saying he was preparing a place for him in the days to come.

Meanwhile Baba Chanda Singh, who too had received instructions at the feet of Soami Ji, passed away. In his last moments Bibi Rukko, a very devoted disciple, asked him what was to become of her. "Fear not, my child," replied the sage, "another greater than myself shall take care of you." "Where shall I find him, Sir?" asked Rukko. "Find him? No, you shall have no need, for he himself will seek you out."

Shortly before Baba Ji came to settle down on the banks of the Beas, Bibi Rukko, who was then living at Vairach and was fairly well advanced spiritually, told the villagers that her protector was coming to live there. When Baba Jaimal Singh arrived, he found a small hut built out of straw and branches for him, a bare eight feet by eight feet, and he began living there. Soon after Khazana Mal arrived, and hearing that Baba Ji had come, came to see him. He had the hut plastered with mud and a cave dug out. It was the year 1891 and Baba Ji gave himself up with redoubled zeal to his spiritual sadhans. He would enter the cave and stay in it for days on end, sometimes as long as a fortnight without any thought for food, rapt in inner samadhi.

Though Baba Ji shunned the public gaze, yet musk cannot be hidden in the dark. He might have no care for earthly name and fame but name and fame fell to his share in spite of this. Fame of his spiritual greatness had already spread from Ghuman to the neighbouring villages; and going for darshan to a holy man is an ancient institution in this land of the sages. Where there had been wilderness, people began appearing in ever growing numbers and regular Satsangs began to take place. How could Baba Ji turn away those who had come to his door? In all simplicity and humility he taught them the spiritual message that he had received at the feet of Soami Ji. Many a moneyed man begged him to be permitted to build pucca quarters for him, but he, rich in his own humility, continued in his simple austere ways.

To undertake to write the biography of a Saint is to attempt the impossible. If it is to do real justice to its subject, it must follow the inner movements that defy observation, analysis and formulation. You may take up the life of a great artist, writer, soldier or statesman, and if you are a man of deep understanding and imagination, you may reincarnate it in words giving a vivid picture of the psychological conflicts and resolutions involved. But the Saints at one leap have passed from this world to another and have cast their tents in inaccessible realms. Few men have reached there; and those that have entered have been wrapped in silence.

*When the pen set to picturing this station
It broke in pieces and the page was torn.*

The study of the progress of the mystic soul is beyond the reach of ordinary mortals, and those that have been on the inner journey can only speak in metaphor and parable, for how else can the language of common humanity be compelled to express experiences for which it was never fashioned? The history then of a Master Soul, as fired by a restless zeal, which moves from plane to plane, must remain an unwritten one; at best it can only give the husk of outer events and happenings to suggest the unusual nature of the spiritual experiences they unfold. And once such a

soul has attained full enlightenment and become one with the Infinite, its history is no longer its own, but is the history of those that came under its spell and were liberated from worldly bondage.

The story of Baba Ji's life after his great search had been crowned with success is the story not so much of his own development as of the many souls that benefited from him. Thus Mian Chirag Din relates the story of his maternal grandfather, Mistri Elahi Baksh, of whom we have already spoken.

Elahi, a childhood friend of Baba Ji, showed great interest in spiritual matters and would discuss them with him when he (Baba Ji) would come home on leave from his regiment. Once when Baba Ji, known in his village as "Bhai," was in Ghuman, Elahi saw him approaching in the company of a sadhu. A lively discussion was in progress and when Elahi wished to know its theme, he was told that the sadhu insisted that Brahmmand was the highest of all heavens in spite of the fact that Baba Ji assured him that there were higher realms. On hearing this, Elahi turned to the sadhu and with solemn conviction said: "Revered sir, Bhai Ji is absolutely right. There are indeed regions higher than those of which you know."

This silenced the sadhu and he went away. When the friends were left alone, Baba Ji thanked Elahi for his friendly intervention and added, "But it is strange that you never told me of your access to the inner spiritual realms."

"Whoever said I had access to them?"

"But then how could you speak with such conviction?"

"Oh, Bhai, I only know that a man of realization can never utter a falsehood. So how could I doubt what you said?"

Baba Ji was so moved by his friend's spontaneous and deep-rooted faith that he told him, "I shall unlock to you treasures of which few ever dream and which fewer attain." He took him straight to a nearby pond and initiated him into the Surat Shabd Yoga on its bank. However, Elahi

had yet to learn the value of the gift he had received. Greatly interested in spiritual questions, he continued the practices taught to him by Muslim fakirs and failed to attend to his friend's instructions.

When Baba Ji came to Ghuman again, he sent for Elahi and asked him what he had done with the inner key that had been given to him. When Elahi told him that he had done nothing and even forgotten what he had been told, Baba Ji was displeased. "I give you the greatest riches that man can ever hope to have and you treat them with such scant regard," he scolded, and slapped him thrice on the face. As soon as his hands fell upon the repentant Elahi's face, his inner eye was opened and his spirit rose to higher worlds. From that day onward Elahi Baksh began devoting himself exclusively to the Surat Shabd Yoga and would daily visit his Pir or Guru and bow in reverence before him.

When a Great One takes a wandering soul under his wing, his grace is not confined only to his immediate disciple, but radiates to those near and dear to him. Such a powerful spiritual influence fell upon Elahi Baksh's family that in spite of their Muslim relations' and brother's taunts and scorn, many of its members sought instruction at Baba Ji's feet. Elahi's son-in-law, Hussain Baksh, was among the first to take to the Path. He was very devoted to Baba Ji and displayed great love and reverence. His Guru was pleased with him and treated him and his sons, Ghulam Qadir and Chirag Din, with affection. Mian Chirag Din, in his manuscript account, relates how the Great One would joke with them and receive them at all hours when they were youngsters. Once when he had gone to Ghuman and was resting, the boys sought him out there. Bibi Daya, received them at the door and when she learned that they had come for her son, she got a little irritated. "Ah, when you grow up," she exclaimed, "and have children of your own, never make the mistake of educating them. I am a mother and I know too well from my experience how difficult it is to cope with when a son becomes a God." Baba Ji at this juncture called out from within and the boys went in. He patted them fondly and remarked, "You are always welcome. Do not mind what mother says."

A true Master is ever with his disciple and protects him not only in life but equally in death:

*O Nanak: free yourself from worldly companions,
And seek the friendship of a true Saint.
They shall forsake you even in life,
But He shall not leave you even after death.*

NANAK

*Take hold, O soul! of One Who knows all inner planes,
For he shall befriend thee in life as well as in death.*

MAULANA RUMI

To witness the last moments of a disciple of Baba Ji was to be convinced of his genuine greatness. Countless stories are told of the strange happenings marking the end of those initiated by the Beas Saint. We may quote the eye-witness account left by Chirag Din of his father's death as an outstanding example. We translate from his Urdu manuscript recording his family's contact with Baba Ji and some anecdotes he heard from the great Master about his own early life:

Once Baba Ji had gone to Ghuman after collecting his pension. Our father, meanwhile, had passed away. We went to the Great One and related to him the sad news. He consoled us and straightway proceeded to the spot where the dead body lay. On reaching there he said, "Oh Hussain Baksh, why have you been in such haste? I would have come and you could have had my darshan." As these words were uttered, our dead father opened his eyes and sat up. Our mother, frightened, inquired if anything was the matter. "Nothing," he said. "The Master has come and I am going." He then lay down and was gone.

Another very interesting anecdote relates how, while Baba Ji was visiting the village of Dhaliwal, Attar Singh, a local inhabitant, carried him across a nearby seasonal stream swollen with recent rains and back again. The sage was so pleased with the Jat's selfless service that he declared, "Oh

Attar, you have taken me across this little streamlet. I, in return, shall take you across the sea of life.” He then initiated him into the Divine Science and from that day the latter was a changed man. He would take his cattle for grazing as of yore, but on reaching the meadows he would let them go and himself got busy with his spiritual sadhans. He no longer used a stick to control his herd, but would manage it with a piece of cloth and soon became known for his extraordinarily kind treatment of his animals. One day he returned rather early. On reaching home, he told his daughter-in-law, who was there: “Child, get everything done quickly; storm will soon be here.”

He then went to take his bath and on returning spread a bed on the floor and called all those in the house to his side. He bade them goodbye, explaining: “My time is drawing to a close and I must soon be gone.” Everyone was taken aback at these strange words. How could the speaker talk of dying when he was apparently in good health? At last his daughter-in-law, collecting herself, asked leave to send for his son. “There is no need,” he answered, “My Master has come and I cannot keep him waiting.” Saying these words, he lay down, closed his eyes and his spirit left for its heavenly Home.

Baba Ji was not only chary himself of revealing his spiritual riches, but strictly enjoined his disciples to exercise the same restraint. When they transgressed his instructions they never escaped chastisement. Thus Chirag Din relates the story of a blind Hafiz (learned man) of Dhariwal. He once attended a discourse of Baba Ji at the town of Kapurthala, and when it was over and they were talking to each other, the Hafiz remarked: “The wise have said that he who has read the Holy Book thrice attains heaven.”

“Heaven is very far, my dear fellow,” replied Baba Ji. “Those that have entered it alone can tell.”

The assurance of the sage’s voice moved the Hafiz to request instruction. His wish was granted and he sedulously cultivated the lesson that had been given to him till it bore fruit. He then proceeded to Mian Sahib

at Batala, his former teacher, and told him that all he had taught him was a hoax and a lie. He would often visit the mosque and, intolerant of the pious sham practiced there, he would secretly break the earthen pots and burn the prayer mats. His fellows soon discovered the miscreant and complained to his Guru.

The blind man was called and Baba Ji rebuked him. "Sir," replied his disciple, "I cannot stand hypocrisy and besides I am in the right." His Master, however, told him that in the future he must learn to contain himself and exercise restraint. But the advice went unheeded and the Hafiz soon began indulging his whim once again. A group of Muslims came to wait upon the sage and bitterly protested, complaining that he had taught his disciple to turn heathen. At this Baba Ji answered, "Does the man still persist in his foolishness? Well, if he will not stop troubling you, do not be angry for you will soon be rid of him." Sure enough, a few days later the Hafiz passed away.

Similar stories are told about other advanced disciples. A sadhu who came to live at Beas made rapid headway and his soul would soar at will to Daswan Dwar. He could not restrain himself, however, and would begin talking of the inner glories to whoever would pass his way. Baba Ji was upset and told him that he must learn to discipline his tongue. But the sadhu, confident of himself, continued unheeding. The inner curtain was rung down and for full sixteen years he was denied inner access until his very last days when Baba Ji's illustrious successor, Baba Sawan Singh, gave him his blessings. Baba Nizam-ud-din in a like situation was to experience a similar check. His son, in a beautifully written Urdu account, narrates how his father, who was the sixteenth initiate of Baba Ji according to the records at Beas, made very speedy inner progress. In a few months he had gained great powers and had developed a remarkable clairvoyance. But instead of locking his gifts within himself as taught by his teacher, he began displaying his spiritual wares and would freely tell those around of future happenings or of what was taking place at distant towns. When Baba Ji was told of this, he turned to Bibi Rukko and said: "This man has ascended very rapidly indeed, but has not been able to digest what he has got."

From that day on Nizam-ud-din, who had failed to shutter his lips, found that his inner eye had been curtained. His sorrow was great, but trusting the grace of his Master, he took to his spiritual practices with redoubled energy. His wife too got initiated and with the passage of time great blessings were bestowed upon them, and it was evident to those that came into contact with them that they were no ordinary mortals. But never again did Nizam-ud-din flaunt his spiritual powers.

The entire life of Baba Nizam-ud-din and his family as written by his son is one long saga of the blessings of having a true Master. But society is not kind to a living Saint nor to those that are lost in their love. Nizam-ud-din's devotion to his Sikh Pir soon won him the animosity of his relatives and Muslim brethren. "He has turned *kafir*," they said, and lost no opportunity of abusing and persecuting him. He himself was not to be deterred and whenever there was any talk of "Muslim" and "non-Muslim," he would recite the Persian couplets:

*Ishk ra ba kafir-o-moman, na bashad imtyaj
Ein Sukhan bar mamber-o-mehrab mae bayad nivisht.
Love makes no distinction between the infidel and the faithful;
Let these words be written on every pulpit and arch.*

*Mard-e-hujji Mard-e-hajji ra talab
Khah Hindu, Khah Turk-o-Khah Arab.
If you wish to go on the inner pilgrimage, then seek an inner guide,
Be he a Hindu, a Turk or an Arab.*

But for all his patience, matters grew only worse and when things were not to be borne any longer, Baba Ji advised his beloved disciple to shift his hearth and home to Multan. It was there that he spent the rest of his long life and would often go to Beas to meet his Master. When after 1903 he was no more, he would visit Baba Sawan Singh, his spiritual successor, who held him in great esteem. It is not for us to dwell at length on the many blessings bestowed upon him, his sons, grandsons and great-grand-

sons; suffice it to say that the whole family held Baba Ji in great reverence and, as enjoined by him, kept up all the traditions of their faith while practicing the discipline he had taught. When his wife passed away, she foretold her approaching end a month before the date, at which time she was in good health. When her hour drew near, she took touching leave of her husband: "I have served you to the best of my ability for sixty years. Now grant me leave for going away. My Master and Maharaj Sawan Singh are waiting for me." Nizam-ud-din asked her to hold his arm and focused his attention inward. The whole family was looking on as the old couple sat wrapt in meditation. Twenty minutes later the husband opened his eyes. "Now you may go," he said, and his wife peacefully passed away. Next morning when her hearse had to be carried to the burial grounds, some of the relations refused to lift the bier on the ground that the lady was a kafir. But the neighbors knew her to be kind and generous and a true daughter of God, and helped to carry the coffin to the graveyard.

Baba Nizam-ud-din did not tarry long after. His end was similarly known before it came and when his bier was to be carried, his brethren's hearts had been softened and they joined the procession. Many a fakir and sadhu witnessed his burial and as his remains were being lowered, the verse was chanted:

Hum nashini saat-e ba aulia
Behter az sad-sala taat be-ria.
A moment's contact with a Saint is worth
more than a million austerities.

Even to this day, in spite of the division of the country that came with independence and in spite of the communal hatreds unleashed in its wake, the descendants of Baba Nizam-ud-din have kept up the faith and often visit Sawan Ashram at Delhi to keep alive their association with the Path of the Masters or the *Sultan-ul-Azkar*, as their enlightened forefather called it in the terminology of the Sufi fakirs.

Baba Ji's grace flowed to all! It was not only his disciples who benefited from him, but many others who merely happened to catch his eye

by their simplicity, purity and selfless service. He had read many a scripture in his childhood and youth, but he spoke not from learning but from direct inner experience. There was inexplicable sweetness and charm in what he said and an irresistible sense of conviction and assurance. Once four great pundits who dabbled in various yogic practices began wrangling and debating about the nature of the inner planes. They based themselves on their spiritual study and the controversy they waged was lively indeed. Hearing of a Jat Saint of great attainment, they came to Baba Ji's door. He heard what they had to say and then lucidly explained to them the nature of the spiritual regions, reconciling what had appeared to be contradictory viewpoints and resolving all their doubts to their satisfaction. The pundits went away, but one of them, a true seeker who had caught the Saint's bait, returned and begged for initiation. The boon was granted; he practiced his sadhans with regularity but to little avail.

"Ah, Sir! Bless me with some inner vision," he begged.

"Do you think I do not wish you well?" came the reply. "I wish to the Lord that you reach Sat Lok this day, but you are not yet ripe and would not be able to bear the strain."

The prayer was repeated many a time but Baba Ji always gave the same answer. One day while he was going alone to collect his pension, the pundit met him at a lonely spot. "Sir, this is wilderness and no one is by. Bless me now, at least give me a glimpse of the realms within – no more – that I may rest in certainty."

"You will not be able to stand it and the strain will be too much for you."

"What does it matter even if I lose my life if only I may see what is within!"

Baba Ji could refuse no longer. He asked the pundit to sit down in meditation and focused his gaze upon him. The pundit's soul was forcibly drawn up into the higher realms. When Baba Ji, by his own will, brought it down to physical consciousness, the pundit fell sobbing at his feet. "I thought my life was being wrenched out of me and a million lightnings fell

upon my head. Oh, Sir, forgive me my foolishness. We mortals are indeed unworthy.”

“What have I to forgive?” replied the sage. “It is you who must forgive yourself for it is not I who suffered. Now go and make the most of your time, for you have only three more years to life.”

From that day onward the pundit concentrated on his meditations and three years later, as predicted, passed away.

Such tales are, however, legion, and whole volumes would not suffice to sing the glory and grace of a true Saint. So passing them by, we will concern ourselves with the most important single event in the annals of Baba Ji’s divine ministry: the initiation of Sawan Singh Ji who was later to carry on his mission. The story is told by the great disciple himself and we quote from his letters which have been published in *Spiritual Gems* (Beas, 1959):

“I was fond of Satsang and Parmarth (spirituality) from my very childhood. I often associated with sadhus and religious people, and this in part was because my father was fond of *Sadhu seva*. Then while in service I studied Vedanta and discussed Vedanta with people, specially with the sadhus who, on their way to Kashmir, stayed at a *dharamsala* (rest-house) near my house.”

“Later I was transferred to Murree Hills. One day as I was supervising my work, I saw an old Sikh going up a hill along with a middle-aged lady. When I noticed him, I thought he had probably come in connection with some case in the Commissioner’s Court. Little did I think that he was to be my Master. He was no other than Baba Ji himself and the lady was Bibi Rukko. This I did not know at the time, but found out later that Baba Ji said to Bibi Rukko, referring to me, ‘It is for his sake that we have come here,’ to which Bibi Rukko replied, ‘But he has not even greeted you.’ Baba Ji said to her, ‘What does the poor fellow know yet? On the fourth day from this he will come to us.’

On the fourth day I went to attend Satsang. Baba Ji was at that time explaining the meaning of Jap Ji Sahib. Well, I started my volley of questions – so much so that the audience got tired and began to feel restless at the large number of questions I had put. The sacred book, *Sar Bachan*, was lying there and I objected to the name of ‘Radhasoami,’ and Baba Ji explained from the book itself what ‘Radhasoami’ meant.”!

Radha ad surat ka nam

Soami ad Shabd nij dham.

Radha is the name of the first or primal ray of surat (consciousness);

Soami is the original source of the stream of Shabd.

“Now he wanted to point out the way, but I had read Vedanta. When I read Gurbani, my opinion was different; when I read Gita my opinion was again different, and I was unable to come to a decision. At last I applied for eight days leave to enable me to study the teachings of Baba Ji. He advised me to read Kabir Sahib’s *Anurag Sagar*. I immediately ordered eight copies of this book from Bombay so that I could also give some to my friends, Baba Hari Ram, Gulab Singh, etc., to read and comment on it.

“After several conferences with Baba Ji, I was thoroughly convinced and received initiation from him on the 15th day of October in 1894.”

What follows is a moving tale of devotion and obedience on the one hand and ineffable love and grace on the other. The letters exchanged between the Master and the disciple catch something of the esoteric beauty of this tale; and Baba Ji’s epistles are reproduced in the already mentioned volume of *Spiritual Gems*. In these we learn of the step-by-step guidance afforded by the Guru to the disciple who has surrendered himself completely to his Will, and the bizarre and miraculous way in which his protective hand helps him at every turn. There were two particular incidents that Baba Sawan Singh was particularly fond of relating to his audiences to exemplify the greatness of Baba Ji and the blessing of having a *Pooran Guru* or True Master. We quote again from his letters:

(1) “It was my habit to catch hold of the mane of my horse and jump upon it while it was going by. But my servant, in my absence and without my knowledge, had cut the horse’s mane. I did not notice that and as I grabbed for the mane, my hand slipped and I fell down and broke my leg. The fracture was painful, no doubt, but much more painful was the fact that I could neither defecate nor urinate. The doctors even thought it might be difficult for me to survive.”

“A Mohammedan overseer, belonging to my district, coming to know of this accident, came to me and said: ‘I am your own man, a sort of family member. I belong to your place. Tell me please, how can I help you?’ I said, ‘My children are studying as boarders in a school about eight miles from this place. I do not want them to know of this accident. But I should like you to send a telegram to Maharaj Ji (Baba Ji).’ He sent the telegram. And when Baba Ji received the telegram, he said: ‘Well, if the Master wants to take him away, he may, for at least he has got Naam.’ But my sister in faith, Bibi Rukko, pleaded for me with Baba Ji.”

“It was Baba Ji’s practice to sit in meditation or to go into meditation when there was expectation of anything important happening, and then to give out whatever information he received within. He sat in meditation at 8 p.m. or earlier (whenever the information was received by telegram). At about 3 a.m. he called Bibi Rukko and she asked, ‘Shall I bring you food now?’ (He had not taken his evening meal.) Baba Ji replied: ‘No, but you asked something about Bhai Sawan Singh. Now you can inform Sawan Singh that he is not going, but the karmas were very heavy. It was ordained that he had to suffer for five years but now we will settle the karmas in five months. Is it not something? We shall not go to him just now, but after he has been discharged from the hospital. In the meantime you may acknowledge receipt of his telegram.’ And the moment Baba Ji’s telegram was received, I could pass stools and urine. ...”

“Saints show their mercy but they never talk about it. Now, while I was reduced to this condition, I had to suffer from the monetary point of

view also. I lost my sub-divisional allowance, my horse allowance and half my pay also. The Chief Engineer was very kind to me. He said: 'If only you could come to office every day in a *dandi* (a sedan chair), I would consider you on duty.' But I was very doubtful and feared that my leg being still weak, I might slip and have another accident. The Chief Engineer thereupon allowed me one month's leave. I wondered if I would be fit to work after one month. The next morning I saw the Commanding Engineer and he said: 'Now you are going for only one month.' Prior to this Baba Ji came to see me and told me that I would be absent from duty for only one more month, but it was hard for me to believe it."

"At last the month passed and a letter was received from Baba Ji stating: 'We people have not come into this world to do our own work; we have come here by the orders of Maharaj Ji (Soami Ji). If he likes, he will get the work out of us.' It is impossible to describe the reach or the power of the Saints. I am sure, if the Guru wants, he can make even the stones carry out his work."

(2) "Baba Ji used to be very kind to me and whenever I came to visit him, he would give me a place in his own room. Once I got down from the Beas station at twelve o'clock at noon. It was very hot and I sat down under a tree for a while. Then I felt that I had come for Baba Ji's darshan, yet here I was seeking comfort and delaying that meeting with the Beloved. Even worldly lovers have done much better. The thought troubled me. So I started on foot from the station to the Dera. At the Dera, Baba Ji Maharaj, who was very sensitive to heat, came out and began to pace the open courtyard before his room. Bibi Rukko remonstrated and requested him to go inside his room, out of the hot sun, but he would not. A few minutes before I reached the Dera, he went in and then Bibi Rukko, seeing me coming, exclaimed: 'Oh, now I see why Baba Ji was walking in the hot sun.' (He had himself absorbed some of that extreme heat so that I would not be overcome by it on the way). There are so many wonderful things about Baba Ji that if I go on relating them for one hundred years, it would not be possible to finish them all."

Indeed “a hundred years” would not suffice and we will cover as swiftly as possible the rest of the story of Baba Ji’s earthly sojourn. An ever-increasing number of visitors flocked to his hut at Beas, and his words to Bibi Rukko – “Here shall rise one day an ever-growing city and many a house and bungalow shall be built” – and no less the words of God-intoxicated Kahan at whom the people had laughed – “I collect these bricks for the town that shall here be built” – began at last to seem meaningful. Baba Ji spent the greater part of his time at Beas but often went on tour to neighbouring areas or to towns farther off, to minister to the spiritual needs of his votaries.

Once when he was at Ambala, at the behest of some disciples, Hukam Singh, a friend of his devoted disciple Moti Ram, a tailor who worked for the British regiment stationed there, applied for initiation. Baba Ji refused to grant his request. Hukam Singh approached his friend, who in turn approached Baba Ji, but to no avail. “He is not yet fit for the Path,” the sage observed, but Moti Ram was not to be put off. He pleaded again and again for the case of his friend.

“I have told you before, his karmas don’t permit it. So what can I do in the matter?”

“Holy one, all the more reason you should take pity on him, for if you don’t, who will?”

“Moti Ram, do not press me further. I would rather initiate four hundred others than this friend of yours.”

A Saint cannot refuse a devoted disciple for long and would even pass through fire for his sake. When Moti Ram repeatedly pressed, he gave way, adding: “But as soon as I have initiated your friend, I shall not spend another moment here, but proceed straight home.” True to his word, Baba Ji, as soon as the instructions were over, packed his scanty belongings and entrained for Beas. Whoever expressed a desire to follow him there was told to come two weeks later. On reaching his hut he lay down in bed and when local visitors come to see him, they were in consternation for

they found him in the grip of a deadly fever. Doctors and medicines were sent for but Baba Ji would take nothing. About a fortnight later the fever subsided and when Moti Ram received the news, he hastened to see him and begged forgiveness: “Sir, if only I had known what it was to mean for you, I would not, for the kingdom of three worlds, have pressed to initiate my friend.”

Baba Ji was in a communicative mood and revealed: “So heavy were the karmas of Hukam Singh that but for the intercession he would, for the next seven lives, have passed through the most trying sufferings and ordeals.”

Moti Ram humbly thanked him for his unfathomable grace but Baba Ji, true to his innate humility, simply replied: “Such was the Will of the Lord.”

The grace of Baba Ji radiated like the life-giving sun to those that came in touch with him. Baba Sawan Singh, however, as we have already seen, was the object of his special adoration. The years from 1894 to 1903 were marked by regular visits to Beas by Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj which were occasionally returned by Baba Ji. The sage called his favorite disciple by the name of “Babu Ji.” He had told Bibi Rukko that the handsome government officer would one day be his successor. On one occasion, while in an extraordinarily gracious mood, he turned to his Gurmukh and remarked: “You and I have come for the good of mankind.” Sawan Singh replied, “You, of course, have come for humanity’s uplift, but I myself am only an erring mortal.” Baba Ji repeated what he had said and Sawan Singh made the same reply. Baba Ji then, raising his eyebrows, said in a louder tone: “Babu Ji, I am speaking to you. We both have come for the good of mankind.” Sawan Singh sat mute and silent. At another time the Beas Saint told his disciples: “I have had to toil very hard for my attainment, yet have kept my treasures locked and have never displayed them. But my labours shall bear fruit and he who shall inherit my mantle shall be known far and wide.”

The days passed and Beas became a luminous centre on the spiritual map of the world. He who had never agreed to the building of halls and houses, at the instance of his beloved Babu Ji finally relented, and a well was sunk and a Satsang hall built during his last years. "Why erect any buildings here when the river may wash them off?" he had protested, but Sawan Singh was not to be dissuaded. "Even if you can deliver a single discourse, and the structure collapses immediately after, I will consider my labours richly rewarded." Meanwhile, the last days of the Jat-guru, as he humorously styled himself, were drawing to a close. Six months before his death, he had told his disciples of the approaching end. On hearing of the passing away of Karam Singh of Attock, he had remarked: "I used to meet him at Delhi. A great soul indeed! But he will have to be born once again for full liberation, not having practiced Naam in this life. Well, well, my work is also drawing to a close and I too shall soon be gone."

The last days saw many pilgrims at Beas. The sage who once had passed both night and day lost in meditation was now day and night in the service of his devotees. He would hardly rest for three or four hours, spending the rest of the day in meeting those who sought him out, attending to their problems and goading them to greater and even greater spiritual effort. The gates of divine grace were flung open and those that sat by him in his room during the days immediately preceding his departure would be inwardly buoyed up and wrapped in samadhi.

The construction of the Satsang hall had by now been completed, and everyone pressed Baba Ji to deliver a discourse. He, however, remonstrated: "No, no; the Will of God is otherwise. He who is to succeed me shall address you there." Bibi Rukko was equally adamant: "We shall of course hear him when his time comes, but now while you are here, let us have the benefit of your presence." But Baba Ji insisted: "The Will of God is otherwise. Besides, I wish Babu Ji to discourse to all present during my own lifetime so that there should be no disputes later." But the audience had gathered and pleaded that he himself should speak. Bibi Rukko begged and implored and he at last moved forward. But after climb-

ing a step or two, he once again stopped and repeated what he had said. To the amazement of all who entered the Satsang hall, Baba Ji's gurmukh son, Hazur Sawan Singh Ji, was seen sitting at the dais.

The last day finally arrived. All the close disciples stood by in anxious expectation. It was the 29th of December, 1903, and a cold and piercing breeze blew over from the waters of the Beas. Baba Ji seemed to be waiting, and cast restless glances at the door. At last a police officer arrived and sought for initiation. "It is for you I have been waiting," replied the great Saint, and without further ado began explaining the theory and practice of the Surat Shabd Yoga. Soon after the instructions were over, he lay down and, closing his eyes, cast off this muddy vesture of decay.

Thus passed away one of the greatest of modern Saints, whose life was a lesson in humility and love. He had studied at no schools or universities, but had delved deep into the book of life. He had read as a child the scriptures of many a faith and had early practiced many sadhans or spiritual exercises. By the age of eighteen, when other men have hardly attained mental maturity, he had already won the crown of life denied to the most rigorous of yogis and the most industrious of learned men. And yet the rest of his years were passed in the most perfect humility, his only ambition being to serve his Master and carry his message as best as he could. In his last recorded words he is reported to have said: "All my life I have sought only to serve my Master and now whatever work he had to accomplish through this poor physical frame is over," and his very last hour was spent in this service. He more than exemplified what he had once written to his future successor, "Saints are born not for themselves, but for the liberation of mankind." He spoke from inner experience and not from books, and he initiated about three thousand souls; while the number of those who unconsciously benefited by his influence is beyond enumeration. Could one discover another so selfless, so ready to suffer vicariously for the sins of others, so boundless in his love, and so unconcerned with outer differences of sects and creeds? If one searched one's memory, there was perhaps one name that came most readily to mind:

that of Nanak. And was it a mere coincidence that the Soldier Saint of Beas was born in the very district (Gurdaspur) in which the great medieval Saint, according to his constant companion and biographer Bhai Bala, had prophesied he would reappear in some future age in a Jat home? Baba Ji's disciples did not fail to note the resemblance even during his lifetime and once questioned him on the subject. The sage smiled mysteriously and dismissed the question. But a few minutes later, he casually remarked: "If we spirits were to speak our minds, who would allow us a moment's rest and who would spare our skins?"

PART III

BABA JI AND THE SCIENCE SPIRITUAL

To present the teachings of a past Saint who has left no compositions of his own either in verse or in prose, and in whose time shorthand and the tape recorder were yet unknown, is not an easy task. However, the bunch of letters that Baba Ji addressed to his beloved “Babu” Sawan Singh Ji have been preserved and are very revealing.¹ Further, some of those who came in contact with him have left suggestive accounts of his discourses. But most important of all, Hazur Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj, to whom he passed on the spiritual torch, has interpreted within living memory the message in its essence of his great Guru. Piecing all these together, we can arrive at a clear conception of the nature and scope of his teachings.

The Creation

The Absolute Reality in its ultimate form was *Nirankar*, *Nirgun* and *Anami* – Formless, without attributes, and Nameless – and could only be expressed in negatives: “neither light nor darkness,” “neither sound nor silence,” etc. It was incomprehensible, ineffable, infinite and indescribable. It was this Supreme Reality that was responsible for everything else. When it projected itself into form, it brought into being the purely spiritual realms of *Agam*, *Alakh*, *Sat Naam*, etc.; Light and Sound appearing as its primal attributes. Thence as it descended downward, it brought into creation the material current or *Kal* which gained in predominance as it moved lower and still lower. The countless regions that were created below the purely spiritual realms of *Sat Desh* could be divided into three grand divisions: *Brahmand*, *Und* and *Pind* – the causal, the astral and the physical, or the spirituo-material, the materio-spiritual and the material.

So long as one lived in the plane of the relative, one was caught in the web of *Maya*. One desire was succeeded by another and pleasure was followed by pain. There could be no lasting rest, no lasting joy. God, in fill-

ing the cup of man's earthly blessings, had left out happiness and contentment, to insure that His creature did not wholly forget his Maker. The only way to attain beatitude lay in transcending the realm of relativity and reaching the regions of pure spirit where the soul merged in the Absolute, became lost in the Ocean of Consciousness, and was freed from all failings and desires.

The Path of Liberation

How was this transcension to be achieved? Baba Ji, like Kabir, Nanak and Swami Ji, repeatedly affirmed that outer practices were not of much avail. Reading of scriptures could awaken one's interest in spirituality, but by itself it could not insure emancipation. Mystic literature and religious ritual were useful in many ways: they kept mankind aware of a deeper Reality than the one they were accustomed to in everyday life. But this Reality was to be approached through practical means, and absorption in intellectual problems and controversies only diverted one's energies from one's real Path:

*Khasam na chinae bawri, ka karat barai,
Batan bhagat na hohingay, chhoado chaturai.
O man! If you have not realized the Almighty,
why you brag of your greatness? Let go thy intellectual subtleties.*

KABIR

*Sakhi Shabd Sandes parh mat bhoolo bhai,
Sant mata kuchh aur hai, khopa so pai.
Don't you be deluded by restricting yourself to mere reading
and writing of scriptures. The Path of the Masters is different.
He who is truly after it will get it.*

KABIR

The devil could quote scriptures, and Baba Ji maintained that "religious wranglings and disputes, the pride of caste, the *Varnashram*, of worship, pilgrimages, mere reciting of scriptures, worshipping those who

were past and gone, and such other actions and disciplines” were all “a great deception” and trap set by Kal to keep the soul within the bondage of the realms of relativity. In like manner, the outer *kriyas* or practices of traditional yoga – *pranayam* and various *mudras* and *asanas* – were ineffective for taking us to our real goal. Baba Ji, as his life amply testifies, greatly respected holy men of all creeds and callings, but he never lost sight of man’s highest ideal and lived by the insight expressed by Kabir:

*Sadh hamare sab barae apni apni thor,
Shabd parkhu jo milae tis aagae sir mor.
All holy ones are worthy of reverence,
But I adore only One who has mastered the Word.*

KABIR

He had at a very early age experimented with many a yogic method and whenever he pronounced on the subject, he spoke not as one who bases himself on academic learning, but as one who has himself practically experienced what he says. His words carried conviction, for there was not a trace of prejudice in what he said. He simply explained that he himself had explored all avenues and found the path of Sant Mat or Surat Shabd Yoga to be the highest. He had a great deal to say about the wonderful miraculous powers that could be acquired through yogic sadhans; but his one criterion was: did they make one the master of one’s mind, freeing one from the tyranny of desire? If so, then there was nothing to be said against them, but if not (as was usually the case), then they were hardly of any use. While in Murree in 1894, he, in response to many questions addressed to him by Baba Sawan Singh Ji, dwelt at length on the subject of comparative yoga and concluded by demonstrating how Kabir and Nanak had assimilated the best from their predecessors; how they had penetrated far higher into the Mystic Path; and how they had succeeded in developing a method for mergence with the Formless Absolute that was within the reach of all. He would often quote from past Masters to reinforce his point, and in particular he would cite what his great Guru had said:

*Sant Mata sab se bara yeh nische kar jan
 Sufi aur Vedanti donon neeche man,
 Sant Diwali nit karen Sat Lok ke mahin
 Aur mate sab Kal ke yun he dhur urain.
 The Path of the Masters is far superior to all others, believe ye in full faith.
 Sufism and Vedanta can lead you to a certain extent
 but cannot take you to the ultimate goal.
 The Saints live eternally in the splendour of the Supreme One.
 All other creeds and orders fail to transcend the realms of Relativity.*

SAR BACHAN (poetry)

What was this science of the Surat Shabd Yoga that represented the crown of mystic achievement? It was, said Baba Ji, the path most economical in effort and the one most rewarding for reaching back to the Primal Source of all life and light. Its secret lay in the insight that if the soul was to merge back into the point from where it had descended, the way of ascent must be identical with that of descent. The Nameless One, when He had assumed Name and Form, had projected Himself into *Shabd*, *Naam*, *Kalma* or the Word. It was this spiritual current, whose primary attributes were melody and effulgence, that was responsible for all creation. In a letter dated 21st April, 1903, Baba Ji wrote:

It is through Shabd that everything came into manifestation – Ishwar (God as the sustainer of the world), Jiva (individual soul), Maya (the subtle and gross material), Brahmand (the physical, astral and causal planes) – all were brought into being by its motion.

All sages, in their own different ways, had testified to the working of the Word or Naam Power:

*Kun kae kehnae sae hoowa alam bapa.
 Through the utterance of the Word all things came into being.*

And again:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.*

JOHN 1:1

What the Masters of the Surat Shabd Yoga said on this subject was nothing new; what was distinctive was their emphasis on the idea that if everything – even the *Jiva Atman* – had come into manifestation through the agency of Shabd, then Shabd was the best and only means for reaching back to our Point of Departure, the Nirankar, Nirgun, Anami and Absolute. The music and glory of the Word spread through all creation and permeated our being. If only the Atman could be contacted with it, it could use this “string from the Nameless Lord” to reach His Door. But the soul in its downward descent had loosened the link and had forgotten its real nature. Acquiring the gross coverings of body and mind, it had lost sight of its native home and identified itself with its prison. Baba Ji said in his letter of 15th May, 1900:

Ever since the Jiva Atman has been separated from Sach Khand (True Abode) and from Shabd Dhun, it has lost its faith in the Sat Purush (True One) and Shabd Dhun. But the Shabd always looks after the Jiva Atman though it knows it not for it has fallen deeply in love with Mind and Maya, with the objects of Maya and the senses that are so deceptive. It loves them so well that it cannot realize that it is to its own detriment, considering as beneficial what is in fact harmful. Love for the Mind has left it anaesthetized, and the Mind itself has fallen senseless before the pleasures of the senses, and finally, Maya has cast such a spell that it may never recover from its swoon.

The Perfect Master

Our spiritual faculties had got so fogged and cloaked with the gross coverings of Mind and Maya that, even though the Shabd was forever reverberating within and around us, we could not hear its music or see its glory:

*Nanak sae ankhriyan bae-an jini disindo mapiri.
Those eyes are different with which my Beloved is seen.*

RAG WADHANS 577

How was this chain to be broken? How could man once again revive his link with his Maker? For this, Baba Ji affirmed, one needed indispensably the aid of a competent Master:

*Dhur Khasmae ka hukam paya
Vin Satguru chaitya na jai.
Such is the Will of the Lord –
He cannot be known except through a living Satguru.*

VAR BIHAGRA 556

Without his enlivening touch the soul could not awaken from its slumber and get attuned to Naam. The Jiva Atman was too far lost in the gross material to contact Shabd on its own account. Besides, the inner way was not an easy one and even if the soul could transcend physical consciousness and enter the realms within, it could not proceed very far on its own. The regions *Und* and *Brahmand* were well-nigh infinite and without a spiritual guide it would remain lost in their wonders. Further, there were points in the mystic journey, especially between one plane and another, that were so difficult that but for an Adept the soul would be forever obstructed there.²

Baba Ji indefatigably emphasized the necessity of a living Master for success in the field. Past Saints may have explored all the mysteries of the mystic realms and may even have left accounts of their experiences. But the inner worlds were indescribable in terms of human language, and at best they could only speak in hints and parables. Since these hints and parables were about a realm of experience completely beyond ordinary human experience, they could not be fully understood except through the aid of One who had himself direct access to the experiences they described. Thus even to understand the true message of past Masters, one

needed a living One, and it was only when Baba Ji met Swami Ji that he understood the full import of the Granth Sahib and the writings of Kabir and other great Saints.

The spiritual journey was not a matter of intellectual disquisition. It was a question of practical ascension. Even for academic knowledge a book could not be a substitute for the guidance of a perceptive teacher. Then how much more would this be the case in the spiritual field? The Jiva Atman was so lost in Maya that, according to Baba Ji, it could not of its own accord contact the pure Shabd Dhun. An act of grace alone could put it in touch with the inner Light and Music, and this grace was the gift of a living Master:

Radhasoami, Lord of the Soul, full of pity and compassion, came down Himself in the form of a Saint, gave us the clues to the Spiritual Regions and showed us the way to reach Sach Khand (True Abode) through Shabd Dhun.

Past Saints were worthy of reverence. Their lives were luminous signposts always beckoning us toward our Divine Home. But it was the law of Nature that the living impulse could only come from the living, and the task they had performed for their own age must, in ours, be performed by One who lived amongst us and who had mastered the way they had mastered. In fact, their writings, if critically studied, were an endless testimony of the need for a living Master.

Who was a competent living Master and how was he to be recognized? Baba Ji knew that there were countless wolves that moved about in sheep's clothing, and since everything depended on finding the true Guide, he laid great stress on the need for vigilance and discrimination. His early experiences had shown only too well the rarity of such great Spirits – one perhaps in an age, at times more (as with Nanak and Kabir, Maulana Rumi and Shamas Tabrez, Tulsi Sahib and Swami Ji, who were contemporaries) but alas always too few – and a man was blessed indeed if he could come across such a One. The records of past Saints could be used as a touchstone, as had been done by Baba Ji during his quest. If a man was a

true Master, and further, a mystic of the highest order, all obscurities and contradictions that puzzled one while reading the scriptures would vanish at his touch. He would not only be able to explain effectively the writings of one school of mystics, but of all, for he had access to all the inner realms, not just one. As a lad Baba Ji had met many a sadhu, but not until he sat at Swami Ji's feet did he begin to appreciate all the treasures stored in the Granth Sahib. Mystics of a lower order could interpret records of only those experiences to which they had access, but One who had ascended to the highest heights could explain everything – a point which Baba Ji's meeting with the four pundits brought out fully.

Another feature of a true Saint was his amazing humility. It was one of the supreme paradoxes of human life that those who claimed to be Saints were not, and those who were, never claimed to be such. Nanak declared himself to be no more than a slave of the servants of Saints and Swami Ji maintained unruffled the garb of his humility. It was not by what a man claimed that he was to be known, but by what he did; a tree was judged not by its name but by its fruit; and a Saint was recognized by his perfection as a man, his freedom from worldly desires, his love and kindness, his unassuming ways, his concern for the welfare of others and his unconcern with name and fame. He gave away his spiritual gifts freely like any other of Nature's blessings, and maintained himself by his own labours:

*Gur, Pir sadai mangan jayae
Ta ke mool na lagye payae.
Bow not before one who calls himself a guru
But depends on the charity of others.*

SARANG VAR, 1245

If on the human level it was his perfection as a man that marked out a true Saint from the rest, on the spiritual he was to be known by the inner experiences and guidance he could afford. His ability to give some direct spiritual experience, however little it may be, to his disciples at the time

of initiation was, Baba Ji insisted, the final test of a true Master. He did not promise spiritual attainment in some future life after death. He gave a taste of it here and now. He linked the soul to the inner Light and Sound and it was the disciple's task to nurture and nourish this seed to full blossom and maturity. The gift of Naam was the sole prerogative of the Satguru and his guiding hand stretched everywhere, in the inner planes no less than in the world outside. So great were his love and protection that no earthly relationship could ever hope to compare to them. His Radiant Form accompanied the soul after it had transcended the body, and led it from plane to plane toward its celestial home; and the perceptive disciple could see his grace working at every turn. Miracles he could perform indeed – being one with the Divine Will – but he was reluctant to disturb the settled plan; and even if he let his grace take the upper hand, he let it work unseen, claiming nothing for himself but working only in the name of his own Master. He did not concern himself with disputes and controversies: “Go within and see for yourself,” was his constant dictum, and the stress always fell on the inner and not on outer forms and rituals.

Faith, Love and Self-surrender

It was indeed a supreme blessing to find a true Satguru. If the search for a competent Master needed great perseverance and discrimination on the part of the seeker, the qualities most demanded of him after the quest had been crowned were faith, love and complete self-surrender. It was not until King Janak had renounced the body, mind and wealth – *tan, man* and *dhan* – that he received enlightenment. To meet a true Master was to realize one's own limitations, and one's blessedness in being accepted at his feet. It was also to know that his love and his wisdom were measureless and infinite. Such a realization must, if one wished to make the most of one's opportunity, be accompanied by humility and faith and the acceptance of his will as supreme. Baba Ji in his discourses and no less in his letters time and again asserted the necessity of love and faith on the part of the disciple. Writing to Baba Sawan Singh on 16th May, 1901, he said:

Shabd is the real form of the Satguru. By linking with it you will reach your destination. But the condition is that you first develop love and devotion for the person of the Master for without it nothing else is possible. The Satguru is one with the All-Giver, the Anami-Radhasoami, and has assumed a physical form for the uplift of jivas. Whosoever develops a strong love and devotion for him and regards him as the Supreme Lord Himself will contact the Shabd Dhun and be saved.

On another occasion he wrote:

Even after a hundred years of Bhajan one does not get so purified as by an intense longing for *darshan* (meeting with the Master), provided that the longing is real and true and the love for the Satguru is from the innermost heart.

Self-surrender was the natural corollary of such faith and love and Baba Ji's letters return insistently to this theme:

Be not lost in yourself. Let this thought be firmly and unshakeably fixed in your mind: Body, mind and wealth, *nirat* and *surat*, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands, feet – yea, all that is in the world is the Satguru's. I myself am nothing. Whatever you are doing, do it as Satguru's and always seek to do what is the best. Do not forget this even for a moment, but take it as a *hidayat*, a commandment.

(24th May, 1901)

Never let the idea of "mine-ness" find a place in your heart. Even if you get the lordship of Brahmand, do not regard that you have any share in it: "I am only an agent." Everything is the Satguru's. Let the Master's injunction be ever in your mind: "I am nothing, I am nothing, I am nothing," and let the remembrance of the Lord be your constant thought and the form of the Satguru imaged in your heart always.

(7th September, 1900)

Weed out all worldly desires from your heart and place them at your Master's feet. Claim nothing for yourself and try to tune yourself to his

Will which should be uppermost in your heart. Even if he asks you to dig grass, do it, for to obey the Satguru is the highest action. If you can cast your heart in this mold, then all things will be added unto you.

(18th September, 1902)

When Baba Sawan Singh Ji once wrote that he did not even yearn for Sach Khand but only prayed that he had “love and faith at the Satguru’s holy feet,” Baba Ji was extremely pleased and replied that such self-surrender was “indeed the highest *karni* (discipline),” and assured him that “he who had such a love for the Master would certainly reach Sach Khand, and passing through the Alakh, Agam, Anami-Radhasoami, get merged in the Wonder Region.”

(11th September, 1897)

The Life Without

The seeker who had found a true Guide and who had begun to develop the right kind of love and faith in him, would naturally attempt to fashion his life according to his Satguru’s Will, and Baba Ji laid great emphasis on the need to transform our lives. It was not necessary, he maintained, to leave the world in order to pursue the inner Path. What was needed for spiritual progress was inner detachment, and he who had surrendered himself completely to his Guru was free from all earthly ties. Some of his disciples would at times express the desire for complete renunciation, but he always kept such tendencies in check:

You say you wish to give up home and service and devote yourself exclusively to Bhajan. Home or service or wealth – are they really yours? Turn it over in your mind. It is all a magician’s game and the world is a dream. Then why worry about clutching and relinquishing?

(18th September, 1902)

The ideal he always held up before his disciples was that of the royal swan that had its home in the water yet rose up from it dry and untram-

melled. If he would not have his disciples attached to the world, he would not have them neglect their worldly duties either. When Baba Sawan Singh wrote that he would be taking ten days leave and spending it at Beas, Baba Ji replied:

When you come on ten days leave, you should first proceed straight home, and then on your way back drop in Saturday at about 5 p.m. at the Dera from where you can proceed to duty the following day after attending the Sunday Satsang. You must go home for there are many things awaiting your attention there for the last two or three years. Therefore please go straight home. I will be very pleased if you first go home and then come here.

When on one occasion his beloved disciple was unable to secure leave for seeing him and offered to come over nonetheless, Baba Ji was far from happy and strictly forbade any such step. "Please never write such a thing again," he answered, "that you would come here without taking leave," and added, "The work that you are doing, that is also the work of Radhasoami, the work of the Lord."

However, while living in the world one had to follow a very rigorous discipline. The road to the New Jerusalem was a narrow and difficult one. "Your way of living," said the sage of Beas to his disciples, "must be different from that of other people." And how exacting was the discipline he demanded becomes clear from one of his letters:

You do not seem to understand that when your official duties are over, you are not to talk to anyone. In the evening between 6 and 8, you should sit for Bhajan as long as possible – be it half an hour, an hour, fifteen minutes or an hour and a half – and keep the surat on the inner planes. Then hold Satsang from 8 to 10 p.m., after which you may go to sleep or talk as you please. Then at 4:30 in the morning you are to sit for Bhajan and continue up to 5:30. Then throughout the day you have to attend to your official routine and may, if you like, talk during those hours. But as soon as you are free from office duties, you must not waste time in idle talk or in the company of non-satsangis. You should have your meals in private

. . . You are never to have meals cooked from non-satsangis in your kitchen, especially if they take meat and drink. If you associate with non-satsangis, you will have to suffer from the effects of their company.

(17th October, 1902)

Abstinence from non-vegetarian food and intoxicants was a prime condition for taking to the spiritual path. Baba Ji laid equal stress on the need for honesty. In the same letter we have quoted above, he wrote:

If you are offered anything free, never accept it for how will you repay it? If you do not adhere strictly to this rule, you will never attain the highest spiritually.

One must not be led away by the world but look upon each object with discrimination. "The entire world is tied with the ropes of the love of parents, children, wife and earthly relations," and one must free oneself from this slavery. Running away to the jungles was no solution. It had to be an inner detachment, and this inner detachment could only come through the love of a true Master. Hence the great value of Satsang, for it was only through association with him that one imbibed the true values of life, learned of the delusions of Maya, and imbibed a love that displaced the love of the world. Peace and blessing radiate from the person of a Saint and whoever came under his spell was freed from worldly tensions, ambitions and jealousies. He saw all creatures as of his own essence and knew all worldly gain to be a passing shadow. Such a man alone could cut through the meshes of Maya and reach out toward the worlds beyond.

The Life Within

The perfection of outer conduct was essential as it was only an indispensable means for reaching the inner goal. Love and faith for the Satguru, self-surrender and the ethically unimpeachable life all converged on this centre. Man's ultimate goal was at-one-ment with the Absolute, and if this was not achieved the rest was not of much benefit. It was this question of actual spiritual ascension that was Baba Ji's main concern as a

teacher. He did not expend much time on matters of theory. Why dispute? Why argue? he would say. Turn within, go inside and see for yourself. His correspondence with Baba Sawan Singh Ji is one long exhortation to leave the outside world and to retreat to the world within, and each of his letters has something valuable to say on the actual practice of spirituality.

Since the soul had fallen a victim to Maya through the Mind and the senses, the way of liberation for it lay through its withdrawal from them. The two sadhans that Baba Ji gave for practice, as his predecessors had done, were *Simran* and *Bhajan*. The first, involving the repetition of the sacred names of the Lord, was to be practiced at all hours of the day. “Always keep the Simran in mind,” he enjoined, “even while moving or busy at work.” Constant thought of the Supreme One was the greatest security against worldly thoughts and desires. It helped the mind in keeping itself free from its usual preoccupations and when done with full attention at the time of *abhyasa* or meditation, it enabled a speedy collection of the currents of consciousness at the spiritual center between and behind the eyebrows. Once such concentration or *Dhyan* had been attained, one could get in touch with the Sound Current, and Dhyan (resulting from Simran) led naturally to *Bhajan* or absorption into the Shabd Dhun:

When you are doing your Bhajan or Simran, do not have any worldly cares in your mind nor let yourself be distracted by any thoughts. First do your Simran for a quarter of an hour, then gradually fix your attention in the music of the Shabd Dhun. Then give up Simran and anchor your mind and soul in the Shabd. You will then experience great bliss and Supreme Grace will descend on you from the highest region.

Such was the general pattern. The details, of course, were adjustable. The time factor could vary, but daily *abhyasa* was to be maintained at all costs:

Listen to the Shabd Dhun, calling in your heart, every day with great love and devotion, for fifteen minutes or ten minutes or five minutes or an hour or two, according to the time at your disposal. But you must listen to it every day for a while.³

There was great beauty in the Shabd. It had a music that was beyond any music created by man and which drew the soul toward itself. It was forever calling the spirit toward its Divine Home and though it was not heard by ordinary men, yet those who had developed, through *abhyasa* and the grace of a Satguru, the capacity of inner hearing, could hear its melody every minute of the day, now growing stronger as the mind focused itself at one point, now dimming and fading away as one's thoughts scattered in various directions and attention was dissipated. It was Shabd that was the true anchor of the seeker. It was the conscious power that had brought everything into creation and it was also one's real Master – the *Shabd Guru* – for the Satguru in his human form was its physical manifestation. Baba Ji once said:

Shabd Dhun – that is our real form. This physical body is only a garment. Nobody could keep it forever and nobody ever will ... Believe, O devout ones, that the Shabd form of the Satguru, which has no beginning and no end, is within the body.

Once one had developed a constant link with this inner music, it worked as a shield against worldly afflictions and sorrows. Misfortunes visited everyone and one's past karmas had to be paid for; but for the man who had rooted himself in Shabd Dhun, they had lost their sting. Baba Ji, speaking mostly to simple villagers, drove home his teachings through examples and similes based on village life. Thus explaining the protective power of Shabd, he would say:

The body is like a village or city and the Shabd Dhun is our own house. When somebody dies or there is some great suffering in another house, everyone in that house is very unhappy but we, in our own house, are quite contented.

Again, clarifying the magnetic power and hold of the inner music, on another occasion he wrote:

. . . the Shabd Dhun will pull it (mind) and keep it in the same way as animals, like goats or cattle, are kept tied by means of a rope.

The greatest obstacles to the seeker were the mind and the senses. It was through their agency that the soul had been caught in the nets of Maya, and the soul had to disengage itself from them in order to be free. Shutting out sense experience was not so difficult. Even when the gates of the senses had been shut, the mind continued to disturb and distract. It was the root of the ego principle and, therefore, the chief cause of the jiva's isolation from the Universal Lord. How was this restless dragon to be conquered? Baba Ji maintained that the chief remedy lay in meditation on the form of the true Master and absorption in Shabd:

You ask me how to hold your mind. It is held only through Shabd. Hear its music daily and meditate on the form of Satguru. Then the mind shall cease to wander and one day, borne on the Shabd Dhun, the soul shall reach Dasam Dwar (the third inner plane and home of the Universal Mind). Thus, leaving the mental apparatus behind, the soul shall unite with the pure Shabd and through the grace of the Satguru reach Sach Khand. Have no doubt, it shall reach there.

(7th January, 1901)

Once the mind had been brought under control and it no longer doubted and wavered:

Then the Radiant Form of the Master appears within. There is no difference between it and the physical form. It is like a reflection in a clear mirror. So long as the glass is not clear, nothing can be seen reflected.

The mind was indeed a glass, which, when sullied by the muck-flow of worldly attachments, blurred and hid everything; but the moment this film was cleansed, it imaged the Universal in itself. The surat, collected by Simran at the *Tisra Til*, shot through it with the aid of the magnetism of Shabd. As it entered the inner realms, it was met by the Radiant Form of the Master that welcomed it and thenceforward guided every step of its inner journey.

Once the soul had won access to the Master in his Radiant Form within, its major task was over. The rest was a matter of time. It could of course

be taken directly to higher planes by the Satguru, but he worked out the progress gradually for else, as was the case with an insistent pundit, the shock and strain of it would be too great. The *Sanchit* Karmas (actions of past lives to fructify in future births) and the *Kriyaman* Karmas (actions in this life also to fructify in future ones) had of course been rendered ineffective the moment the Master had accepted one in his fold. But the *Pralabdha* Karmas on which the present life was based had to be worked out, else death would immediately ensue. The Master sought to exhaust these as swiftly and as smoothly as possible. When Baba Sawan Singh Ji's leg was fractured, Baba Ji revealed that it was the result of no mere accident but of past karmas whose fruit could not be avoided. But his suffering if not wholly cancelled had been mitigated through his Satguru's intercession. "Whatever suffering has come to you," Baba Ji wrote, "is only a fifth part, four parts have been condoned," and went on to add:

Suffering and troubles are blessings in disguise for they are ordained by the Lord. If our benefit lies in pain, He sends pain, if in pleasure He sends pleasure. Pleasures and pains are tests of our strength and if one does not waver or deflect, then the Almighty blesses such souls with Naam.

(8th May, 1897)

Whatever troubles befell his disciples, Baba Ji told them to be of good cheer. The sooner their accounts were cleared the better, and special grace was theirs in the hour of trial:

Sickness and pleasures are the fruits of past actions. All those who are sick are extended special grace. Let them, therefore, have no worry, but bear it with equanimity. During suffering, the mind wanders not and turns to Bhajan readily in sorrow. So blessed are the periods of sickness when the mind is turned toward Bhajan. This is a special gift to Satsangis. So whenever sickness and pain afflict you, accept them as the Lord's Will and devote yourself to your spiritual exercises. So long as the surat is absorbed in the Shabd Dhun, pain will not be felt . . . Has it not been said: "Pleasure is the disease and pain the remedy."

(17th October, 1902)

“Once one meets a competent Satguru, one learns the complete inner way and launches on the spiritual journey,” Baba Ji would say, “there is then only the liquidation of give and take that limits its flight. The soul is then not pure enough to catch the Divine Shabd and must be first freed of all karmic reactions. The Satguru must free it from the chain of karmas in this life itself so as to safeguard against the necessity of taking further births for their repayment.”

Hence the inevitability of suffering, but fortunately for Satsangis “years of pain are liquidated in a matter of days.” The Shabd Dhun was one’s guiding angel, one’s protecting charm. If one took refuge in its richness, one’s karmas were steadily burnt away in its purifying flame. As the mind grew calmer and the karmas got exhausted, the soul was progressively released from Maya and guided by the Radiant Master within, penetrating to ever higher inner planes. The disciple had not to worry. His task was only to abide by his Guru’s commandments, and labor according to His Will. It was for the Satguru to crown his efforts as he considered fit and appropriate, for he was the best judge and did what was best for the disciple:

What the Lord considers best He is doing. Do not bring yourself into the picture. Live by the words of the Master and continue performing your earthly duties. When the fruit is ripe, it will fall of its own accord without injury to itself or the bearing branch, and the ripe fruit is held in great value. But if we pluck the unripe fruit forcibly from off the tree, the branch is injured and the raw fruit shrivels and is of little use. Meeting a competent Master is the fulfilment of human birth: this is the fruit of life. To live by his commandments ensures its proper nurture. Daily Simran and Bhajan to the maximum possible are its best food and nourishment, and mergence with Shabd is its ripening and falling off.

(3rd March, 1899)

Such was the progress of the soul. Its ripening was a matter of steady growth. Supported by the words of the Master, nourished by Bhajan, and borne on the Shabd Dhun, it transcended realm after realm until it left all

coverings of mind and matter behind and reached Sach Khand. This was its True Abode, the realm of pure spirit. From there, merging into the Divine, it receded progressively into the Formless, until, passing through the Alakh and Agam, it reached the Anami, the Nameless and Formless source of all that moves and has its being.

With some, as in the case of Baba Ji himself, the entire journey, owing to the spiritual proficiency they had gained in past lives, was accomplished at what seemed to their fellows a phenomenal and amazing speed. There were others who, through their intense devotion and abhyasa, reaped in a single life the fruits of many births. But the overwhelming majority consisted of those who took to spirituality as a passing phase of idealism and who did not make Shabd the sheet anchor of their lives, but turned to it only intermittently. For such people success in a single life was not assured. But the seed once sown by a Master could not go to waste, and that which had not sprouted in one birth could blossom forth in the next, under the guidance of the living human manifestation of the Shabd Power working at that time. And even this was unnecessary if one had already before death contacted the Naam current and washed away all earthly desires, for then one could work out the rest of one's salvation from supra-physical planes. Once a true Satguru had taken one in his fold, one was assured of deliverance and sooner or later would reach one's Eternal Home. Even if he left his earthly frame his guidance and protection continued unaffected. There was no need for those who had been initiated by him to seek initiation from any other; for if the Guru's physical form was mortal, his Shabd form was eternal and ever reverberating. One could of course seek elucidation on knotty points from the fellow disciple who had been chosen by one's Master to succeed him. But as for inner guidance, that continued to remain the sole responsibility of one's preceptor even if he was physically alive no longer. The disciple's sole duty was to follow the practices enjoined by his Guru and it was for him to crown them with success. Had not Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"? And did not Swami Ji on the last day of his mission on

earth assure his devotees: “Have no fear whatsoever. I am forever with each one of you and your protection and care shall be even greater than before”?⁴

An Ancient Science

Baba Jaimal Singh gave out his spiritual message not as something new, but as an ancient science. Its traces were to be found in the scriptures of all faiths, but it came into full blossom in known history with Kabir and Nanak. Their writings reveal unequivocally that they had realized the inner science to its full potential. The great tradition that these Master-souls had established was continued by Nanak’s successors and then, as we have already seen earlier in this study, passed on to Tulsi Sahib of Hathras and from him to Swami Ji of Agra, before returning with Baba Jaimal Singh to the Punjab.

The Surat Shabd Yoga was not merely a faith, but a science. It had not been confined to India alone, but was known to the greatest of the Sufis; and historical records suggest that the two movements, in India and in the Middle East, often met and intermingled. It was a path open to all men and most suited to our times. Swami Ji in giving out his message was not teaching anything new. He was doing what his great predecessors had done: revitalizing and reinterpreting for his times the truths given out of old. Baba Ji strongly resisted any suggestion that his Master had discovered a wholly new path, as some people came later to suggest. Had he not himself declared in *Sar Bachan* after stating his tenets:

*Jo mun maen pateet na dekhe
To Kabir, Gur Bani Pekhe,
Tulsi Sahib ka mat joi,
Paltu, Jagjivan kahan soi.
In santan ka daeon parmana
In ki Bani sakh bakhana.
He who cannot realize this fact*

*Let him refer to the teachings of Kabir and the Sikh Gurus.
Tulsi Sahib also taught those truths,
While Paltu and Jagjivan point to the same.
I refer the sceptic to the testimony of such mystics,
For their teachings are in accord with what I say.⁵*

And did he not often base his discourses on the writings of Kabir, Tulsi Sahib, Bhikha, and especially of Guru Nanak?

Any hypothesis that Swami Ji while beginning in the footsteps of his predecessors suddenly, after 1858-61, transcended to some higher realms unknown to any before him, could at best only misrepresent him. His poetical compositions were the fruit of the last years of his life, and in them he had said, while stating that the Satguru was identical with the Sat Purush:

*Sewa kar puja kar un ki,
Unhi ko Guru Nanak jan.
Vohi Kabir Vohi Satnama
Sab santan ko vohi pahchan.
Tera kaj unhi se hoga,
Mat bhatke tu taj abhiman.
Serve and worship the Guru for he is Nanak;
Kabir is also in him, and even so is Sat Naam.
Truly, every Saint is the embodied form of the Formless;
Your emancipation will be wrought by Him and Him alone.*

In the light of such recorded statements – to say nothing of what Swami Ji directly told his disciples – how could one be so obtuse as to claim a new invention for him?

The Agra Saint, Baba Ji pointed out, in spite of what came to be claimed later (about a decade after his death), had always initiated his disciples into the Simran of the Panch Shabd. Indeed, this was the primary ground of difference on account of which Baba Ji was unwilling to join the Central Administrative Council at Soamibagh in 1902. The greatest Saints of

the past had put their disciples on the Panch Shabd, he said, as was clear from their writings:

*Kabir through the agency of the Five Words
is now ever merged in the silence of the Formless.*

KABIR

*Know him to be a true Master who can open in thee the way back to God,
And guides thee in the spiritual path with the clarion call of the Five
Sounds.⁶*

GURU NANAK

*Without the Satguru one finds not the secret of Naam,
Sweet is the elixir of Shabd that flows through the Simran of the Five
Words.⁷*

GURU AMAR DAS

*Blessed indeed is one who through the grace of the Master
Unfolds the eternal melody of the Five Sounds.⁸*

GURU ARJAN

Tulsi Sahib also referred to the same explicitly in his writings.

Swami Ji respected and revered them and pursued the same course as theirs. In *Sar Bachan* he clearly stated at one point:

*Panch Shabd ka Simran karo
Siam set main surat dharo
Keep repeating the five holy Words,
and focus on the dark spot within.*

When Swami Ji began using the term *Radhasoami* brought into vogue by his devoted and beloved disciple Rai Saligram, he did not, Baba Ji affirmed, begin a new faith or creed. He simply accepted the word as yet another name for the Unnameable Infinite; interpreting it on the outer plane to stand for the disciple (*Radha*) and the Guru (*Soami*), and on the

inner plane for the soul current (*Radha*) and its source (*Soami*). When Baba Sawan Singh Ji objected to the use of this new word at Murree in 1894, Baba Ji, as we have already seen, picked up a copy of *Sar Bachan* and read out the verse:

Radha aad surat ka naam
Soami aad Shabd nij dham.
Radha is the name of the primal soul current (surat);
Soami is the name of the primal source of Shabd or the Word.

He explained that the Absolute in His ultimate form was formless and indescribable, yet Saints in their zeal to point Him out to their disciples had given Him countless names. Had not the authors of the *Vishnu Sahasranama* and the *Jap Sahib* coined hundreds of names for the All-Merciful Creator? Then why to object to “Radhasoami”?

The Reality which Swami Ji attempted to point out by the term “Radhasoami” had been referred to by his predecessors by other names, like *Khasam* or *Soami* (Supreme Lord), *Maha Dayal* (All Grace), *Nirala* (the Mysterious), *Nirankar* (Formless), and *Anami* (Nameless). Thus Kabir once said:

Kal Akal Khasam ka keena
Eh parpanch badhawan.
Time and the Timeless both spring from a single source
And are vital for His manifestation.

And Nanak had declared:

Kot Brahmmand ka thakur Soami
Sarabh jian ka data reh.
Soami is the Lord of all creation and the Master of all the souls.

Tulsi Sahib had spoken in a similar vein:

Sab ki aad kahun main Soami.
I address as “Soami” the Creator of all that is.

Swami Ji himself, like his Master, invoked the Supreme Reality as “Soami” or more often still as “Sahib Soami” and “Satguru Soami.” He used those terms freely in his discourses and letters rather than the word “Radhasoami.” It is just likely that these occurred in his original poetical compositions as well, but that the word “Radhasoami” was substituted for them, for purpose of homogeneity, when these poems were collected some six years after his death along with many of Hazur Maharaj Rai Saligram’s compositions, in the volume entitled *Sar Bachan* (poetry), in which “Radhasoami” word stands either for the ultimate goal – Soami or Anami – or for the Guru.

Baba Ji was prepared to go thus far and no farther. He respected the term “Radhasoami” as yet another attempt at naming the Nameless, but could not accept the special mystic significance that began to be given to it after Swami Ji’s death. Had not the Agra Saint himself said in *Bachan* 115, Part II of *Sar Bachan* prose:

Naam is of two kinds: *Varanatmak* and *Dhunutmak*. Innumerable are the benefits of Dhunutmak Naam and hardly any of the Varanatmak Naam.⁹

All names that could be brought into verbal expression were Varanatmak and were therefore outer, and subject to variation from person to person and from people to people. The inner Shabd was the same in all ages and the same for all people. It was wholly musical, defying verbal expression or description, and was the source of all creation and therefore the sole object of the seeker’s abhyasa. Any word prepossessed in one’s mind appears to be reverberating in that Sound principle. Baba Ji, abiding by the spirit of his great Guru, unhesitatingly declared, “Any word which may possibly be brought into utterance and writing could not be an internal spiritual Sound which is the unspoken and unwritten law and order of the whole creation.” How could the word “Radhasoami” be Dhunutmak when it had been brought into outer expression, and how could it be said to be “resounding” in the highest spiritual plane where form did not exist and where the Shabd itself had not yet come into manifestation?

His Master, Baba Ji explained, had always held his teachings to be those of Kabir and Nanak and had never claimed to have entered realms unknown to any man before him in human history. Had not the greatest mystics of the past left definite testimony of their access to all the eight inner planes? And did not one read in Nanak:

*Sat Lok ke oopar dhave
Alakh, Agam ki tab gat pave
Tis ke oopar Santan dham
Nanak das kio bisram.
He who transcends the Sat Lok
Alone knows the essence of Agam and Alakh,
The saints have their abode above them
And poor Nanak too is a resident there.*

Swami Ji's last words placed his adherence to the traditional path beyond any shadow of a doubt. He had made it clear that he had nothing to do with "Radhasoami" developed as a cult. His path was that of Sat Naam and the Anami, and if he did accept the term "Radhasoami" it could only be as another Varanatmak name for the Unnameable One.

All names like *Sat Naam, Onkar*, etc., given for Simran were in like manner Varanatmak. Their sole functions were (a) to help build up Dhyana or one-pointed concentration, and (b) to serve as passwords for crossing from one plane to another. The soul's task (and the Satguru's) was to reach the fifth plane, Sat Lok, and for this five passwords, one for each realm, were needed. Once the soul entered the regions of pure spirit, no further passwords were necessary. As it beheld the Sat Purush, the deity of Sat Lok or Sach Khand, and the first definite manifestation of Naam and Form of the Formless and the Nameless, it realized that He (i.e., Sat Purush) and the Satguru were not distinct but one and the same, and that it itself was also of their very essence. Its search for the Absolute was at last over and it began to merge in Him. As it entered deeper and deeper, being absorbed from Form into the Formless, it passed through Alakh (indescribable) and Agam (inconceivable) until it finally lost itself in the

Ocean of Bliss and Consciousness that is the Ultimate Reality beyond any name and form, ineffable, immaculate, indescribable, and immeasurable. It was what it was and nothing more could be said of it. The only way left for describing it was through negatives. It was neither light nor darkness, neither sound nor silence. No Shabd could be said to be resounding there, as Shabd had not yet come into manifestation, and to say that the strains of “Radhasoami” could be heard vibrating there was a contradiction in terms.

All past Adepts in the Surat Shabd Yoga had taught as such. Any perceptive student of their writings could see that they all regarded the entry into the fifth plane as the goal that both disciple and Guru must set before themselves. For achieving this, the Simran of the five sacred names was essential; and once the soul had entered Sat Lok it remained the Sat Purush’s task to merge it into Himself and permit it to recede further and still further into the Formless and the Nameless. It was this very two-phase process that Swami Ji underlined when he said, “My path was the path of Sat Naam and the Anami Naam,” and at the conclusion of Bachan 26 in *Sar Bachan* (poetry), while describing the soul’s entry into Sat Lok and its journey beyond, he made the whole method very clear indeed and left not a shadow of doubt:

*Pushap madh sae uti avaza
 Kau tum hoe kaho kaja
 Satgur milae bhed sub dina
 Tis ki kripa daras hum lina
 Darshan kar ut kar magnani
 Sat Purush tub bolae bani
 Alakh lok ka bhed sunaya
 Bal upna dae surat pathaya
 Alakh Purush ka roop anoopa
 Agam Purush nirkha kul bhoopa
 Dekh achraj kaha na jaye
 Kaya kaya sobha varan paye*

From the lotus there arose a voice:

“Speak! Who are you and what brings you here?”

“My Satguru gave me the key to this realm

And through His grace I am blessed with thy darshan.”

Beholding the Lord it was lost in ecstasy;

Thereupon the Sat Purush spoke

Giving forth the secrets of Alakh Lok

And by His own power raised it further.

The form of the Alakh Purush defies description.

Agam Purush, the Lord of all creations,

His wondrous sight cannot be described

And His glory cannot be rendered in words.

Baba Ji strictly adhered to his Master’s original teachings and assured his disciples that if they lived by his instructions they most certainly would “reach Sach Khand, and, passing through Alakh, Agam, Anami Radha-soami, get merged in the Wonder Region.” Saints in the past had attained the highest state through the agency of the Five Names, so why change them now? Why travesty Swami Ji’s message merely for starting a new cult? The Surat Shabd Yoga was an ancient science and it had not changed overnight. Before his last day, Baba Ji called all his disciples then present at Beas and declared: “It is the Will of Din Dayal Swami Ji Maharaj that I open the doors of the spiritual treasure house even more widely than before. My Master wishes that I give you in even greater detail than before an account of the inner realms, the first five and the last three, so that you should not be put in doubt and say that one who was favored of Swami Ji passed away in silence.” He then spoke at length on the wonders of the worlds within and ended with the words we have already cited in the conclusion to the biography: “All my life I have only sought to serve my Master, and now whatever he had to accomplish through this poor physical frame is over.”

It is impossible to reduce to bare statement the outer teachings of a great man. The task becomes doubly difficult in the case of a Saint of the eminence of Baba Jaimal Singh Ji. Such spirits speak from a wisdom that we cannot understand and act not as limited human beings but as the agents of the Lord:

*Jaisi maen aavae Khasam ki bani
Taisra kari gian wey Lalo.
What my Lord speaks within me, O Lalo,
That alone I utter.*¹⁰

GURU NANAK

Their message lives in every little word they speak and in every little gesture. The abstract statement of their philosophy is but the skeleton of bone and cartilage that misses altogether the flesh and blood of their direct impact on their disciples. Who can now recall those words of wisdom, of peace, of consolation, of reassurance, of encouragement, of loving reprimand that Baba Ji uttered as he moved among his disciples? And who can now record those little acts of selfless kindness and superhuman love that unconsciously brought home to those around the unquestioning conviction of the truth of what the sage taught? If ever there was a problem that could not be solved, he sat wrapt in meditation, and when he returned from the inner planes the answer was with him. But all that – beyond a few brief recorded accounts – is lost forever, the meaning spoken and the meaning left unspoken and expressed through the agency of the eyes, the words of advice on every conceivable subject to the never-ending stream of disciples and seekers; and it is gone beyond recall. We can only give the husk, the skeleton, and leave the rest to the reader. And for his better remembrance and convenience we summarize here some of the main features of his message – the most ancient, and yet, in his hands as in those of every great Saint, the most new and the most vital.

Surat Shabd Yoga

It is the highest form of Yoga which takes the soul to the very source, the source of all life and creation, the Formless and Nameless Anami. It is the most economical and quickest way, and can be practiced by all, young and old, children and women, householders and non-householders. In fact, it is the best suited for our times when other yogic forms, so slow and exacting, are well-nigh impossible to practice. Swami Ji made no mistake when on his last day he said, "In this *yuga* (time cycle) nothing can avail except devotion to a true Master and the practice of Naam."¹¹

The Satguru or the True Master

He is an embodiment of the Sat Purush in human form, having become one with Him. "Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." Without the active aid of such a living Master, nothing is possible. Past Masters may have ferried their contemporaries across, but they cannot be of much use to us. The Shabd Guru must always be contacted through the agency of its living manifestation. The only infallible test for competence in this field is the Satguru's ability to give some first-hand experience which may be later developed. Once one has found a true Master, one should concentrate on inner discipline. His guidance is always with us and continues even after he has left the physical plane.

The Gurmukh or the Genuine Disciple

Having found a genuine Master after resolving all doubts, one must live up to the ideal of a perfect disciple. And what is it to be such a perfect disciple? It is to have full faith in the Satguru, never questioning his wisdom and authority. It is to be lost in his love while at work or at play, for such love alone can purify the heart of the imperfect loves of the world. Further, given such faith and love, one is to follow to the best of one's ability his injunctions: "If you love me, keep my commandments." If a disciple develops those qualities and surrenders himself completely to the

Satguru's Will, he shall be freed from worldly desires, become an apt receptacle for the Shabd Dhun, and the Master's grace and generosity shall descend upon him like a flood that breaks open all inner gates and obstructions.

The Outer and the Inner

The way to salvation lies not outside; it is within. Outer rituals are of no avail and, though it is desirable to honor the memory of past Masters, to be lost in the worship of their *samadhs*, statues or pictures cannot be of any substantial use. One must hold up their lives as a model and like them concentrate upon the world within. Baba Ji himself would spend weeks in Bhajan and Simran with only short breaks for food. He always encouraged his disciples to give as much time as possible to the sadhans he had taught. Constant remembrance of the Lord was the best protection against attachment and Maya; and one should maintain the five-fold Simran all the hours of the day. No less important was Bhajan, which needed more concentrated attention. Whatever the matter, however preoccupied with outer duties, the disciple must find some time every day – be it ever so little – for Bhajan. Only through maintaining the link with Shabd could anything be gained and once a disciple had strengthened the link through constant practice, the inner music flowed in incessantly at all hours of the day, becoming a clarion call forever inviting him within and deftly lifting him like a silken robe from off the thorns of earthly desires.

In short, Baba Ji taught spirituality as a non-sectarian inner discipline which was accessible to all. He always emphasized that the matter was not one of outer forms and sects: it was entirely a question of inward purification and practice. He who could find a true Master, grow into an apt disciple, and unflinchingly pursue the sadhan he had been taught, would without doubt sooner or later reach Sat Lok. The Satguru's task was to take the soul to the Sat Purush, on beholding whom it realized itself to be of the same essence, and saw the Satguru and the Supreme Lord as one and indivisible. There it merged into the Sat Naam, with whose help it re-

ceded further into the Alakh, Agam, Anami (or Radhasoami) and even to a Wonder Region beyond as will be evinced from one of the letters of Baba Ji (presented in *Spiritual Gems*), each marking a further stage of the soul's absorption from name and form into the Nameless and the Formless, the final stage being beyond all forms of light and sound and therefore wholly indescribable in terms of human experience.

One could succeed in this path irrespective of one's social or religious background. True to Swami Ji's injunctions, Baba Ji attempted to interpret spirituality in as non-sectarian a manner as possible. He did away with many of the older outer practices, chief among them being *bhaint* or tribute to the Guru, leaving it entirely to the wishes of the disciple to subscribe toward the running of the Satsang. Nor did he encourage the adoration of any particular mode of salutation that might tend to grow into the mark of a creed. While at Murree, Bibi Rukko once (under the influence of a recent visit to Agra) instructed the Satsangis to greet Baba Ji when he came with the word "Radhasoami". Baba Ji was far from pleased: "See that in the future you do not repeat the mistake," he admonished. "We spirits come not to create new sects and creeds. We are here to dissolve all differences. Why distract these simple people with these outer slogans? My task is to take them within and let them greet me each according to the traditions of his community." As we have already seen, he had a nucleus of Muslim disciples and he never gave them the feeling that they had in any way to renounce their own faith. It was only a field of study like mathematics or astronomy that people all over the world could take up and master, and what he taught them were the very same truths that the greatest of the Sufis – Jalal-ud-Din Rumi, Hafiz, Shamas Tabrez, Inayat Khan – had given out to their disciples.

This task was carried further by Baba Ji's spiritual son, Hazur Sawan Singh Ji. During his ministry Baba Ji's prophecy was fulfilled and the Satsang expanded tremendously. The message of the great Master was carried across the seas and men of all faiths sought shelter in its fold. In conformity with these new developments and to suit the changing spirit

of the age, Hazur Sawan Singh Ji began to interpret the timeless message as an inner science. More and more of the outer ritual was shed, and practices like *charan-amrit* or *mukh-amrit* and *arti* completely disappeared. Like Baba Ji, he was ever willing to meet the spiritual leaders of all faiths; and Dr. Johnson, one of his American disciples, records in his *With a Great Master in India* how he would visit the places of worship of every sect wherever he went.

The scientific tendency has continued to gather strength and men are no longer willing to accept spirituality as in former days as a matter of devotional faith. "We must be convinced," they say, "we must have proofs. We cannot be satisfied simply with doing in a blind way what our forefathers did." So keeping pace with these developments the Ruhani Sat-sang in Delhi finally abolished in consonance with the wishes of Hazur Sawan Singh Ji the last vestiges of ritual; even the living Master's photograph is not held up for attention. Stripped of all its outer encrustations, spirituality emerges as a science, as scientific as any other, as verifiable in its results. Let any seeker take it up and let him create in the laboratory of the soul the conditions that are prerequisite, as sure as the day follows the night shall he rise into the Kingdom of God.

FOOTNOTES

PART ONE: THE GREAT TRADITION

- 1 For fuller details in this connection, the reader is referred to Naam or Word by the same author, a study that gives a full account of the teachings of the Masters in all ages.
- 2 Cf. Shri Des Raj, Hindu Sikh Ithras.
- 3 Chacha Partap Singh, Jivan Charitar Swamiji Maharaj, p. 6; S.D. Maheshwari, Correspondence with Certain Americans, p. 221.
- 4 Chacha Partap Singh, op. cit., p. 109.
- 5 Ibid., pp 33-34
- 6 Ibid., pp. 93-96.
- 7 Jivan Charitar Babuji Maharaj, Vol. III, p. 29.
- 8 Ajodhya Parshad, Jivan Charitar Hazur Maharaj, p. 36.
- 9 Chacha Partap Singh, op. cit., p. 5.
- 10 Lucknow: Nawalkishore Printing Press.
- 11 Sansar Da Dharmic Ithas
- 12 Chacha Partap Singh, op. cit., p. 52.

PART TWO: BABA JI – A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

- 1 It is related in Guru Nanak's life that the great sage was touring the region with his devoted disciples, Bala and Mardana. The party was feeling exceedingly thirsty and there seemed to be no trace of water around. The sage directed his followers to Wali Kandhari, a Muslim hermit who lived on the hillside by the side of a spring. The Wali, lost in his own pride, sent away the strangers empty-handed. When they returned again at their Master's bidding, he scoffed: "If your Guru is as great a man as you affirm, can't he even quench your thirst?"

When these words were related to Nanak, who stood at the foot of the hill below, he smiled and struck the rock with his open hand. Straightway a crystal jet burst forth and everyone drank his fill. The Wali was full of remorse, but it was too late now; and to his consternation he discovered that the spring that ran by his hut but suddenly dried up.

The rock where the Saint struck his hand still bears the imprint of his palm and fingers and a clear stream of water sprouts from beneath. It is a great center for Sikh pilgrimage.

- 2 In the past it was a common practice with the mystics to initiate their disciples by degrees into the inner science. After the sadhak had mastered one stage, he was acquainted with the mysteries of the next and so on to the end. The method was not in itself objectionable, but it often led to results of the kind we have just noted. Jaimal was to meet another case like that of the Chikker mahatma a few years later at Delhi after being initiated by Soami Ji at Agra, when he met a Muslim fakir who too had suffered by the early death of his pir. To avoid such mishaps, Masters of the Surat Shabd Yoga nowadays initiate their disciples directly into the mysteries of all the five inner planes that the soul has to traverse before it can merge with the Absolute.
- 3 What we cannot explain in terms of what we know, we normally term as a “miracle.” Thus the first witnesses of locomotion looked upon what they saw as a wonder; yet today hardly anyone would take it as such. In like manner, he who has mastered the inner Science knows that what people take as miracles are not miracles as such, but are based on the higher laws of creation, accessible only to the scientists of the Spirit who have explored the mysteries of the inner Path. See in this connection the chapter, “The Law of Miracles,” in *The Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramhansa Yogananda.
- 4 Chacha Partap Singh Ji’s letter dated August 4, 1902:
“Beloved of the Satguru, purified by Shabd, pure of face and intellect, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji.

I have received your letter and was very glad to read its contents. And the stone which you suggested will be put in the building. You may be assured about that. My son, Suchet Singh, has come back on pension. I am, however, sorry to note that there is a tendency of forming different sects and cliques in our Satsang, and that all satsangis are not in harmony with each other. For this purpose I have come here (to Allahabad).

We have decided that a Radha Swami Satsang Central Association should be started. Pandit Ji (Brahm Shankar Misra) has insisted that I should be its President and he will be the Vice-President; that Lala Ajodhia Prashad, son of Hazur Sahib Maharaj (Rai Bahadur Saligram) and eight others, as well as yourself, should be members. Or, in whatever manner any ten members can be selected by the Satsangis by a vote of majority. I am, therefore, sending you a pamphlet containing a complete description about this Central Association, and can send you any number of copies as may be required. Please send instructions to all your satsangis that they should sanction the following ten names and endorse these pamphlets in token of their nomination. If you have Satsangis in far-off places, they should also be asked to act accordingly. I am giving below the names of the ten members referred to above:

1. Lala Ajodhia Prashad (son of Rai Saligram).
2. Pandit Brahm Shankar Misra Sahib.
3. Lala Baleshwar Parshad.
4. Lala Madho Parshad.
5. Rai Ishwar Sahai, alias Raja Sahib.
6. Lala Suchet Singh (son of Chacha Partap Singh).
7. Baba Jaimal Singh Ji Sahib.
8. Lala Sudershan Singh (another son of Pratap Singh).
9. Munshi Hargobind Daya Sahib.
10. Mr. Bool Chand Sahib.

It is expected that by the constitution of this Society, different groups and cliques will disappear and satsangis will love each others as brothers.

Kindly send this letter to Babu Sawan Singh also for his information.”

PART THREE: BABA JI AND THE SCIENCE SPIRITUAL

- 1 Most of the citations from Baba Ji's letters in the pages that follow are translated directly from the Gurmukhi originals. The reader wishing to read his entire correspondence with Baba Sawan Singh Ji may consult *Spiritual Gems* (Beas 1958).
- 2 Baba Sawan Singh Ji in a letter to one of his disciples makes the necessity of a living Master in the Mystic Path very clear indeed: "When I was in the hospital on account of the fracture of my leg, one day when I was meditating, Baba Ji's form appeared before me. Baba Ji, or rather what seemed to be his form, said: "If, in a case of emergency, meat and drink are used, there is no harm." But when I repeated the five Names, he got up and walked away. Now because I had seen Baba Ji in real life and could visualize him, I found out this trick. But those people who concentrate on the old Masters who passed away thousands of years ago are likely to be misled. His (the Saint's) eyes and his forehead cannot be imitated. Hence, you always require a living teacher for the pupil, a living physician for the sick, a living husband for the wife and a living ruler for the people. I maintain that no one else can help a disciple so much as a living Master." (*Spiritual Gems* p. 150.)
- 3 Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji also laid great stress on this: "... no matter in what circumstances one finds himself and what new problems one is facing, a devotee should not miss his Bhajan. He may give only fifteen minutes or even five minutes to it daily, but he should be on it without a break." (*Spiritual Gems*, p. 462)
- 4 Jeevan Charitrar Swamiji Maharaj, p. 112. It is relevant to point out here the controversy initiated by Shri S. D. Maheshwari in his *Radhasoami Faith, History and Tenets* (Agra, 1954), Chapter 22, regarding paragraph 250 of *Sar Bachan* (prose). The volume was not written by Swami Ji himself, but was based on dictations and notes taken by disciples, and published several years after his death. When Baba Ji undertook to have it republished at Beas, he strictly adhered to the Agra text but for paragraph 250 which, he was convinced, gave an er-

roneous picture of Swami Ji's teachings. Swami Ji had always said that once a true Master had taken a disciple under his wing, he would never forsake him whatever the matter. Even if he left the physical plane, his guidance continued; we have already quoted his last words on the subject. Nor should it be forgotten that when referring his disciples to Rai Saligram, he expressly stated that if they desired "elucidation" (not initiation) on any point, they could consult "Saligram" for it.

Keeping the above in mind, Baba Ji had paragraph 250 of the Agra edition, which stated that a disciple could make no progress after the death of his Guru until he sought out his successor (a point not always easy to settle), deleted, and substituted for it the following, to accord with Swami Ji's original teachings:

If anyone is initiated by a perfect Satguru, having love and faith in Him, serving Him devotedly, and before he has advanced far the Guru should depart, he should continue to contemplate His form and perform all the of the exercises prescribed by the Guru. The same Satguru, in the same Radiant Form, will continue to carry on the work as he had commenced it, and will carry it on to final success, as if he were still in the body.

Stated in this form, Bachan 250 fits in perfectly with Bachan 254, which fails to harmonize with it in the Soamibagh version.

- 5 Sar Bachan (Beas, 1950), p. 350.
- 6 War M. 1.
- 7 Maru M. 3.
- 8 Ramkali M. 5.
- 9 In the light of Swami Ji's Bachan 115 quoted above, which Shri S. D. Maheshwari himself cites (Correspondence with Certain Americans, Agra, 1960, p. 193), one fails to realize how the latter could commit himself to such patently self-cancelling statements as: "Radhasoami Naam is resounding in all refulgence in higher spheres" (p. 192); "Like

the word Om, Sat Naam is resounding at the seat of Sat Purush (True Being). In the same way the Shabd or Sound Radhasoami is resounding in the Radhasoami Dham” (p. 266). It is indeed interesting to learn that Hindi is the lingua franca of the transcendent worlds. One had thought that the inner Shabd was Dhunatmak (musical and irreducible to speech) and not Varanatmak and further that the Anami or Radhasoami realm was beyond Naam and Form, the Parent and Creator of Shabd (which came into full manifestation only at Sat Lok) and not its seat and center. It is not irrelevant here to point out that mystics have attempted to describe the music of Shabd only up to the fifth plane – speaking of the bell, the conch, the drum, the kingri (onestringed harp), the flute etc. – but beyond that have been forced to utter Herat! Herat! Herat! – “Wonder! Wonder! Wonder!” Form and Shabd, as we have already stated, progressively disappear after the fifth plane, and what finally remains is the Ocean of Blissful Consciousness that defies all description.

10 Tilang M. 1, 722

11 Jeevan Charitrar Swamiji Maharaj, p. 112

GLOSSARY OF ORIENTAL TERMS

ABHYASA Mediation; spiritual practices or exercises.

AGAM PURUSH The Inconceivable One; Lord of the seventh spiritual region, the last stage before the Absolute; first (partial) expression of the Absolute God.

ALAKH LOK The sixth spiritual region, two stages before the Absolute.

ALAKH PURUSH The Indescribable One; Lord of the sixth spiritual region and the second (partial) expression of the Absolute God.

AMAR DAS, GURU (1479-1574) The third Guru of the Sikhs, disciple and successor of Guru Angad.

AMRITSAR (“The pool of nectar”) The holy city of the Sikhs, located in northern Punjab. Named after the pool in *Dasam Dwar*, it was founded by Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan.

ANAMI The Nameless; the Absolute Formless God; the Essence before it comes into expression or existence; the eighth and final spiritual stage. Also called *Maha Dayal*, *Nirala*, *Soami* and *Radhasoami*.

ANGAD GURU (1504-1552) The second Guru of the Sikhs. Disciple and successor of Guru Nanak, who chose him in preference to his physical sons, and changed his name from Lehna to Angad – “one cast in his mold.”

ANURAG SAGAR A book by Kabir, dealing among other things with the creation of the world.

ARJAN, GURU (1563-1606) The fifth Guru of the Sikhs, disciple, youngest son and successor of Guru Ram Das. He built the Golden Temple at Amritsar and compiled the *Granth Sahib*, the Sikh scriptures, which includes, besides his own songs and those of his predecessors, the available writings of all Saints, whether Hindu or Muslim. He was tortured to death by the Emperor Jehangir.

ARTI The practice of waving lights before a deity.

ASANAS Various yogic postures for health and meditation.

ATMAN Soul; the essence of the individual, of the same nature as the Universal.

BABA A reverential prefix, added to the names of old or exceptionally holy men.

BASANT PANCHMI Festival marking the advent of spring.

BEAS One of the five rivers of the Punjab, on the banks of which Baba Jaimal Singh Ji set up his abode while carrying on his work as a spiritual torchbearer.

BHAI Brother; term of affection.

BHAI BALA One of the two constant companions of Guru Nanak (the other was Mardana, a Muslim).

BHAI NT Love offering.

BHAJAN The practice of listening to the holy Sound Current within. Also used for holy songs and hymns.

BHIKHA A sixteenth century Indian Saint.

BIBI A term of respectful affection used in addressing ladies.

BRAHMAND The causal plane or *Trikuti*; the second inner region, a spirituo-material plane, subject to decay and dissolution. Sometimes used to include the two planes below it (astral and physical) as well, in which case it is used to mean the macrocosm.

BRAHMIN Literally, “one who knows Brahm (God).” In practice, the highest of the four Hindu castes, that of priests and educators.

BRAHMACHARYA Chastity; life of restraint. Also used for the first of the four Hindu *ashrams* or stages in life, the pre-householder stage of a chaste student.

BUDDHA The Awakened or Enlightened One; title given to Prince Siddhartha Gautama (583-463 B.C), who gave up his throne for the life of a mendicant and is honored as the founder of the Buddhist religion.

CHAITANYA MAHAPRABHU (b. 1485) A great Hindu mystic of Bengal, considered by many to be an *avatar* (incarnation) of Vishnu.

CHAPATI Indian bread.

CHARAN-AMRIT Nectar; washings of the feet of a Saint.

DASAM DWAR *or* **DASWAN DWAR** Third inner plane, next after the causal or *Brahmand*; consists of pure spirit and subtle forms of matter in varying degrees. Here the pilgrim soul, by dipping in *Amritsar* (the sacred pool of nectar located here), is washed clean of all impurities.

DERA Abode. Used for a colony named after its founder.

DHAM Region or home; goal.

DHUN The music of the inner Sound Current or *Shabd*.

DHUNATMAK That Name which is inexpressible by outer means; pertaining to the inner Sound Current.

DIN DAYAL Lord of compassion.

DIWALI Festival of lights, held in India every autumn to commemorate the victory of Rama over the forces of evil.

DIWAN Minister.

FAKIR Muslim term for a Saint.

GADDI Seat or cushion. Used to mean the inheritance of temporal power or possessions of a departed Saint.

GHARIB DAS, BABA Nineteenth century Saint, a disciple of Tulsi Sahib of Hathras and brother disciple of Swami Ji; eventually settled in Delhi.

GHAT A bathing place on the bank of a river.

GHAT RAMAYANA A spiritual, esoteric version of the *Ramayana*, by Tulsi Sahib of Hathras.

GIANI One learned in religious lore.

GITA Short for *Bhagavad Ghita*, a Hindu sacred scripture in which Lord Krishna gives instruction on various forms of yoga.

GOBIND SINGH, GURU (1660-1708) The tenth Guru of the Sikhs, son and successor of Guru Teg Bahadur. Did the work of an avatar as well as that of a Saint, functioning as an ideal knight protecting the weak from the strong and restoring justice, as well as initiating souls and taking them back to the Father. He gave the Sikh religion its present form and created the institution of the *Khalsa*, the brotherhood of the pure. Some say he did not die on the traditional date given above, but lived on for many years obscurely serving the pure.

GRANTH SAHIB The Sikh scriptures compiled by Guru Arjan. Comprising over 1,400 pages, the book is mostly in Punjabi and includes the hymns of Nanak, Angad, Amar Das, Ram Das, Arjan, Teg Bahadur, Kabir, Sheikh Farid, Ravidas, Namdev, Ramanand, and many other Saints, both Hindu and Muslim.

GURBANI The teachings of the Gurus as found in the *Granth Sahib*; not to be confused with *Gur-ki-Bani*, the holy Sound Current made manifest by a Guru.

GURDWARA A Sikh shrine or temple.

GURMUKH Mouthpiece of the Guru; a disciple who has achieved such a degree of surrender that the Guru talks through him.

GURMUKHI The script in which the Punjabi language is written; devised by Guru Angad.

GURU Dispeller of darkness; He who can show the way Godward by instruction, example and the imparting of experience.

HAFIZ (d. 1388) A native of Shiraz in Persia and poet-mystic of the highest order. A great Sufi, his poems are considered among the finest in Persian.

HAKIM A medical practitioner in indigenous drugs.

HALWA A kind of Indian pudding.

HATHA YOGA A form of yoga dealing with the control of the body and bodily activities as a means to good health, and eventually to stilling the mind. It is supposedly practiced as a preliminary to Raja Yoga or other yoga systems involving the use of *pranas*; in practice, it frequently constitutes an end in itself and is taken up for health and long life.

HAZUR A respectful form of address, applied to venerable persons of distinction in any walk of life.

ITHAS History.

JAPA Intense repetition, with the tongue of thought, of God's name, so much so that one's individuality is lost.

JAP JI The great poem by Guru Nanak which serves as a prologue and epitome to the *Granth Sahib*. The words literally mean such a degree of concentrated meditation that new life (*jia* or inner awareness) is infused in the heart of the meditator. For an English translation of the Jap Ji, with introduction, commentary and notes, see *The Jap Ji: The Message of Guru Nanak*, by Kirpal Singh (Delhi, 1968).

JAT Cultivator; farmer; peasant.

JJ Signifies love and respect; used as a suffix added to personal names or titles.

JIVA or JIVA ATMAN Embodied or individual soul.

JIVAN CHARITAR Biography.

KABIR (1398-1518) A great Indian poet-Saint of Benares. A Muslim by birth and education, he became a disciple of the Hindu Saint Ramananda, and his whole life was spent in tearing down the barriers be-

tween Hindus and Muslims and demonstrating the inner truth common to each. A weaver by trade, his influence on the spiritual life of northern India was enormous, and his lyrics (many of which are included in the *Granth*) are considered the finest in Hindi. He is honored as the founder of the *Kabir-panth* (a Hindu sect numbering about a million adherents) but his spiritual significance for the modern world lies in the impulse that proceeded from him to Nanak and is still active in the living Master of today.

KAFIR Infidel; heretic. Used by Muslims.

KAL The Negative Power, or that aspect of the One God that flows downward and is responsible for the maintenance of the causal, astral and physical planes. The female aspect of Kal is known as *Kali* or *Maya*. Kal manifests in three ways: *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*, or Creator, Preserver and Destroyer (within the confines of the lower three worlds only) respectively. The preservative aspect of Kal (Vishnu) incarnates (*avatar*) from time to time to maintain the balance of minimum spirituality and restore the justice.

KALI YUGA The Age of Time or Dark Age; the fourth and final time-cycle of the manifestation of the Universe, in which life is short and hard, justice is minimal and evil predominates. A compensating factor is that pure spirituality is more available to suffering mankind than ever before. The age we are living in now, it is said to have begun in 3102 B.C.

KALMA The Word that created the Universe; the Koranic term for *Shabd*, *Naam*, Word, Sound current, etc.

KARAM Kindness, mercy, compassion, grace.

KARMA The law of action and reaction, based on desire and I-hood, which causes continual wandering in the cycle of birth and death (transmigration), and governs the fate or destiny of each life. Actions done in one life (whether in thought, word, or deed) form the basis of the karma of the next life. For a complete discussion of this subject, see *The Wheel of Life* by Kirpal Singh.

KARTARPUR “Abode of God;” a city in the Punjab named by Guru Nanak, who spent the last part of his life there.

KHADI Hand-woven cloth.

KHASAM Literally, “husband;” used for God, who is considered to be the spouse of all souls.

KRISHNA, LORD (d. 3102 B.C.) Worshiped by the Hindus as the eighth avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu. His teachings are found in the *Bhagavad Gita* and in the Puranas.

KRIYA Disciplinary yogic exercise.

LALA A prefix used to address a gentleman.

LALO A carpenter who was a devoted disciple of Guru Nanak.

LEHNA, BAI The original name of Guru Angad (q.v.).

MAHA DAYAL Boundless mercy. Used for the Absolute God, also called *Anami* (q.v.).

MAHANT Head of a monastery.

MAHARAJ Literally, “great king;” when used in a spiritual sense, it is added before or after the name of a Saint.

MAHATMA Great soul.

MAHAVIRA A contemporary of the Buddha, he is considered to be the founder of the Jain religion; but the Jains themselves look upon him as the last of the *Tirthankaras* of Great Masters of ancient and prehistoric times, whose memory they honor and revere.

MARDANA (1460-1530) A Muslim rebeck-player, he became a disciple and constant companion of Guru Nanak. Three poems of his are included in the *Granth*.

MAYA Illusion; the feminine aspect of Kal (q.v.), which is responsible for the clouding of vision in the lower worlds, so that individual forms appear as real in themselves and the Power of God which gives them reality and is working through them is not perceived.

MECCA A town in Arabia, the birthplace of the Prophet Mohammed; a place of pilgrimage for all Muslims.

MIAN A reverential form of address among Muslims.

MISTRI A mechanic or skilled craftsman.

MOHAMMED (570-632) The last of the Semitic prophets, he founded the religion of Islam (often incorrectly called “Mohammedanism”) and labored mightily to raise the spiritual and social level of the Arab people among whom he was born and to whom he was called to serve. The revelations received by him from God are found in the *Koran*, the Islamic scripture.

MUDRAS Hand positions used in various yogas as an aid in controlling the mind.

MUKH-AMRIT Food consecrated by a Saint after he takes a little of it himself.

NAAM Name; refers to the Creative Power of God, His original expression, the essence of the whole manifested Universe and of each individual. Also called *Shabd*, *Kalma*, Word, etc. Of the essence of the Supreme Father, it reveals His Will to man – directly to those souls (“Word made flesh”) who have become one with it, and through them to others.

NAMDEV (1269-1344) A calico printer of Maharashtra and at one time a highwayman, he became a disciple of Guru Giandev and eventually a great Saint, ending his days at Pandarpur in the Punjab. Sixty of his hymns are included in the *Granth*.

NANAK, GURU (1469-1539) The first Guru of the Sikhs, honored by them as the founder of the Sikh religion. A younger contemporary of Kabir, he had close associations with him and continued his mission, ignoring religious and caste differences and teaching the practice of the inner Sound Current.

NAND LAL, BHAI An advanced and devoted disciple of Guru Gobind Singh.

NIRAKAR The Formless One; the Absolute God, also called *Anami* (q.v.).

NIRALA Indescribably wonderful. Used to describe the Absolute God.

NIRAT Gazing faculty; that part of the attention used in seeing.

NIRGUN Without attributes.

OM The Sound Current or *Naam* from the causal plane downward; the Creator of the lower worlds.

ONKAR The Form of Om.

PALTU A great Hindu Saint of Nangpur in Oudh, initiated into the Surat Shabd Yoga by his family priest, Gobind Ji, a disciple of Bhikha.

PANCH SHABD The Five Sounds; refers to the one Sound Current resounding throughout the five inner planes between the purely spiritual and the physical. In each plane the Current manifests as a different Sound, the knowledge of which is part of the initiation instructions given by a true Master. Also refers to the mantra or *Simran* of five names, which is based on the inner five sounds and connected with them through the charging of the Guru.

PATHANS Brave tribal people of the Northwestern Frontier Province (now in West Pakistan).

PESHTWA Marhatta chieftain.

PIND The physical plane; the lowest plane of all. Includes all solar systems, universes, galaxies, etc. Also refers to the physical body, and to the psychic functioning of the individual below the eye focus or *Tisra Til* (q.v.).

PIPA, RAJA (1408-1468) The king of Gagaraungarh, he became a disciple of Ramananda and a brother disciple of Kabir and Ravidas. He gave away his riches to the poor and became a great Saint. One of his hymns is included in the *Granth Sahib*.

PIR Muslim or Sufi term for *Guru* or Master.

PRANAS Vital airs pervading the bodily system and controlling the various physiological processes; breathing, elimination, digestion, swallowing, circulation. Those practicing yogas based on Patanjali's system (Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, etc.) control the pranas and use them to withdraw from the body – a very difficult process.

PRANAYAM The process of controlling the *pranas*..

PRANVA Meditation on a sacred syllable in rhythm with the *pranas*.

PRALABDHA KARMA That portion of a person's *karma* (q.v.) which determines his fate or destiny in this life.

PUNDIT A Sanskrit scholar, learned in the Vedas.

PUNJAB “The five rivers;” a plain in northwest India through which five rivers flow, now partly in Pakistan.

PUNJABI (1) A modern Indian language derived from Sanskrit, written in the Gurmukhi (q.v.) script, and spoken in the Punjab; (2) A native of the Punjab.

RADHASOAMI The Lord of the Soul; name coined by Rai Saligram (q.v.) to mean the Absolute God or *Anami*, and sometimes the Guru. Now the name of a religion which bases itself on the writings of Swami Ji.

RAI SALIGRAM, HAZUR MAHARAJ A devoted disciple of Swami Ji of Agra and brother disciple of Baba Jaimal Singh. He coined the word *Radhasoami*, which was accepted by Swami Ji as another name for the Nameless. Swami Ji referred his disciples to him for elucidation of his teachings after his death.

RAM DAS, GURU (1534-1581) The fourth Guru of the Sikhs. He was the son-in-law and devoted disciple of Guru Amar Das, and the father and Master of Guru Arjan.

RAMAKRISHNA, SRI (1836-1886) A great Bengali mystic, widely regarded by Hindus as an incarnation of Vishnu. He was a contemporary of Baba Jaimal Singh, and like him, Kabir, and other Saints, taught the basic oneness of all religions. He was a devotee of Kali, the Divine Mother.

er, but under the guidance of his guru, a sadhu from the Punjab named Totapuri, he transcended that stage and went much further within. Much of his life was spent in a God-intoxicated state, although he earned his living as a priest. Among his disciples was the well known Swami Vivekananda.

RAMANANDA (1340-1430) A great Hindu Saint and the guru of Kabir, Ravidas, Raja Pipa, etc., he was the disciple of Raghvananda, third in line from Ramanuja. One of his hymns is included in the *Granth Sahib*.

RAVIDAS A fifteenth century cobbler Saint and disciple of Ramananda. Like his brother disciple Kabir, he taught the Surat Shabd Yoga and the unity of all religions. Among his disciples was the Rajput princess Mira Bai, who became a great Saint and poet.

RISHI In Hinduism, an inspired poet or sage. Usually refers to the saints of ancient times to whom the Vedas were revealed.

RUHANI SATSANG Spiritual gathering; a congregation of Truth-seekers irrespective of religion, caste or race, sitting at the feet of a fully realized Saint. One such exists with headquarters at Sawan Ashram in Delhi.

RUMI, MAULANA JALAL-UD-DIN (1207-1273) Great Sufi Saint of Persia, author of the *Masnavi*, considered by many as the greatest spiritual poem ever written. He was a schoolteacher (*Maulvi*), but under the influence of his Master, Shamas Tabrez, he became a great spiritual guide (*Maulana*). Like other great Sufis, he taught the *Sultan-ul-Azkar* or the Yoga of the Sound Current.

SACH KHAND The Region of Truth; the fifth inner plane and fist purely spiritual one. Seat of the Positive Power, the Supreme Father, who at this stage is seen to be one with both the Guru and the individual soul. Not subject do decay or dissolution, it is the goal that Saints of the highest order set for their disciples, as it is not until this stage is attained that true liberation is achieved. Here the work of the Guru ends; God Himself takes the soul beyond this point.

SADH or SADHU A disciplined soul; one who has attained the third inner plane. Popularly used in India to mean wandering monk.

SADHAK One who practices spiritual discipline; an initiate on the first stages of the Path.

SADHNA Spiritual discipline or exercise.

SAHIB The Lord; the Supreme Being. Frequently used as a suffix added to the names of Saints as a mark of respect.

SAMADH Sanctuary for the preservation of the ashes of a great Saint.

SANT Saint; Master of the highest order. One who has reached the stage of Sach Khand, the fifth plane.

SANT MAT The Path of the Masters. The essence of all religions, it is attached to none and consists of the practice of Surat Shabd Yoga (q.v.) at the feet of a Saint.

SANT SATGURU A Saint of the highest order who is commissioned by God to lead others back to Him and to show them the Truth within their own selves.

SANT SEPAHI A soldier saint.

SAR BACHAN “Essential Utterance;” name of two books, one in poetry and one in prose, containing the teachings of Swami Ji of Agra.

SAT True; that which exists.

SAT DESH The purely spiritual regions. See *Sach Khand*.

SATGURU Master of Truth or True Master. See *Sant Satguru*.

SAT LOK The Region of Truth; the fifth inner plane. Another name for Sach Khand (q.v.).

SAT NAAM True Name; Expression of Existence. Given to the Primal Sound Current as it comes into Being at the stage of Sach Khand. Another name for Sat Purush.

SAT PURUSH The True Being; the first full expression of the Absolute God. Called also the Supreme Father or the Positive Power, He is the Lord of Sach Khand and is the highest form of God that can be called personal. Also known as Sat Naam.

SATSANG Contact or association with Truth, either directly (inner) or through the agency of some Saint who is a full expression of Truth (outer). Also refers to the congregation presided over by such a Saint or his representative.

SATSANGI One who comes in contact with Truth; a disciple of a perfect Master.

SAWAN SINGH, HAZUR BABA (1858-1948) Beloved disciple and successor of Baba Jaimal Singh. During his ministry the number of disciples increased fifty times (from 3,000 to 150,000) and the work expanded into Europe and America. He was succeeded by Maharaj Kirpal Singh Ji of Delhi.

SETH A form of address used for affluent persons.

SEWA or SEVA Service; a labor of love.

SHABD or SHABD DHUN The inner Sound Current that is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the entire Universe – spiritual, causal, astral, physical – and is the essence of each individual, who can hear its wonderful music for himself when shown how and given a contact with it by a Sant Satguru. The expression of God, it is also called *Naam*, Word, etc.

SHAMAS TABREZ A great Persian Saint, Master of Maulana Rumi.

SHIV DAYAL SINGH, SWAMI (1818-1878) Great Saint of Agra, popularly known as Swami Ji Maharaj, the guru of Baba Jaimal Singh. He revived the teachings of Kabir and Nanak and explained them to the general public in very simple language. He was initiated by Tulsi Sahib of Hathras at the age of six, and spent seventeen years in meditation in a dark, back room.

SIKH Literally, a disciple; same word as the Sanskrit *shishya* or *chela*. Has come to mean a religious sect which worships the memory of ten Great Masters (see *Sikh Gurus*) and is found mainly in the Punjab and northern India.

SIKH GURUS Ten Great Masters, who came in an unbroken line for two centuries and who are today worshiped by the Sikhs. They are Nanak, Angad, Amar Das, Ram Das, Arjan, Har Gobind, Har Rai, Har Krishan, Teg Bahadur, and Gobind Singh.

SIMRAN Constant remembrance; in a spiritual sense it refers to *japa* or repetition of God's names, a sadhan given by Saints to still the mind and clear it of the Simran of worldly impressions that it is already engaged in.

SOAMI The Absolute God; see *Anami*.

SOAMIBAGH A place in Agra where the sacred remains of Swami Ji Maharaj are enshrined in a magnificent marble structure.

SOHANG "I am as Thou art." The Lord of the fourth inner plane; used as a mantra by yogis and others.

SUFI A Muslim mystic. The highest Sufis were perfect Saints.

SULTAN-UL-AZKAR "The King of Prayers;" Muslim term for Surat Shabd Yoga.

SURAT Attention; expression of the soul; hearing faculty.

SURAT SHABD YOGA The union of the attention, or expression of the soul, with the Holy Word or expression of God; also called *Sehaj Yoga* or the natural way. It leads to full liberation without recourse to the control of pranas, and is the essence of all religions.

SWAMI JI Beloved Lord; a title denoting both affection and respect often given to holy men in India. In this book, it is used throughout for Shiv Dayal Singh (q.v.) of Agra, who was popularly addressed as such.

TEGH BAHADUR, GURU (1621-1675) The ninth Guru of the Sikhs, he was the son of the sixth Guru, Har Gobind, and the father of Guru Gobind Singh. He was beheaded by the Emperor Aurangzeb.

TISRA TIL The Third Eye, Single Eye, *Shiv Netra*, etc. The chakra or focus between and behind the eyebrows where the soul currents are gathered together as a prelude to withdrawal from the body and entry into higher planes.

TULSI SAHIB (1763-1843) Originally Sham Rao Peshwa, the elder brother of Baji Rao Peshwa, he gave up his throne for spirituality and settled in Hathras. He wrote the *Ghat Ramayana* (q.v.) and was the guru of Swami Ji Maharaj of Agra, to whom he passed his spiritual mantle. He should not be confused with Tulsidas, a much earlier Saint (sixteenth century) who wrote the *Ram Charitra Mansa* or Hindi Ramayana.

UND The astral plane; the first inner stage, a materio-spiritual region, subject to dissolution. This stage is the highest known to some yogic and occult schools; most of it is bypassed on the Path of the Masters.

VARNASHRAM *Varna* means caste, and *ashram* in this context means stage of life – *Brahmcharya* (student), *Grehastha* (householder), *Van-prastha* (spiritual aspirant and renunciate), and *Sanyasa* (perfected soul qualified to teach others) – as enjoined in the Hindu scriptures.

VARANATMAK Any name of God that can be written or spoken.

VEDA The holiest and most ancient of the Hindu scriptures. There are four of them (*Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama*, and *Atharva*) and they are each divided into four parts, of which the final and most spiritual consists of the Upanishads.

VEDANTA The philosophical system derived from “the end of the Vedas” – the Upanishads.

YOGA From the Sanskrit *yuj*, to join. The science of controlling the mind and senses and withdrawal of the consciousness from the body in order to unite with God. There are two basic ways of achieving this withdrawal: through control of the *pranas* (q.v.) or through control of the *surat* (attention). The former method was expounded by Patanjali in the fifth century B.C., and his presentation constitutes one of the six *darshanas* or philosophical systems of Hinduism. Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, etc., are all

based on *pranayam* or control of the pranas, and derive from Patanjali. The other method, that of controlling the attention and uniting it with the inner Sound, is a natural method open to householders as well as to ascetics, and is the one advocated by the Saints (see *Surat Shabd Yoga*). The word also refers to the psychological disciplines. (Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, etc.) explained in the Gita, which are a part of both of the above-mentioned systems. For a complete discussion of this subject, see *The Crown of Life* by Kirpal Singh (Delhi, 1971).

YOGI One who has mastered the technique and practice of any form of yoga, and can impart it to others. Often used for ascetics engaged full-time in the practice of yoga, regardless of the degree of mastery. Also sometimes used for those who have mastered Prana Yoga as distinguished from those who have mastered Surat Shabd Yoga (who are called Saints).

ZOROASTER Greek form of the Persian *Zarathustra* (660-583 B.C., approximately). The founder of Zoroastrianism, whose practitioners today are the Parsees of India. He taught the worship of the God of Light (symbolically represented by fire) and of the *Sraosha* (or Sound Current), the Creative Verbum. His teachings are included in the *Zend Avesta*, the Parsee scripture.

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