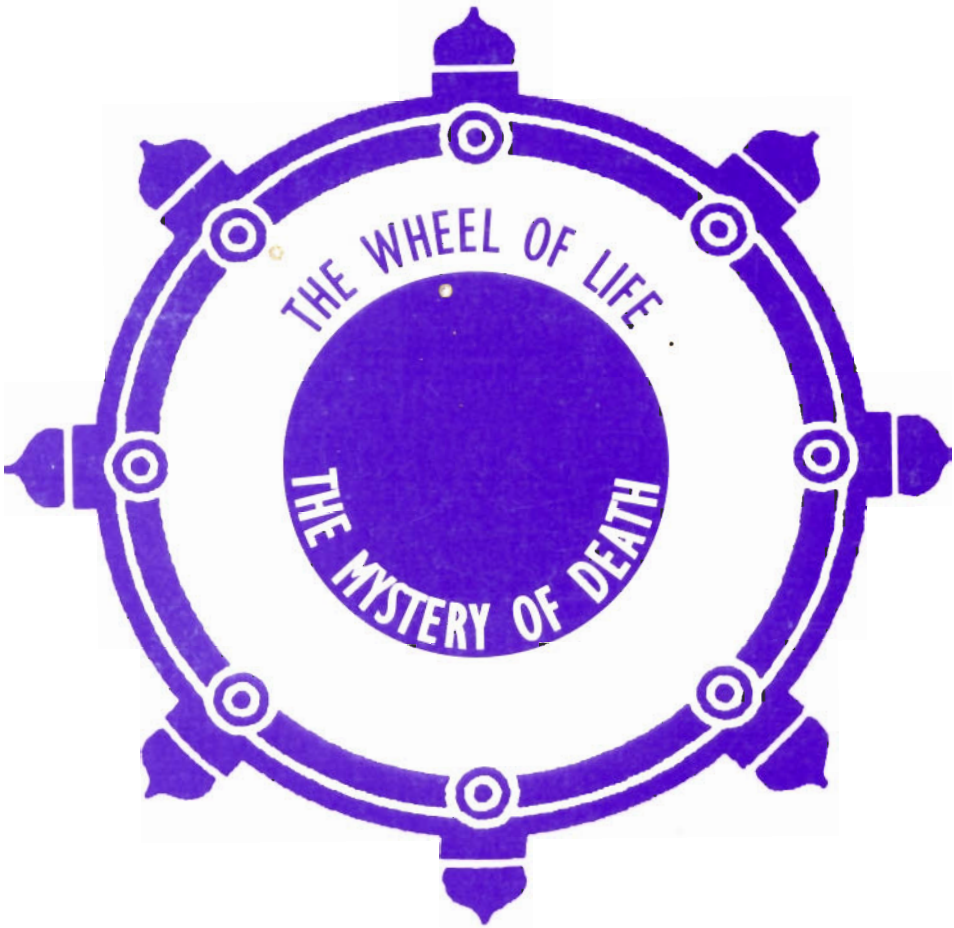


Two Books By

KIRPAL SINGH

THE WHEEL OF LIFE

&

THE MYSTERY OF DEATH

by

KIRPAL SINGH

Ruhani Satsang—Divine Science of the Soul
Anaheim, California
1994

The contents of this volume are photographed from previous editions and printed in the United States of America for Ruhani Satsang—Divine Science of the Soul, 2618 Skywood Place, Anaheim, California 92804, USA

Edition of 1994 printed by Print Graphics Pros, Irvine, CA

Introduction

Justice and Grace

a talk given by Sant Kirpal Singh Ji at
Kirpal Ashram, Calais, Vermont, October 12, 1963

THERE IS a law of justice, and there is a law of grace—both of them: they are both laws. It is just like, when you light a candle, the light is above and the darkness below. If you have a bulb, then the light is below and the darkness above. So both are the laws working in the world.

Sowing a seed—that's a point to be understood: when you sow a seed, it will bring forth similar seeds. There is action-reaction; then again a reaction; and the thing goes on like that. There's no end to it. After sowing the grain, a man cannot stop having the harvest—the fruit will come. So there are many actions. Actions are of one kind, but there are three aspects to them.

There are certain actions which we are doing now, daily—fresh actions; fresh seeds are sown, you might say. Some have already been sown and are bearing fruit. Others have been sown, but are not yet bearing forth fruit. So there are three kinds of karmas or actions.

Our present life depends on those reactions of the past karmas which are bearing fruit. They are called *pralabdha karma*. On that karma our length of life is based. According to that, some people get children, some die, some are ugly, some are old, some have a give-and-take. This is based on those karmas or seeds which have grown in the past and are now bearing forth fruit in action. This you cannot change. When a railroad line is laid down, the train will run over it.

Before you lay down any railroad line, it is up to you to lay it down this way or that way. But once it is laid down, the train will have to run over it. So, as I told you, some karmas are bearing fruit; some we are doing fresh; and others have not yet borne any fruit—that will come up in due course.

So we are independent within certain limits to do some actions, and we are also bound to some extent. Action, reaction, action, reaction goes on—there's no end to it.

When a Master meets someone, he does not touch the present reactions which are coming up; for our life is based on that. He lets it alone, he lets it go on. But he does two things: For the future, he lays down a line of conduct, beyond which we should not transcend: don't think evil of anybody, even in mind, not to speak of in word or in deed. Be truthful, even in mind. Don't think up anything wrong—acting and posing, scheming, polishing, doing something underground and then aboveboard doing something else.

And further: be chaste, even in mind, word and deed. And have love for all: because all men are alike; they have the same privileges that each one of us has. So love all, because God is in the hearts of all: whether they are rich or poor, whether they are learned or unlearned, they all have the same privileges from God that you have.

Also, do not hate others—even in mind, word or deed. And further, when you are to love God and love all humanity, then you must give selfless service, not selfish service: for love knows service and sacrifice. Selfish service will again cause a reaction to come. If you serve selflessly, for the sake of God in others, then that won't bear forth fruit.

As for the present actions which are having reactions, these are also softened down, or polished down, you might say, by the Master. How? By giving some Bread of Life to your soul, so that your soul becomes strong.

Suppose a fight is going on: one man is very weak, and

the others are strong. They come to blows and this and that thing. The one poor fellow who is very weak gets one blow and is stunned; he cries out, "I am killed!" And the others who are strong say, "We don't mind. We have had so many blows, but we don't care a fig for it." Why is this? Because they are strong.

Reactions do come up, but for those who have strong souls, who have the Bread of Life, they lose their pinching effect. For the future, Master lays down a line of conduct. For the present which is bearing fruit, he gives food to the soul so that it will become strong and there will not be any pinching effect. And for those which are not yet bearing forth fruit, he gives the disciple a contact with God within. By coming in contact with God within—when his inner eye is opened—he sees that He is the doer of all; that we are mere puppets in His hands. He becomes a conscious co-worker of the Divine Plan. The result is that there is no I-hood left. And all those actions which were sown in the past, and are still awaiting fruit, are burned away. Who is there to bear their fruit?

So this is the way in which you can escape from the reactions of the past. If you say, "Oh, I can do this and that"—with a little I-hood in it—so long as you are the doer, you have to bear the reactions of it. When no "doer" is left, then God is the doer. You are absolved.

There is a story given in the Koran, the scripture of the Mohammedans. There was once a saint who from his very childhood had left the world to reside in a jungle like this.* Here, fortunately, you find enough water, electricity and everything else; but there, there was nothing like that. For miles and miles around there was no water and nothing to eat.

So he used to pray to God, and God made some arrangement to take care of him. One small spring sprouted forth,

* I.e., Kirpal Ashram.

and from that, very sweet water was flowing; and he used to drink water from that.

And they say there was one pomegranate tree, and each day one pomegranate was borne by the tree. He used to eat that pomegranate and drink that water and pass his days.

It is said there that after long, long years—seventy or eighty years—he died. He was presented to the court of God. God looked at him: "All right, we forgive you as a matter of grace."

His eyes opened wide: "Well, all through life I've been killing myself doing this sort of penance and that sort of penance, and with all that, I'm now being forgiven as a matter of grace—as an act of grace only?" In his heart of hearts, he thought perhaps that a very great injustice was being done.

God read his mind and said, "Well, would you like us to make an account of your own actions?"

"Yes, You may, please." (At heart he wanted it.)

"All right, look here. In that jungle there was no water for miles and miles altogether. One spring was created there, only for you—specially for you. And there was a pomegranate tree; each day it bore one big pomegranate: no tree can bear forth one fruit daily. So that is in compensation for all you've done. Now let us account for your other actions: you were walking along the way, and some insect died—trampled down under your feet. You must be trampled down as you trample down. Further, you did this, and that . . ."

The saint thought that perhaps matters had gotten worse and said, "All right, please excuse me; forgive me, if You would like to."

Masters come, not to break the law, but to fulfill the law as a matter of redemption by grace; not as action-reaction. Guru Nanak says, "With actions, you can have reactions. As you sow, so shall you reap. But redemption comes only by grace." All Masters say so.

Of course, it does not mean we should be vicious. We should restrict ourselves according to the commandments the Masters have given us.

Another thing you might want to know about it is: a father has a child who does not obey him. He commits some offense —something like that. What would the father do? Would he send him to the police? I don't think so. No father would permit his son to be sent to the police. He might slap him once or twice, but he wouldn't send him to the police.

So, similarly, when you come to a Master—the God in him—you are all his children. He doesn't send you on the regular course, to bear the fruit of what you have sown. That's a concession. Otherwise, how long would you continue like that? First there's the seed, and then there's the tree; then there are many seeds and again a tree. Is the egg before the hen or the hen before the egg?—where's the end? So it's a matter of redemption by grace. It is something like that—so that you can understand it. Unless you become a conscious co-worker of the Divine Plan, there's no escape, no emancipation. "As you sow, so shall you reap": that goes on like that for aeons and aeons of time.

QUESTION: Do we have to work it all off on this physical plane—all the karma that we have—like the "B-type" of karma that we are working off in this life? What about the things that we are doing now or have done in this lifetime—what if we're not all finished up by the time we die?

THE MASTER: I think I have replied to you and you have not followed it. When you become a conscious co-worker of the Divine Plan, when you become selfless, who will bear whatever actions you have done? Furthermore, that is why all Masters say: "Be desireless." Master tries to wind up all your reactions of the past, just as I told you, by giving you strength—by giving the Bread of Life to your soul—so that the reactions which are coming up will not be pinching to

you. But he doesn't touch them. Otherwise, as soon as a man was initiated, he would die. For that reason they are not touched. For the future, he lays down a line of conduct. For the past, if you become selfless—a conscious co-worker—then nothing will come up. Guru Nanak says, "O Master, what is the use of coming to your feet if, when coming here, we still have to bear the fruit of all the actions which we have done in the past?" He gives an example: "What is the use of going to the feet of a lion if still jackals come and howl at you?"

So that is a great blessing. Now the question may arise: What is a Master? A Master is a man like you. Each one of us has the same privileges. The difference lies only in the fact that although God resides in every heart, in the heart of a Master He is now manifest.

Master is a conscious co-worker; that is, He is doing it; it is not he who is speaking, but the God in him Who is speaking. He becomes a mouthpiece of God. We can also become the mouthpiece of God. Every Saint has his past, and every sinner a future.

How has he become the mouthpiece of God? The man who has reached that stage can also give you the same thing. On the very first day, when he initiates you, he withdraws and drags your soul above body-consciousness and gives you a contact with the Light and Sound Principle of God. That is the way back to the ultimate, absolute God. When you become quite conscious of all that, you see that, "It is He that is doing it, not I." So when all reactions are finished, it is just like having a few grains of seeds, which have been roasted in the oven: even if you sow them, they won't bear forth fruit; they will not grow. It is something like that.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Wheel of Life: The Law of Action and Reaction 1

Appendix I: True Living 61

Ahar or Diet 64

Vihar or Social Conduct 72

Appendix II: Life of Self-Surrender 76

Glossary and Index of Foreign Terms and Names 83

Index 91

Everything in the Universe is the fruit of a Just Law, the Law of Causality, the Law of Cause and Effect, the Law of Karma.

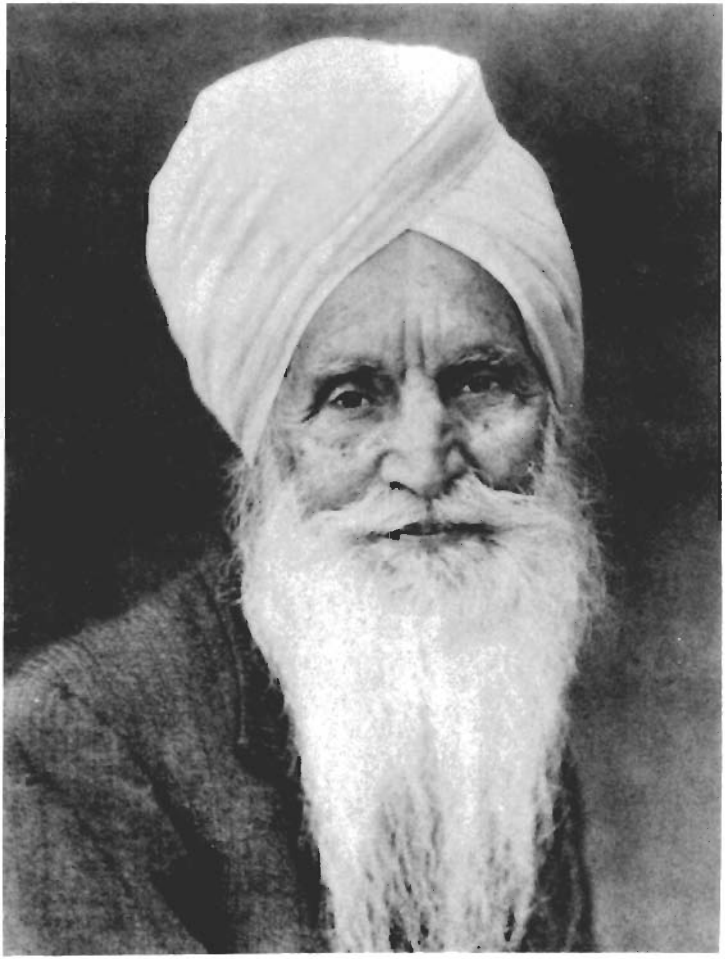
Gautama Buddha

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

THE WHEEL OF LIFE

The Law of Action and Reaction

KIRPAL SINGH



Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj
(1858-1948)

I

Be not deceived; God is not mocked:
for whatsoever a man soweth,
that shall he also reap.
Galatians VI : 7

CONFRONTED with the complexities of earth-bound life, man struggles for a Way-out. Wherever he turns, he finds his upward flight thwarted by unseen barriers. Why all the seeming inequalities in the world? Why is man's way blocked to his primal Home—the Home of his Heavenly Father? Why cannot man redeem his unknown past? Where should he turn for the saving Light of the "Pure Science of Being?" These queries lead the inquiring mind to an investigation of the universal law of action and reaction.

The term "Karma" frequently appears in various Indian philosophical and religious writings. Indeed, it has been so often bandied about by priests and preachers that many have come to consider it as an imaginary stumbling block in the path of spiritual salvation. Being a term foreign to the West, usually it is passed on without sufficient clarification. All the Masters of the lower reaches or grades of ascent, speak of liberation through performing action without attachment to and desire for the fruit or result thereof. This, however, is but a partial truth and half-way knowledge.

The mind is accustomed to taste the fruit of its actions. How will it give up this habit? *Sadhans* (i.e. mental and physical exercises) may be employed as instruments to discipline the mind to a certain extent. But in the long

run, the mind's habit of enjoying its experiences will assert itself. The mind can give up worldly pleasures only when it gets some kind of higher pleasure.

The Saints have experienced a far more exquisite pleasure—ecstatic bliss—by contact with *Naam* (the Word of God or the Divine Sound Principle). Once absorbed in this Sound Current or *Naam,* the mind is drawn away from the world. The mind has the habit of running after worldly objects and of jumping from one thing to another. What we have to do, then, is not to stop its flux which is but its natural characteristic, but only to turn its direction from downwards into the world outside to upwards into the world within. This means harnessing the wandering wits and channelling the mental energy into a proper course as would ensure results that are of a lasting and permanent nature. This comes through regular practice or absorption in *Naam.* This is the only method by which the mind may gradually be trained and ultimately rendered innocuous with sublimation of the mental currents; the soul comes to its own and can proceed unencumbered and unhampered on its way to its original source: the Oversoul or the All-soul. Thus the Saints Who have Themselves trodden this Path—the Path of *Surat Shabd Yoga* (absorption in the Holy Word or the Sacred Sound)—can also not only enable us to free ourselves from the Karmic cycle of action and reaction but also provide us an access into the Kingdom of God which lies within.

Now the question arises: How can the Karmas be wound up or rendered ineffective? In the labyrinth of the laws of Nature, in which we are inextricably involved, there is an outlet provided for those who are really in search of Self-knowledge and God-knowledge. The access to this outlet or the Way-out of the dense jungle of Kar-

mas spreading far back to immemorial past is made manifest by the saving grace of the True Master. Once He has taken us in His fold and contacted us with the eternal Holy Word or the Sound-Current, we are put out of the reach of *Yama* or the angel of death representing the negative aspect of the Supreme Power and the dispenser of justice in the universe, to each according to his actions.

Every act of a living being done knowingly or unknowingly, irrespective of whether it is yet in the stage of latency or thought form, a mental vibration, or is uttered by words of mouth or is actually done by a physical act, constitutes Karma.

Lest the reader get confused by the term "Karma," it is better to understand this word in its proper context. Originally, the word *Karma* stood for and represented sacrificial rites and rituals, and *yajnas* performed by individuals as prescribed by the sacred texts. Later on, however, it came to include all kinds of virtues, social and self-purifying, like truthfulness, purity, abstinence, continence, *ahimsa,* universal love, selfless service and all deeds of a charitable and philanthropic nature. In short, great stress was laid on the cultivation of *Atam-gunas* which tended to discipline the mind and divert the mental powers in the right direction, so as to serve the higher purpose of liberating *atman* or the spirit in bondage.

Karmas are generally classified as prohibited, permitted and prescribed. All Karmas that are degrading and derogatory in nature (*Nashedh*) are classed as prohibited because indulgence in vices is sinful and the wages of sin are death. These are termed *Kukarmas* or *Vikarmas.* Next come Karmas that are upgrading and help a person in attaining higher planes like *Swarag, Baikunth, Bahisht* or paradise. These are *Sukama* Karmas or *Sukarmas,* that is Karmas performed for fulfilment of one's benevolent de-

sires and aspirations and as such are permissible and therefore permitted. Finally, we have Karmas the performance of which is considered obligatory as enjoined by the scriptures for persons belonging to different *varns* or social orders (*Brahmans* or the priestly class engaged in the study and teaching of scriptures, *Kshatriyas* or the warrior race consisting of fighting forces for purposes of defense, *Vaishyas* or the people engaged in commercial or agricultural pursuits, and *Sudras* or the people serving the foregoing three classes); and at different stages in one's life called *Ashrams* (*Brahmcharya, Grehastha, Vanprastha* and *Sanyas* corresponding roughly to the formative period of one's education, the stage of married family life as a house-holder, the ascetic stage of a recluse or a hermit engaged in deep meditation in the solitude of a forest and lastly the stage of a spiritual pilgrim giving to the people the fruit of his life-long experience, each portion being of 25 years computing the life-span to be of 100 years duration). These are called *Netya* Karmas or Karmas the performance of which is a "must" for each from day to day in his vocation and period of life.

As a code of moral conduct, the law of Karma makes valuable contributions to man's material and moral well-being on earth and paves the way to a better life in the future. In all the four spheres of human life—secular, material or economic, religious, and spiritual, as denoted by the terms *Kama* (fulfilment of one's desires); *Artha* (economic and material well-being); *Dharma* (moral and religious basis upholding and supporting the Universe); and *Moksha* (salvation)—deeds or Karmas play a vital part. It is, of course, the moral purity that figures as a motivating force for attaining success in one's endeavours. In order that the Karmas bear the desired fruit, it is nec-

essary that they be performed with single-minded and purposeful attention and loving devotion.

Besides these, there is yet another form of Karma—to wit, *Nish-Kama Karma,* that is, Karma performed without any attachment to, or desire for, the fruit thereof. This is superior to all the other forms of Karmas which more or less are the source of bondage, yet this type helps a little to liberate one from Karmic bondage but not from Karmic effect. It may, however, be noted that Karma *per se* has no binding effect whatsoever. It is only Karma born of desire or *Kama* that leads to bondage. This is why Moses taught "Desire not" and Buddha and the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, time and again, laid emphasis on the need for desirelessness. Karma thus is at once the means and the end of all human endeavours. It is through Karmas that one conquers Karmas and transcends Karmas. Any attempt to overstep the Law of Karma is as futile as to step over one's shadow. The highest of all is to be *Neh-Karma* or *Karma-rehat,* that is to say, doing Karma in accordance with the Divine plan, as a conscious co-worker with the power of God. This is being actionless in action like a still point in the ever-revolving wheel of life.

Again, the term "Karma" may be distinguished from the word *Karam.* "Karma" is a Sanskrit term meaning action or deed, including mental vibrations and words of mouth, while *Karam* is a Persian word meaning kindness, mercy, compassion or grace.

Now as to the nature of Karma: according to Jain philosophy, Karma is of the nature of matter, both physical and psychical, one related to the other as Cause and Effect. Matter in a subtle and psychical form pervades the entire cosmos. It penetrates the soul because of its interplay with the matter without. In this way, a *jiva*

builds for itself a nest as does a bird, and gets fettered by what is called *Karman-Srira* or the subtle body and remains bound therein till the empirical self is depersonalized and becomes a pure soul irradiant with its native luminosity.

The *Karman-Srira* or the Karmic shell, enclosing the soul, consists of eight *prakritis* corresponding to the eight types of Karmic atoms producing different types of effects. These are of two types: (1) Karmas that obscure the correct vision, as for instance (i) *Darsan-avarna,* hindering right perception or apprehension in general; (ii) *Janan-avarna,* those which obscure right understanding or comprehension; (iii) *Vedaniya,* those which obscure the inherent blissful nature of the soul and thus bring about pleasurable or painful feelings; and (iv) *Mohaniya,* Karmas which obscure right belief, right faith and right conduct. All these Karmas work as smoke-coloured glasses through which we see the world and all that is of the world. Life has poetically been described as "a dome of many-colored glass" that "stains the white radiance of Eternity."

(2) Then there are Karmas which go to make a person what he is, for they determine (i) bodily physique, (ii) age and longevity, (iii) social status, and (iv) spiritual make-up. Each of these types is known as *Naman, Ayus, Gotra* and *Antraya* respectively.

In addition there are divisions and sub-divisions under these, running into hundreds of ramifications.

The Karmic particles spreading in space, are willy nilly attracted by each soul according to the pressure of the activity indulged in. This constant influx of Karma can be checked by freeing the self of all types of activity of the body, mind and senses and stabilizing it at its own center; while the accumulated Karmas may be curtailed by

fasting, *tapas, saudhyaya, vairagya, prashchit, dhyan* and the like: that is to say, austerities, reading of scriptural texts, detachment, repentance and meditation etc.

Buddha too laid a great stress on constant endeavor and struggle with a view to ultimate victory over the law of Karma. The present may be determined by the past; the future is our own, depending on the directive will of each individual. Time is one endless continuity—past irresistibly leading to the present and the present to the future as one may like it to be. Karma ceases to affect only with the attainment of the highest condition of mind which is beyond both good and evil. With the realization of this ideal all struggle comes to an end, for then whatever the liberated one does, he does without attachment. The ever-rotating Wheel of Life gets its momentum from the Karmic energy and when that energy itself is exhausted, the giant Wheel of Life comes to a stand-still, for then one reaches to the intersection of time and the timeless, a point which is always in action and yet *still* at the core. Karma provides a key to the life processes; and one's consciousness travels from stage to stage until one becomes a really awakened being or Buddha (the enlightened one or the seer of the Holy Light). To Buddha, the universe, far from a mere mechanism, was a *Dharma-Kaya* or body pulsating with *Dharma* or life-principle, serving at once as its main support.

In brief, the Law of Karma is Nature's stubborn and inexorable law from which there is no escape and to which there is no exception. As you sow, so shall you reap, is an ancient axiomatic truth. It is the general rule for earth-life. It also extends to some of the upper physio-spiritual regions, according to the order of density and peculiarity of each. Karma is a supreme principle superior both to gods and men for the former too, sooner or later,

come also under its sway. The various gods and goddesses in different realms of Nature take a much longer time to serve in their respective heavenly spheres than human beings, but all the same they have ultimately to reincarnate in flesh before they can aspire to, and win, final emancipation from the Karmic round of births.

All works, acts or deeds form a vital device in the Divine plan to keep the entire universe in perfect running order. No one can remain without some kind of work (mental or physical activity) even for a single moment. One is always thinking or doing one thing or another. One cannot by nature be mentally vacant or idle, nor can one stop the senses from their automatic functioning: eyes cannot but see and the ears but hear; and the worst is that one cannot, like Penelope, undo what is once done. Repentance though good in itself, cannot cure the past. Whatever one thinks, speaks or acts, good or bad, leaves a deep impression upon the mind and these accumulated impressions go to make or mar an individual. As a man thinks, so he becomes. It is from the abundance of the mind that the tongue speaketh. Every action has a reaction, for that is Nature's law of Cause and Effect. One has, therefore, to bear the fruit of his actions: sweet or bitter, as the case may be, whether one may like it or not.

Is there no remedy then? Is man a mere plaything of fate or destiny who works his way in a purely pre-determined order? There are two sides of the matter. One has, to a certain extent, a free will, wherewith one, if he so chooses, can direct his course and make or mar his future and to a great extent even mould the living present to his own advantage. Armed with the living soul in him of the same essence as his Creator, he is mightier than Karma. The infinite in him can help him to transcend the limitations of the finite. The freedom to act and the Kar-

mic bondage are but two aspects of the real in him. It is only the mechanical and the material part in him that is subject to Karmic restraint, while the real and vital spirit in him transcends all and is hardly affected by the Karmic load, if established in his native God-head. How to get established in one's own real *saroop,* the *Atman?* This is what we have perforce to learn if we aspire for a way out of the endless Karmic web.

The trouble with most of us is that we do not give thought to our actions. We, at every step, heedlessly go on collecting the load of Karmic particles without realizing that there is a power within that keeps a count of all we think, say or do. Thomas Carlyle, a famous thinker, says: "Fool, thinkest thou that because no Boswell is there to note thy jargon, it therefore dies and is buried? Nothing dies, nothing can die. The idlest word thou speakest is a seed cast into time, which brings fruit to all eternity." Similary, Aeschylus, the father of Greek drama in the pre-Christian era, tells us:

Deep in the nether sky,
Death rules the ways of man,
With stern and strong control;
And there is none who can,
By any force or act,
Elude Death's watchful eye
Or his recording heart.

From *The Eumenides*

II

KARMAS have been classified by Saints into three distinct categories:

(i) *Sanchit* or the gathered and stored Karmas, going far back into incarnations running into the unknown past.
(ii) *Pralabdha:* Luck, fate or destiny, or that portion out of the *Sanchit* (store-house) which constitutes a person's living present, which none can escape howsoever one may wish and try.
(iii) *Kriyaman:* The Karmas which one is free to perform as a free agent in his present earthly span or existence, and thereby make or mar his future.

(i) *Sanchit* (the stored deeds): Good or bad deeds that stand to man's credit as earned in all the previous existences in the order of creation, counting from the day of the first appearance of life on earth. Man knows nothing about them, or of their extent and their great potential power. King Dharitrashtra, the blind progenitor of the *Kshatriya* princes, the *Kurvas* of the Epic Age, when endowed by Lord Krishna with his yogic power, was able to trace the cause of his blindness to an act done in the unknown past, extending back to over 100 incarnations or embodiments. In Chapter 20:5 of the Book of Exodus, Moses, while giving the Ten Commandments of God, speaks of God as having commanded: "I the Lord thy God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation . . ." Even the medical science today affirms the

significant part that heredity plays and traces the origin of certain diseases coming down from progenitors and appearing in succeeding generations. So does modern psychology connect problematic behaviors in certain individuals with mental peculiarities in their parents and ancestors.

(ii) *Pralabdha:* These are just that part of the Sanchit Karmas which constitute a person's fate, destiny or luck; which determines one's present existence on earth. A person has no control over them. The effect of these, good or ill, has be tolerated, as best one may—with smiles or with tears. The present life is just an unfoldment or revelation of the predestined Karmas with which one comes fully loaded into the world. It is, however, possible that one may so mould and develop his inner self, through the guidance of some Master-Soul, that he may not feel their bitter and poignant sting, just as the kernel in a ripe almond or walnut does not feel the prick of a needle by getting detached from the shell without, which as a consequence gets shrivelled and hardened, and serves henceforth as a protecting armor.

In this way, each one of us, willingly or unwillingly, wittingly or unwittingly, is forging chains for himself, no matter whether the same be of gold or of iron. Still chains are chains and they are equally efficacious in their application; to wit, to keep a person in perpetual bondage. Like a poor silk-worm imprisoned in its own cocoon or like a spider caught in its own web, or a bird in its nest, one remains bound in hoops of steel of his own making, with no way of escape therefrom. Thus the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth is ceaselessly set in motion. It is only when one transcends the body-consciousness and becomes *Neh-Karma,* i.e. actionless in action like the still

point at the centre of the ever-revolving wheel of life, that a stop is put to the motion of the Giant Wheel of Karmas; for then one becomes a conscious co-worker of the Divine Plan. This is why Buddha, the prince among ascetics, emphatically said: "Be ye desireless" for desires are the root-cause of human sufferings as they motivate actions, right from subtle vibrations in the sub-conscious, to mental thinking in the conscious, leading to the vast and limitless harvest of variegated deeds of different hues and forms, springing from the imbalance of the mind. The spirit, sitting in the chariot of the body is thus driven blindly and head-long into the fields of sensual pleasures by the five powerful steeds of the senses, uncontrolled by the power-intoxicated charioteer of the mind (helplessly imbalanced as it is) with the reins of intellect dangling loosely about him. *Self-discipline* then is of prime importance and chastity in thought, word and deed, is the essential requisite that helps a person on the path of self-knowledge and God-knowledge, for ethical life is a stepping-stone to spirituality.

(iii) *Kriyaman:* It is the current account of one's willful actions and deeds in the present existence. This type of Karma is quite distinct from the other two. In spite of the limitations imposed by *Pralabdh* or unchangeable destiny, each one is gifted with a free will and is free to sow what seeds he may. Endowed with the gift of discriminative faculty peculiar to his constitution alone, he can judge for himself what is right and what is wrong and as such it would be vainly presumptuous on his part if he were to expect a bed of roses when he sows thorns and thistles. It is up to him to make or mar his future, as he may. A Master-soul can give him a correct lead by putting before him the true values of life—life which is more than the

bodily raiment and all that is connected therewith: the sense-dominated existence. Under His guidance, one develops an easy detachment from the world and worldly affairs and once the magic spell is broken, the blinkers fall off and the stark reality stares him squarely in the face, providing him with an opportunity to escape unscathed. Ordinarily, however, some of the *Kriyaman* Karmas bear fruit in this very life; while others—the unfructified ones—are transferred to the General Account of the *Sanchit* Karmas, which go on accumulating from age to age. Thus, it is given to each one to think ahead of time, and weigh well the consequences of the acts and deeds intended before taking an irretrievable step—a leap in the dark and a head-long plunge in a fit of impetuosity which is regretted for ever and cannot be undone by blaming the stars for their supposed malignant influence. A railway engineer, for instance, is to plan beforehand the railway track, for once the lines are laid the train is to run on blindly. A little error in laying the lines, a loose fish-plate or a wrong angle may lead to calamitous results. Even when everything is done properly, one has to keep a constant and strict watch, day and night, lest anything get out of joint or the track is otherwise tampered with by hostile elements.

According to Nature's law of life, a man (the embodied or incarnate soul) is like a precious jewel clothed in three caskets or bodies—the physical, the astral or mental, and the causal or the seed-body—all of which, more or less, partake of the terrestrial character, with varying degrees of density.

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial:

> but the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another.
>
> I Cor 15 : 40

These are like outer robes of coat, vest under it, and then shirt. When a man casts off the physical body, his spirit still is wearing the astral or the mental body. He has also the causal or the ethereal seed body or thin veil under the astral raiment. Until one is able to cast off the physical body, he cannot reach the first heaven, the astral kingdom within:

> Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption . . .
>
> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
>
> So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.
>
> O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
>
> I Cor 15 : 50, 53-55

This casting off or change may occur either through the final dissolution, the disintegrating process commonly known as death, or be brought about by the method of voluntary withdrawal of the sensory currents from the body technically known as "rising above body consciousness" by a process of inversion and self-analysis. The Gospels refer to this withdrawal as "to be born anew" or "resurrection." The Hindu scriptures speak of it as "twice-

born" or *do-janma.* It is a birth of the spirit as distinct from that of the water—the latter being from "seed corruptible" as distinguished from the former, "seed incorruptible," unchangeable and abiding (of the spirit). The Muslim *darveshs* (mystics) call this death-in-life as death before death. One can learn how to withdraw not only from one's physical body but from the other two bodies (the astral and the causal) as well, through the kindly assistance of a Master-Saint, Who has Himself transcended into the beyond and can help others to do likewise. One has, therefore, to "forsake the flesh for the spirit" if one is anxious to escape from the perpetual wheel of life on this sublunary planet (earth).

In the ordinary natural course of things, the *jiva* (the embodied soul or the incarnate spirit) has, after physical death, no option but in time to return to the physical plane in some physical form, the nature of which is determined by his life-long propensities and inclinations, the intensity of his longings and long-cherished unfulfilled desires enshrined in his mental make-up and predominantly uppermost at the time of death, the over-bearing influence of which irresistibly shapes a course for him.

> So kind and generous is the Father Divine,
> He grants unto His children what they desire.

But, if one, under the guidance of a perfect Master (*Sant-Satguru*) learns the practical process of self-analysis, i.e. self-withdrawal from the physical body at will, and develops it by a regular practice, he, while living, gets an experience of the Beyond (Death-in-life), with the result that gradually the age-old scales of his make-believe begin to fall away from his eyes and the world and worldly things lose their hypnotic charm, and he,

while seeing things in their true colors, and understanding the intrinsic worth of each, grows desireless and free —a master of himself, a liberated soul (*jivan mukat*) and thereafter continues to live on just to complete his allotted span of life without attachment. This is called a new birth (or the second advent of the soul)—life eternal. But how can one attain it? Christ tells us:

> He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.
> He that findeth his life shall lose it:
> And he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.
> Matthew 10 : 38-39

In the Gospel of Luke, we have:

> And he (Jesus) said to them all: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.
> Luke 9 : 23

> And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.
> Luke 14 : 27

Thus we see that *death*-in-Christ is the way to *live* with Christ eternally. Learn to die so that you may begin to live, is the exordium of all the saints. Among the Muslims, this is known as *fana-fi-sheikh* or self-effacement in the *Murshid* or the Master. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that one should first seek a living Master competent enough to wind up once for all the otherwise endless cycle of Karmas and then seek refuge at His Holy Feet and thereby free oneself from the baneful influence of one's deeds which continue to haunt a person in the form of eumenides and furies.

Of the power of the *Jagat-guru,* it is said:

A *Jagat-guru* can annihilate Karmas by his look and Word,

In his presence, the Karmas fly like autumn leaves before a wind.

Again, we have in the scripture:

Great is the power of the retributive angel, and none can escape its fury,

But it doth fly in fear of death, before the sounding blast of the Word.

Now as to the working of the Karmic Law, the following example may help us to understand the position more explicitly.

Take two kinds of grape-seeds—yellow and brown. Suppose yellow seeds represent good deeds and brown seeds represent bad deeds. A room is full to the roof in which heaps of both kinds of seeds are lying. This forms man's storehouse of *Sanchit* Karmas.

Now there is a person "A" (physical body plus mind plus soul) who has long cherished a desire during his lifetime to become a king. He falls ill and his unfulfilled desire to be a king all the time remains uppermost in his mind. He, in due course, is compelled by nature to surrender his physical body, but according to the Law of life after death he is still clothed in the astral (mental) and causal (ethereal) bodies. He now functions as a disembodied or disincarnate spirit in his other raiment, the mind-stuff both astral and causal. Since mind is the storehouse of all impressions, "A" still remembers his desire to be a king. "A," now a disembodied spirit (*jiva*), disrobed

of the physical body, is faced with a difficulty. He cannot function as a king until, once again, he puts on a physical vesture as may enable him to be a king, at one stage or another in his earthly career. Propelled by the unerring motor-power behind all activity, his mind-stuff, he is led on to pick up some of the unfructified Karmas, sufficient enough to bring about a new set of circumstances as may help him to have the long cherished and deeply engraved desire fulfilled.

The great motor power referred to above has two aspects: positive as well as negative; the former leading to the journey homeward and the latter controlling and guiding life on the earth-plane. Nature, or the negative aspect of the Power that is One, is concerned solely with the administration of life as it exists on the physical planet; its chief function being to keep the world going, fully peopled, and people engaged in various pursuits of life, according to the earned merit in each case, called in common parlance as *Pralabdha* which fashions the earthly life for each individual with an absolute precision and an unfailing art.

To the extent described above, one is in a sort of "closed trap" and cannot but unfold what comes with him in a folded state. It is a revelation of the unrevealed past in the seed or the essence lying dormant at the back of the essential mind-stuff and is projected on the canvas of life with its multifarious patterns and diverse colors, taking on different lines, as life emerges out of the pristine unalloyed and eternal radiance of which we generally lose sight as we get absorbed in the "dome of many-coloured glass" that encloses us and presses us from all sides with the passage of time. Dame Nature now takes charge of her foster-child and lavishes in plenitude all her gifts, so much so that unknowingly one enjoys in full-

ness and to surfeit that for which he hankered in the past. Dazzled by the glamour of the gifts, one forgets the Great Benefactor, the Bestower of the Gifts, and is inextricably caught in the meshes of death.

This is but one part of the life that "A" leads, as a predestined game. Along with this, there is yet another, a very vital counterpart depending on the freedom of action and volitional independence that is given to each. It is in correctly understanding the higher values of life and making the most of the opportunities given to him that his salvation lies, right here and now. Paradoxically then, man is not only a creature of his destiny (past), but a creator of his destiny (future) as well. What we bring, must come to pass; and what we do now shall shape the things to come. Wisdom, therefore, lies in making the choice. The mindpower is a single entity and if harnessed correctly, can, like an obedient servant, render a good account of itself; but if allowed to over-power the life-giving spirit, it proves a treacherous parasite that saps the vitality and shrivels up the host-plant on which it thrives and from which it derives its very life and sustenance. Thus, one must pay all his attention to proper sowing and cultivating, while playing his destined part in the human drama, on the stage of life, in the light of the eternal radiance that shines through thick and thin, whether we know it or not. The Supreme Will is already wrought in the pattern of our being, for without it there can be no existence; and in knowing that Will and by working in unison with that Will, one can escape from the Wheel of Life. Guru Nanak in *Jap Ji* speaks of it thus:

> How may one know the Truth and break through the cloud of falsehood?

There is a Way, O Nanak, to make His Will our own,
His Will which is already wrought in our existence.

We thus see that Karmas and desires are responsible for the interminable cycle of births and re-births. How then can one end this ceaseless cycle? There are only two ways to exhaust or finish up the vast and limitless storehouse of Karmas—the impenetrable granite wall between a person and the High One, with the blindingly thick veil of the ignorant mind ever covering the eyes. The two ways to solve this ever-eluding and baffling problem are:

(a) To leave it to Nature to exhaust the storehouse in due course of time, should that be at all possible.
(b) To obtain from a Master-soul a practical knowledge and experience of the Science of Life, on the earthly as well as the spiritual planes, and to work right now for transcension from one to the other, while there is still a chance and an opportunity.

The first course is not only endlessly long but tortuous in the extreme, tricky at every step and full of dangers and pitfalls. It will take myriads of ages to reach the goal if one is fortunate enough to do so. Besides, Nature by herself hardly helps one to disentangle himself from the inexorable Karmic Order, for that spells self-extinction for her and her brood.

Human birth is a rare privilege indeed and this privilege one gets after passing through a long evolutionary process in creation extending through innumerable forms or embodiments that the Life Principle takes on the physical plane. Once this golden opportunity is lost, the *jiva* or the embodied spirit has to continue on the Wheel of Life, according to the usually predominant world traits

during his life-time and particularly those which forcefully project themselves at the time of his passing away from this world, the law being: "Where the mind is, there the spirit goes irresistibly." This being the case, it is wellnigh impossible for an average embodied spirit to get over the sensory plane and keep the mind stilled and self-absorbed by his own unguided and unaided efforts, howsoever herculean they may be. It is only some God-man or Master-power that may, in compassion, help a jiva in regaining the lost kingdom—the realm spiritual —from which each one has been driven out by his disobedience to the behests of God. This course then is fraught with untold dangers, lurking at every step, even in the very nature of each individual; and hence no sane person will ever think of attempting to tread the lonesome and weary path, which more often than not leads into a cul-de-sac or blind alley.

By adopting the second course, one seeks a competent spiritual Master who wields influence over all the subordinate powers in this and higher planes of existence. He can wind up the Karmic accounts of the bankrupt spirit. The moment He accepts an individual as His Own, He takes in His own Hand the process of liquidating the endless process of Karma coming down from the unknown past. He calls a halt to the mad and reckless career in which one is engaged. "So far and no further" is His command, and then He puts an individual on the High-road Godward. He does not usually interfere with the *Pralabdh* or destiny, for it has of necessity to be worked off as well as possible, so as to complete the allotted span of life and to reap the fruit; while the *Sanchit* or the vast storehouse, He, by being a conscious co-worker with the Divine Plan, singes by contacting the spirit with the spark of *Naam*. Contact with *Naam* or the Holy Word at once

reduces to ashes the storehouse of *Sanchit* Karmas as well as the unfructified *Kriyaman* Karmas done hitherto, just as a spark of fire reduces to ashes the entire forest or the heap of fuel that may be lying on the ground. Guru Nanak beautifully tells us in *Pauri* XX of *Jap Ji,* the morning prayer of the Sikhs:

When the hands, feet and the body are besmeared (with dust), they are washed clean with water;

When the clothes get dirty and polluted, they are cleansed by soap;

When one's mind gets defiled by sin, it can be purified only by communion with the Word;

Men do not become saints and sinners merely by words,

But they carry deeds with them wherever they go.

As one sows, so does one reap;

O Nanak, men come and go by the wheel of birth and death as ordained by His Will.

It is now clear that mind is the main magnet that attracts Karmas with all their concomitants. Mind maintains a mighty sway over man. It utilizes our *surat* (attention, the outward expression of the soul within) as its means, which is the most precious of man's inherited faculties—the priceless jewel of immense virtue.

The Master-Saints come into the world with a divine purpose and a mission. They are commissioned from above to liberate man from the Karmic bondage. When one is fortunate to find such a Holy Man and surrenders himself to His will, the latter takes charge of the spirit.

His first and foremost task is to break the magic spell of the Karmic tentacles that hold one in their deadly grasp. He advises each one to lead a well-regulated and highly disciplined ethical life, so as to escape from contracting any more evil influences or Karmic impressions. He tells us that all the bounties of Nature, including sense-objects, are for a legitimate and fair use only and not for indulgence and enjoyment. All our troubles arise from the fact that we ravenously indulge sense pleasures to surfeit with the result that instead of our enjoying the worldly pleasures, the pleasures enjoy us to the full and leave us a total wreck, physically and mentally. We forget that true happiness is an attitude of the mind and springs from within, when we consciously awaken the Life-Current (the Holy Word) lying dormant and feed our "self" on the "Life principle" immanent in all things, visible and invisible, the sole motor-force creating and sustaining the entire universe. The past, the present and the future, the God-man holds in His mighty grasp; and like a compassionate father, guides His children in the Path of righteousness and rectitude, leading gradually to Self-knowledge and God-knowledge and attaining in the end the prize of God-head. Just as a child does not know what his father provides for him, from time to time, so does a neophyte not know what his Heavenly Father does for him. It is by following in His ways that one may gradually learn the esoteric mysteries as these unfold themselves to him at each step.

> Poor soul in this, the flesh, what dost thou know?
> Thou art too narrow, wretch, to comprehend even thy self.
>
> J. Donne

III

THE way in which the Master tackles the intricate and baffling problem of Karmas, may briefly be stated as under:

Sanchit or the seed Karmas: These are latencies lying in the store-house to one's account from endless ages, ever since the world began. No one escapes from them unless the same are worked off (without making any more addition thereto, which of course in the nature of things, is an impossibility), in innumerable lives that lie ahead. It is, therefore, not possible to exhaust this tremendous credit balance in one's account. Is there then no way to cross over the great chasm that lies between the conscious and the sub-conscious and again the gulf that separates the sub-conscious from the unconscious? Every wrong has a remedy; it may be a spiritual or a secular wrong. If one fries seed-grains in a pan so that they get puffed up, they lose their fecundity or power of fructification, that is to say the power to germinate and to bear fruit. Exactly in the same way, the *Sanchit* Karmas can be seared and scorched with the fire of *Naam* or Word and rendered harmless for the future, for then one becomes a conscious co-worker with the Divine Plan losing all contact with the unknown past.

Pralabdh Karmas: These constitute one's present fate, his stock-in-trade or destiny as it is called. The fruit of these has got to be borne, no matter how bitter or sweet, for one cannot avoid reaping the harvest already sown. The Master, therefore, leaves them untouched for man to endure with loving sweetness and to finish up during his present lifetime. If these Karmas were to be wiped out

or tampered with in any way, the body itself would dissolve. In grappling with these, a disciple is, however, not left alone. As soon as the Master initiates, the Master-power takes charge of the disciple. He is helped a good deal at every step. By gradual spiritual discipline, he learns the process of self-analysis and withdrawal and grows strong in spirit with the result that the otherwise painful effect of these Karmas just blows over as a gentle breeze, leaving him unscathed. Even in serious and incurable cases, the Master-power brings into operation His Laws of Sympathy and Mercy. All the troubles of the devoted disciples are greatly mitigated and softened. Sometimes the intensity of bodily and mental troubles is increased a little to shorten the duration of the suffering involved, while at others the intensity is greatly reduced and the duration is prolonged as may be considered appropriate. But this is not all. The sufferings, troubles and diseases of the physical body accrue from sense-pleasures. Bodily troubles are, of course, to be borne by the physical body. The Master, as Word-personified or Polarized God, knows all about disciples, wherever they may be, either at a distance or near at hand. He may even take over by the law of sympathy the burden of the Karmas of His devoted disciples on His own shoulders to bear Himself, for the Law of Nature has got to be compensated in one form or another. This happens in very rare cases as the Master may think fit. Besides, no disciple would like to adopt a course, in which the Holy Master should suffer for his wrongs. On the contrary, a disciple must learn to pray to his Master sincerely and if he does so, all feasible help is sure to come to relieve him or to soften the situation and to minimize the resultant suffering; the soul itself becoming strong by feeding on the bread of life and by drawing sustenance from the water of life.

There are, however, things over which a man has no appreciable control: (i) the sweets and bitters of life with comforts and discomforts, physical as well as mental; (ii) riches, opulence and power or destitution, penury and abjectness; (iii) name and fame or notoriety and downright oblivion. All these are the usual adjuncts of life on earth and come and go as predestined. All human endeavours are directed to gaining one or more of the sweets of life and in avoiding what is bitter, without realizing that life itself is as evanescent as a cloud, a shadow without a substance, a mere mirage and will-o'-the-wisp; ever flitting and eluding the unwary pilgrim on the scorching desert-sands of time. The Master-Saints by precept and practice bring home to the *jiva* the illusory nature of the world and all that is worldly, and manifest in him the perennial fountain of life; finding which one gets saturated to the very marrow of his bones and the fibres of his being and becomes fully satisfied, able to sing away life itself.

Kriyaman Karmas: These are the Karmas that we daily do during our present sojourn on the earth-plane. In this respect, every disciple is enjoined to lead a strictly chaste and pure life hereafter in thoughts, words and deeds and to abstain from all that is evil, for any violation or disregard in this behalf is bound to bring trouble in its wake and the price of sin is nothing short of death, death at the very roots of life.

The question here arises as to how Master-Saints take over some of the burden of Karmas of the *jivas* under special or rare circumstances and manage to rid them of the unpalatable effect. The Karmas connected with the physical body, as said above, are to be borne on the physical body.

God cloth'd Himself in vile man's flesh, that so
He might be weak enough to suffer woe.

J. Donne

We have in history an incident that occurred in the life-story of Baber, the first *Mughal* king in India. His son Humayun fell seriously ill and every one despaired of his life. The king in silent sympathy prayed to God that he might be permitted to take over his son's illness and strange as it may seem, from that very moment the tables were turned; the prince began gradually to recover while the king languished and died. This is just a single instance of vicarious suffering on the human plane.

The Master is of the Lord of Compassion. In His kingdom which is boundless, there is no count of the deeds. Embedded in the divine, He grants contact to each individual with the saving life lines within, which serve as a sheet-anchor in times of distress. The ship may toss on the stormy waters of life, but being moored to the floating buoy it keeps steady on its keel, in spite of the stormy winds and waters around.

Man is irresistibly forced to come on to the stage of the world blind-fold just to reap the fruit of his *Pralabdh* Karma of which he has no knowledge whatsoever. He is not even aware of the working of the physical plane, not to speak of higher regions. With all his professions and protestations, he renders a lip-service to God having no access to the inner Divine Links, the saving life-lines: the Light and the Voice of God. He does not even know the nature of his own real Self and spends all his time in sense-pleasures. He takes himself to be but a creature of chance and lives by chance, a mere puppet on the stage of life.

A Saint, on the other hand, comes with a commission

and a purpose. He is God's elect, His Messiah and His Prophet. He works in His Name and by the Power of His Word. He has no independent will of His own, apart from the Will of God; and being a conscious co-worker with Him on the Divine Plan, He sees the hidden hand of God in all the affairs of life. Living in time, He really belongs to the Timeless. He is Master of life and death but is full of love and compassion for the suffering humanity. His mission is to link such human souls with God as may be yearning for re-union and may be in earnest quest. His sphere of action is quite distinct from and independent of *Avtaras* or incarnations, for the latter work only on the human plane. Their job is to keep the world in proper shape and order. Lord Krishna has declared in no ambiguous words that He comes into the world whenever there is an imbalance in the forces of good and evil; the object being to restore the lost equilibrium, to help the righteous and to penalize the unrighteous. Similarly we read of Lord Rama in the *Ram Chritra Mansa*. He reincarnated himself when the evil in the world was in the ascendant. The *Avtaras* come to re-establish righteousness. They cannot, however, throw open the prison gates of the world and take the *jivas* out into the spiritual planes. This work falls purely within the domain of the Saints, who consciously act as co-workers with the Power of God on the Divine Plan and teach the worship of the Divine alone; for that alone puts an end to the effects of Karma. A Muslim divine says:

> At last it came to light, that in the Kingdom of *Darveshs*, Karmas count for naught.

Again, it is said:

A Master-Saint chases away the Karmas which fly as jackals do in the presence of a lion.

No one can escape from the fruits of his actions—not even the ghosts and spirits; nor the giants, demons, *kinnars, yakshas, gandharvas, devas* and the gods. Those with luminous, astral and ethereal bodies enjoy the fruits of their actions in the region of *Brahmand*, the third grand division, above the first two, *Pind* and *Und*. They, too, aspire for and await a human birth to get out of the clutches of Karmic reactions; for in human birth alone there is the chance of contacting some God-man who may reveal to them the secret of the Divine Path, the Sound-Current or the Holy Word.

It would require many years of patient meditation for a man to be able to understand in some measure the arrangement of God's mighty administration, and very little can be said to the inquiring seeker at this stage. It is also equally difficult to understand a genuine spiritual Master. But with all this, a *Sant* ordinarily plays the normal part of man while on this earth and He always speaks of Himself as a slave, a bondsman and a servant of God and His people.

In taking over the burden of the Karmas of the devoted souls on His shoulders, a Master-Saint does not overlook or eliminate the "Highest Law." His position may be likened to that of a king in disguise, who for ameliorating the condition of his subjects freely mixes with them to understand their difficulties and at times even shares with them their joys and sorrows. So far as the human body is concerned, a Master-Saint makes use of the special Divine Concession. He may, in brief, reduce death by guillotine to a thorn-prick. At times, He allows His body to suffer in some slight measure which for an ordinary individual

might have been a great travail. In this way, He shows man that all bodies do suffer, for this is Nature's law for all the embodied creatures. "Physical life is all misery," declared the *Sakya Muni,* Lord Buddha. Sant Kabir also declared that he had not seen a single human being who was happy for each one whom he happened to come upon was in misery. Guru Nanak graphically draws a pen-picture of the world as full of sorrow and suffering humanity except rare individuals who had taken refuge in *Naam.* It is because of this sad experience all around that we take the God-man for an ordinary being, like ourselves. In suffering bodily "pain" He plays the part of a man to all appearances, but internally He is always separate from the physical body. The constant contact with the divinity within Him enables Him to escape what may otherwise have been an unbearable sting for the disciple.

Every one who has been put on this path and is engaged in the process of inversion, can withdraw his sensory currents from the body by concentrating them at the center at the back of the eyes. There may be differences in the time required by different individuals to achieve this, but the results are sure to follow, and are actually verifiable in each case. The devoted disciples on the path, even when on the operation-table, voluntarily dispense with the usual administration to patients of anesthetics. They withdraw their consciousness from the body and do not feel the effect of the surgeon's knife or lancet. Of Bhai Mani Singh, who was sentenced to death by cutting off each joint, it is said that he not only smilingly submitted to the process but even remonstrated with the executioner to stick to the letter of the order when the latter tried to get rid of the nefarious job and wanted to make short work by cutting down the body part by part, instead of joint by joint, as ordered.

The *Satsangis* who study things with open eyes, very frequently come across several such cases. The souls that have an inner access remain absorbed in the great Self within, and do not make a show of their capabilities. This rule holds good for the simple reason that feats like these are calculated to pass for miracles and hence are to be avoided scrupulously. Saints do not display miracles nor do they allow any of their disciples to indulge in such vainglorious and empty baubles.

Saints, when seemingly ill, are generally seen taking medicinal doses as may be prescribed by the physicians, but actually They do not need such treatment. This They do just to keep up the worldly order of things. In this way, They set an example to man to continue his worldly routine wisely and resort to proper treatment whenever necessary. It is, of course, expected of the disciples to resort to such medicines as do not contain products of or substances from animal sources; but some of the disciples who have an unshakeable faith in the benign power of the Master-healer within, usually avoid the so-called remedial measures, and allow nature to work on its own, for the healing power within is a part and parcel of the human system. The bodily disorders as they come should be accepted and borne cheerfully for they are generally the result of our own dietetic errors and can be set right by resort to proper hygienic measures and selective foods. Hippocrates, the father of the medical system, emphasized that food should be taken as medicine. Even serious illness, resulting from Karmic reactions, has to be tolerated with patience without grumbling or bitterness, because all Karmic debts are to be paid and their accounts squared here and now, and the speedier it is done, the better, instead of keeping any outstanding balances to be paid hereafter. In the time of Hazrat Mian Mir, a great Muslim

devout and mystic, it is said that one of his disciples Abdullah, when down with an ailment, withdrew his sensory currents to the eye-focus and closed himself safely in the citadel of peace. His Master Mian Mir when He visited him, pulled Abdullah down to the body consciousness and ordered him to pay what was due from him for he could not indefinitely evade the payment by such tactics.

Unlike most of us, the Master Saints do not devote much time to their bodily needs and cares. They consider the physical raiment as a mere rag to be cast off one day. They take to hard physical and mental labor as need be, seeking no rest and repose, not sleeping for nights on end. Such prodigious acts present a riddle to modern science, though it is common practice with Saints for They are conversant with, and make use of, the higher laws of nature of which we are quite ignorant.

Deeds or Karmas may be grouped under the heads of individual Karmas and group Karmas. The latter are Karmas performed by a society or a nation as a whole and these are termed as *Dharma.* As an individual bears the fruits of his own Karmas (actions), so does a society, for it has to bear the fruits of the general policies it pursues with the result that innocent individuals have also to suffer for the wrongs arising from the wrongly conceived *dharma* of the society to which they belong. When Nadir Shah of Persia invaded India and ordered a general massacre of the people of Delhi, there was a general consternation among the populace and it was believed that the social wrongs of the nation had assumed the form of Nadir. A just retribution for the sins of commission or omission is the very essence of the law of nature and it visits in one form or another, call it what you may like; furies, eumenides or anything else.

IV

In the scriptural texts, we have an apt story of Raja Prikshat who had heard that whosoever heard the *Bhagwat* recited by a *Pandit* became *jivan mukat*—a man freed from all bondage. One day he called his court-priest and asked him to recite to him the elevating text of the *Bhagwat* so that he might escape from the bondage of mind and matter, and commanded that if his recitation did not prove the truth of the sacred teachings, the priest would be put to the gallows. The priest was no better than any one of us. He felt dismayed for he saw death staring him in the face, as he knew full well that he could not help the king in attaining salvation. When he reached his home, he was down cast and extremely worried over his impending doom. On the eve of the day fixed for the recitation of the *Bhagwat,* the priest was half-dead with fear. Fortunately for him he had a talented daughter. On her solicitations, he revealed to her the cause of his miserable plight. The daughter consoled him and assured him that she would save him from the gallows, if he permitted her to accompany him on the following day to the king's presence. The next day she went to the royal court along with her father. She enquired if the king wanted freedom from bondage of the world and the king replied in the affirmative. She told the king that she could help him in his much-cherished desire if he followed her advice and permitted her to do what she liked. She took the king and her father to the jungle with two stout ropes, and she tightly tied each one of them to a separate tree. She then asked the king to untie and free his priest. The king expressed his helplessness to do so as he was tied

down himself. Thereupon the girl explained to him that one who was himself in the bondage of *maya* (illusion), could not take another out of the similar bondage. The recitation of the *Bhagwat* could certainly break the magic shell of delusion if it were done by a freed person, who had for himself broken through the delusion, and as such the king should not expect salvation from his royal priest who was as much in fetters as the king himself. It is only *Neh-Karma* or one not in the cobweb of Karmas, who is competent to make others like himself and extricate them from the deadly Karmic cycle.

This in a way also illustrates that mere study of scriptures does not help much in giving *Moksha* or salvation; which is purely a practical theme and can be learned correctly from and perfected by practice under the able guidance of an adept in the line. The *Murshid-i-Kamal* or the perfect Master has first of all to piece together the broken tablet of the mind torn by countless desires and aspirations, and make it into a perfect whole and then to burnish it clean through and through so as to make it capable of reflecting the light and glory of God which no amount of book-learning would do.

One cannot, of course, know and understand the true import of the scriptures unless the same are explained by some Master-soul who has Himself experienced within the laboratory of his own mind what the scriptures say. Thus, He can, from personal experience of His own, teach and guide the disciple in the highly esoteric teachings contained in terse epigrams which baffle the intellect, limited as it is in its scope and instruments of learning. This is why it is said: "God comes handy in the company of a *Sadh*" (or a disciplined soul). One who is a freed soul can free another and none else can. In this context it is said:

The study of the *Vedas,* the *Puranas* and *Etymology*
leads to naught,
Without the practice of the Holy Word, one ever
remains in utter darkness.

A practical man of realization is at once all the scriptures combined besides something much more than the scriptures, which, at best, contain the theory side in subtle language but are incapable of explaining the theory itself by word of mouth, and cannot vouchsafe an actual experience of the same as the Master does.

Every one these days tries to put the blame or fault for his ills on the "times" and this complaint is the greatest complaint of all times. The present time as well as the time to come is no more ours than the time past. This world is a huge magnetic field and the more we strive to get out of it, the more are we caught and entangled in its meshes. Man dances in the net and thinks that nobody sees him. The wise feel the net but do not know where to sit easy. Thus, silently and ceaselessly revolves the huge fly-wheel of the Karmic mill, the giant Wheel of Life slowly but unmistakably pounding to pieces all alike. This mill of Nature grinds all slowly but surely. Some feel and say: "It appears that Nature made man and then broke the mould."

No one, however, tries to peer through the why and wherefore of things, happenings and events for we take everything complacently as it comes along the current of time. We do not try to delve deep into them in order to trace out the links of the chain leading up to what we see and experience. Everyone in his dealings with others forgets that he has to pay for everything in this world. Even nature's gifts like space, light, air, etc. are not free to all alike to any appreciable extent. But each man thinks him-

self the sole custodian of the free gifts of God. He attempts to be as liberal as possible, comes across several ill-set diamonds (men) and is affected by the "Law of give and take." It is after hard buffetting that we learn that scales make no distinction between gold and lead but are concerned with the dead weight only. Every man knows that fog cannot be dispelled with a fan, and yet tries to do so and thereby makes the confusion worse confounded. A person bound hand and foot in the endless chain of cause and effect, cannot free others. When every one in the world is fast asleep, who is there to waken and whom? It is only a freed man who can free others if he so chooses, for the sins of commission and omission are of the very essence of the law of Nature and sooner or later visit the doer in one form or another.

In caging birds and keeping pets collared, chained and imprisoned, one wrongly takes it for granted that these poor dumb creatures have no court of law where they can lodge their complaint. He thinks that he has a right to deal with them as he pleases. He neither dreads to kill nor pays any heed to the common Truth: "As you sow, so shall you reap." Ignorance of the law is no excuse. Every wrong has to be avenged. He that slays, shall be slain. He who lives by the sword, perishes by the sword. One has to pay with "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" which is as true today as it was in the time of Moses. Merry, no doubt, is the feast-making until comes the dreadful reckoning. We may shut our eyes to the laws of Nature, may repose trust in the efficacy of the priest-craft, but it will never do any good. One has to pay a very heavy toll for killing, blood-sucking, and the like. Those who live and thrive on the blood of others cannot have a pure heart, much less access to the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

Saints say that man occupies the highest place in God's creation and is endowed with superb intellect and must not, therefore, pass his limited span of time blindfolded like other creatures. The golden opportunity thus provided of returning and reverting to God's embrace and to his original Home should not be lost. Such a sublime opportunity comes only after one has completely seen through the "World Exhibition" and has successfully concluded his part in the Grand Drama of life. Man is usually lost in the attractions here below. In doing so, he loses the solitary chance given to him under the overbearing influence of Karmic reaction, after myriads of incarnations, for his return to the abiding region of the pure spirit. He is given one body after another in an endless series. He begins to feel the weight of all kinds of laws—social, physical, natural—which like heavy blocks bar his way at every step. He has no alternative left but to wait for his next turn as man, and who knows when it may come?

Saints give a very simple definition of sin as "forgetting one's origin" (or God-head). Every thought, word or deed that keeps a man away from God is a veritable sin, and on the other hand whatever brings man nearer to Him, is pious and holy. A Persian divine while self-commenting on the nature of the world said, "World comes into play only when one forgets the Lord. By constant remembrance of God, one while living in the world among friends and relations is yet not of the world."

Most of the sins, whether coarse or fine, are purely the invention of man under the sway of the mind. Finer ones are regarded as "pardonable weaknesses" by Saints Who are the living and moving images of God's law of love and mercy on this earth. So long as a person acts as a self-willed creature, he subjects himself to all the laws and

their rigors. But when he surrenders his self-will to that of a God-man, he comes under the sway of God's mercy and love. This is the true aspect of sin in every day life.*

Karmas are the most contagious form of invisible diseases to which a man is ever exposed. They are even more galloping, wasting and destructive than the deadliest and most poisonous germs transmitted into the innermost cells of the human system and worm their way most surreptitiously into the blood-system. In society, Karmas take a firm hold first in the shape of a change in view and thought of the so-called moulders of public opinion. Then they affect the disposition and temper, and afterwards take deep roots in the shape of habits which become "second nature" in man. The ancients and the elders were, therefore, always on the alert to advise us to refrain from bad company. "A good company breeds goodness, while the bad one breeds ill." A man is certainly known by the company he keeps.

To crown all such difficulties, one has to share unwittingly the Karmic reactions, even in his own family where he is born and brought up. Thus virtues and vices play an integral role in the formation of culture. In this way, we daily and hourly contract Karmas from our surroundings. The only way to escape the Karmic influence is to stick to the path of God through godly Saints Who being embedded in the Most High, are far above the reach of Karmas and are in fact *Neh-Karma* and *Jivan-Mukat*. It is said that in the kingdom of a real *Darvesh* (God-man), one has not to render account of one's Karmas. A person takes a turn for the better when he takes to the company of a *sadhu*. However, man is naturally prone to accept evil easily rather than the illimitable goodness of Saints. The company of a Saint has marvelous

* For details, refer to Appendix II at the end.

effect in removing all traces of evil. The atmospheric range of a Master-Saint is a vast immensity which man can hardly imagine. The Saints come not for the good of human beings only but for the benefit of all active and inactive creation in the world at all levels, visible and invisible as well. The poor creature called man has no true friend. Even the mind with the three *gunas* (qualities of *Satva* or purity, *Rajas* or activity, and *Tamas* or inertia) ever working as man's accomplice, looks on him just as a cat casts a restless glance over a rat. Those who follow the dictates of the mind are invariably caught in its wiles, and are subjected to untold misery and harrowing terrors. "Mind," however, fears those to whom God is kind through His medium, the *Satguru* (God-man). Mind dares not intrude on the privileges and rights accorded to His Own loved ones and rather helps them as an obedient assistant does under orders from his superior. Like fire, it is a good servant but a bad master:

In the company of a *sadh,* one has nothing to rue;

In his company, one knows the Lord and follows Him true;

In his company, one attains the highest gift of Godhead.

This is why Guru Nanak emphatically declared:

O Nanak! Snap asunder all thy ephemeral ties of the world and go in search of the true ones.

While all shall forsake thee in thy life-time, the True One shall accompany thee even up to the beyond.

Again, –

> Be sure, O soul, that a God-man shall stand by thee before the Judgment seat of God.

Baba Farid, a Muslim Divine, said in almost the same strain:

> O Farid! Hie in search of a freed-man for such a one would free thee (from the bondage of the world).

Again, –

> The ever restless mind cannot find rest until it rests in some God-man.

In *Gurbani,* we have:

> The wandering wits come to a halt in the company of a *sadh,*
>
> The stilled mind alone reflects the Light of the Lord.

Every man is tied physically and mentally in the invisible bonds of Karmas. So long as one is under the sway of mind and matter, and has not sought the protection of a Saint, he is governed by all the laws of the various planes and is meted out justice pure and simple, untempered with mercy. He is liable to punishment for all his sins– unheeded, unnamed, and subtle. A friend, in a court of law, may be able to curtail the long and tortuous legal process, but before the judgment seat of the Most High, a Master-Saint alone is the true friend at the time of trial. In *Jap Ji,* Guru Nanak declares, –

> The Saint is acceptable at His Court, and is the Chief Elect therein:

The Saint adorns the threshold of God and is honoured even by Kings.

Again, –

Satguru has given me the gift of insight and I see all doubts dispelled,

The angel of death can do unto me no more wrong when the very account of my deeds has been blotted out.

The path of the Saints leads in quite another direction. There is no court of trial for the initiated ones. The Saint is present everywhere and His sway extends to realms undreamed of. He never leaves nor forsakes His disciples to the ends of the World. His solemn assurance is:

Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide in thy most need to go by thy side.

Everyman

Like a kindly and gracious father, He Himself may administer a remonstrance to the erring child but would never send him to the police for correction.

No one is in more bondage than the one who wrongly thinks himself to be free. The trap of the high-born spirit is ambition. Those who are well-to-do, in the worldly sense of the word, appear to us in comfort. They may have sown some good seeds in the past and are apparently reaping a rich harvest in the present; or they may now be acting upon the policy of "snatch, grab and hoard" and are thus building for themselves a hornet's nest for the future. All such people in affluence, unfortunately, forget that they in either case are wearing the "unseen fetters of gold," and are unknowingly heading for trouble.

The common saying goes: "The walls and mansions of the mighty are built with the sweat and tears of the poor." Unless one has sown good in the past, he cannot reap a rich harvest in the living present. He may also be carrying imperceptibly the burden of some guilt right under his sleeves. If he does not sow good seeds now, how can he expect to enjoy seemingly good fruits in the future and for how long?

Moreover, good deeds by themselves cannot absolve a person from the reaction of bad deeds, just as dirty water cannot and does not wash clean. With all our righteousnesses we are but filthy rags, says a Christian saint. None is clean, no, not one. Man is always subject to the law of give and take or compensation-and retribution. Following the path of good works is decidedly something desirable and better than the path of evil deeds, but it is not all. A high ethical living may secure a paradise for a person for a lengthy sojourn, where he may comfortably enjoy heavenly bliss; but he is still interned therein in the astral or causal body and he has not freed himself from the cycle of births and deaths. So long as one feels that he is the doer, he cannot escape from the wheel of births and has to bear the fruit of seeds. It is the contact with the Holy Ghost, sacred *Naam* or Word that alone helps a person in his upward ascent to higher spiritual regions, far removed from the shadows of repeated births and deaths that ceaselessly move up and down in endless gyres with no way of escape therefrom.

Hell and Heaven are the regions where the disincarnate spirits have to remain for a relatively long period according to their actions on earth, bad or good, as the case may be. The stay here, however long, is not everlasting and it does not take them out of the inexorable cycle of births and deaths. Paradise (Heaven or Eden) is

the El Dorado of certain faiths. It is also termed salvation by many. But the fact of the matter is that after enjoying the paradisiacal bounties for as long as is determined by good deeds, one is given a human body once again for it alone provides an opportunity to gain merit leading ultimately to liberation. Even the ministering angels of God aspire to human birth when they feel that they have done their job. Thus, in following the almost universally acknowledged, widely believed and generally accepted path of good deeds, one ultimately finds himself, once more, caught in the web of insatiable desires and ambitions and with this glittering and ever-elusive firefly in front of him, he still remains an unwitting captive in the iron grip of Karmas. To achieve his objective, he performs *Tapas* (various kinds of ascetic austerities) which may bring him better lives. Even when he attains the sovereignty of a kingdom, his mind runs riot, he gives himself free reins and commits mighty deeds of valour and prowess, most of which are evil enough to earn him Hell. Again, after taking a bitter lesson from the hell-fires in which he is plunged, he tries to seek solace in *Tapas*. Thus he is ever caught and moves entangled in the vicious circle of temptations and lures from Hell to contrition and from contrition to sovereignty and from sovereignty to Hell again—one after the other—in an endless cyclic order, up and down the Wheel of Life. Thus, everyone for himself makes his own Heaven and Hell and remains through his own volitional deeds entangled in the gossamer web of life prepared by him.

These regions of Hell and Paradise do not come in the way of one who follows the path of the Saints, the middle course, right between the two eye-brows, for he bypasses the path of a Karma Yogi. Even if a soul under the protection of a Master Saint may, for a while, go astray, it

is sure to be rescued. Though Saints are living models of humility and do not speak of the great authority that is Theirs, yet at times They do indirectly refer to the saving power of the Saints gone before them. The scriptures reveal that Sant Satguru Nanak rescued one of His disciples who somehow wandered astray hell-ward. The Holy One had to visit hell for a lost sheep, and dip His thumb in the molten fires of hell, thereby cooling down the entire hell-furnace, giving relief not only to one but to many sinner souls howling piteously in great distress. Similar instances occurred in the time of Raja Janak and others as well. Once Hazur, my Master, too, had to pull out one of His disciples who was straying downwards. How then can there be redemption from Hell for the common man?

Those who are devoted to the practice of the Holy Word, all their labours end,

Their faces, O Nanak! shine with glory and many souls are saved along with them.

Another region, named *Eraf* (or purgatory) by the Muslim Saints, exists and has both joys and terrors in varying degrees. Experiences of various kinds of fears and agonies of hell have been described by various Masters of different grades. This subject is not an imaginary mapped-out scheme but a serious one for reflection. Whether one believes it or not, the disciple of a Saint is not concerned with any of them. And so long as one is true to his Master Saint (*Sant Satguru*), no power on earth can injure a single hair of his head. A true disciple of a *Sant Satguru* verily says:

I have my dealings with the Saints and my only concern is with them,

With the stock-in-trade provided by the Saints, I am freed from all hallucinations,

The angel-of-death cannot now touch a single hair of my head

When the entire record of my deeds has been consigned to the flames.

Again, it is said:

Invincible indeed is the Angel-of-death and none can subdue him.

But he is powerless in the presence of the Sound-Current of the Master,

The very sound of His Word strikes him with terror and he flees therefrom,

For he fears lest the Lord of Hosts may strike him dead.

V

No one can be said to have been born for himself alone, for none can be an island unto himself. To serve the needy, sick and starving, is also a sideline, more effective than mere preaching. "Service before self" stirs and kindles the embers of sympathy, kindness and love. These virtues have a great purifying effect, and clean a person of all his dross, and entitle him to the highest knowledge of divinity. "Pleasure tastes well after service," is a well known adage.

Ahimsa or non-injury refers to man's abstaining not merely from killing, violence and injury but includes also evil thought and ill word. While it may not be so with brutes and beasts, *ahimsa* infuses strength in man which not only excels many virtues but is the highest virtue above all others. Service done to sincere seekers of the divine path is of far greater value than any other service. Helpful ways include, *inter alia,* distribution of alms to the really indigent and the needy, giving sweets to those engaged in extraordinarily arduous pursuits in inaccessible places, nursing the sick, and helping the afflicted ones. All these qualities are great aids in the Path and should be encouraged and cultivated by assiduous practice by all means possible. One should not, however, rest content with them alone, but one must push ahead with the help of these purificatory processes, on the way to freedom as enjoined by the Master.

Love is the panacea for most of the ills of the world. It is the core of all other virtues. Where there is love, there is peace. Love, and all the blessings shall be added unto

thee, is the central idea of the teachings of Christ. The entire edifice of Christianity is founded on the twin principles of "Love thy God with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy might," and "Love thy neighbour as thyself." God is love and so is the human soul, being a spark from the same essence. St. John says: "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love," and he who loveth God loveth his brothers also. Guru Gobind Singh likewise laid emphasis on the prime need of love: "Verily I say unto thee that God reveals Himself only to those who love." A Muslim Saint says:

God created man an embodiment of love.

For His glorification, His angels were quite enough.

To crown all these virtues, comes truth and good living.* One should in the first instance be true to one's self. The trouble with most of us is that our mind, tongue, and actions do not move in unison. We have one thing in the mind, another on our tongue and still another on our hands. "To thine own self be true, and it must follow as night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man" (Shakespeare). You are in the body; God, the controlling power, is also in the body. If you are true to your own self, you have to fear none. Before you attempt to deceive any one, you first deceive your own self. "Rama cannot cheat Rama" were the words of Swami Ram Tirath when someone tried to warn him of the deceptive ways of the world. Truth is the greatest of all virtues; true living is greater still. We must try to lead a neat and clean life in the temple of the Holy Ghost and not defile it by falsehood and lusts of the flesh thus turning it into a money changer's den of the devil.

* For details, refer to Appendix I at the end.

It is commonly believed that prosperity is the source of peace, but it deceives the fools like a will-o'-the-wisp and endangers the rich. It lets go the bridle from off the mind. When once the mind gets off the right track, it recklessly contracts sins which entail dire consequences. To absorb the "self" whole-heartedly in the soil of worldly uncleanliness in mind, word or deed is a heinous sin and death is the reward thereof. The paths leading to worldly enrichment and to God lie far apart. One can take either of the two, as one may like. The mind is a single entity linking the body with the soul at one end and the body with the world and worldly riches at the other. Thus one has of necessity to choose between the two alternatives. Once the die is cast, one has perforce to apply oneself steadily to reach the goal whatever it be. Riches *per se* are no obstacle in the way of "spirituality," for it is the common heritage of all, the rich and the poor alike, and neither of them can claim it as a special gift for himself. All that is required for success on the Path is genuine desire, honesty of purpose, a pure living, and a steadfast devotion to the cause. A rich man has, of course, to see that he does not use unfair means in amassing his wealth and that he uses his honestly acquired treasures in fruitful pursuits and not on wasteful and ephemeral gains. He should always look upon his riches as a sacred trust from God, wherewith to help the needy and the poor, the hungry and the thirsty, the sick and the ailing, for all such people have a claim on him as human beings and children of the same Father. This was the advice given by the sage Ashtavakra to Raja Janak, when after granting him a practical experience in the Science of Soul, he returned

to him his kingdom which the king had dedicated to his Master preceptor before initiation into the sacred path of practical spiritual experience. He was advised to consider it as a gift from Him (the *Rishi* or God-man) and to use it for ameliorating the condition of his people and his country which were consigned to his care by God. Unless the riches secured by fair means are utilized wisely and well, one is likely to go astray and become egocentric and a slave to his ill-gotten wealth and is unknowingly caught in the golden chains that keep him in bondage. To warn against this, Christ in no uncertain terms declared that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. T. S. Eliot, a Nobel prize winner, says, "Take no thought of the harvest; but only of proper sowing."

The sowing then is of prime importance for quality of the harvest depends on the quality of the seeds sown. Next comes the proper tending, the humanizing process which usually takes quite a long time covering a few incarnations depending upon the past make-up of each individual. But with the right type of steadfast devotion and the grace of the Master-power, one can easily traverse the otherwise hard and tortuous path. "A perfect Master, conversant with the turns and twists of the road," says Kabir, "can, however, take the disciple through in no time." The pilgrim-soul with a competent Guide and honest endeavor, can easily swim over the ocean of the world even in the midst of worldly life.

Those who do not daily engage in *Bhajan* and *Simran* are always in trouble. They float endlessly on the stream of lustful pleasures. Practice of *vairagya* does help one in the process of self-purification and gradually a disciple is

enabled to cut the *Upas* tree of multitudinous desires first by cutting the branches and then striking at the root.

No one is faultless. Man is the child of error; and error is always his creed. Though to fall in sin is human, yet to persist in it is villainous. It is not profitable to stock bad merchandise. It is good to be born in a temple but to die in it is a sin, for we have gradually to rise above all forms and formalities of the kindergarten class which all social religions provide and to grow into the sunshine of spirituality. We must study the path, if we wish to divine the future and awaken in the Reality beyond. One who takes no thought of the future will soon have to rue the present. The sins and sorrows are our constant companions and go cheek by jowl. The small foibles gradually let in greater ones, while those confessed are half-redressed. True repentance followed by good actions goes a long way in assuaging suffering. Man would do little for God if the devil were dead. A man living under the shadow of an impending calamity lives at his best for he strives the hardest. To find faults in others is quite easy but to reform one's self is the most difficult, for we see not the beam in our own eyes. Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and a danger foreseen is half-avoided. One who is forewarned, is fore-armed.

Persons who are bound to the physical plane, must obey the commandments of some "Freed" Master-Saint, if they want to free themselves from the delusion of mind and matter. Cast off the burden of your entire responsibilities at the feet of your spiritual Master and the deadly grip of sins will gradually but surely loosen its hold on you. "Leave all else and follow Me," was the exhortation of Lord Krishna. "Come unto Me all ye that labor and I shall give you peace," said Christ. The devoted disciple

actually feels that even the chamber of sickness is a temple of devotion for him. A Master who is Himself well-versed in the practice of the Holy Word and is competent to initiate others into it, is the real Master and a perfect Guide (*Murshid-i-Kamil*). He would, like an able and efficient administrator, wind up all deeds and square the account and Jesus-like advises: "Sin no more." Similarly Hazur Sawan Singh Ji would, when a disciple in open congregation confessed a lapse on his part and craved indulgence, gently raise His right hand and say – "Thus far and no further."

Should we then do nothing? How can that be? The reply is simple. So long as the mind rules, a person cannot but act and must act though he may restrain himself in his acts, according to the behest of his Master, and side by side cultivate the highest virtues. By doing nothing, man gradually learns to do ill and Pandora-like unlocks the evils lying buried in him. If one wishes to lie upon roses, he must strive to cultivate and grow roses for himself. But we always act haphazardly and for selfish ends. We do not know what we should do and what we should abstain from. The Master-Saint is the Divine Imperator of His time. By love, guidance, instruction, and example, He leads men to acts of devotion and reverence and love for the Divine Links (*Naam,* Word, the Inner Voice of God, *Kalma* or *Kalm-i-Qadim, Akashbani,* or *Bang-i-Asmani*) which He makes manifest in him.

A Master cannot be respected by reason of His mansion but His mansion because of Him. So the Holy One is the most respectable, lovable, and worthy of all reverence. He gives the Divine contact and an experience of forgetting for the moment our physical self. Then we have visible glimpses of the Divine Links within us and by degrees gain more and more of the mystic experience. In His *Sat-*

sangs or spiritual discourses, many past sins are given a quick shrift. In His company, maybe in thought, in correspondence, or in meditation, much benefit is derived so far as the Karmas and the sinful associations are concerned. Though there is no end to man's sins, yet at the same time there is no end to the immeasurable mercy in the vast treasure-house of God. In the journey of life, in whatever place, sect, country or society one may find himself, one's chief bag and baggage consists of *Naam* (the Holy Word); a contact with the living life-lines within; the Light of God and the Voice of God. The various names of God, that we usually know and frequently repeat, are mere words of our own mintage for the Nameless Reality which is one indivisible whole, indescribable, and ineffable.

Sant Satguru or the Master Saint is the Holy Father. He comes from afar and for the benefit of all, the sinners and the virtuous alike, for both are equally bound in the worldly fetters, may be of steel or of gold. He loves all and love leads to forgiveness. Never fear to approach Him simply because you are a sinner. He would not allow or hand over any of His children to the reformatory or the prison-house for correction nor submit him to any of the third-degree methods. A loving and kindly father would never do this. The Master would Himself scold or give a little of bodily suffering to correct his erring child and would yet ever remain with him, although unseen, upholding him from within until the short period of trouble is over. He acts just like a master-potter who while gently striking the pitcher-on-the-wheel from without with a mallet to give proper shape to it, keeps the other hand inside to save it from breaking. The Master's love is unbounded. The kingdom of a *Darvesh* is one of grace.

The duty of a superintendent in a jail is to keep the

prisoners in prison, to chasten, and to reform them. Similarly, the aim of the deities and divine incarnates (*Avtaras*) has always been to keep men tied to themselves by showering the gifts of various *ridhis* and *sidhis* on them. (This refers to the granting of gifts, boons, favors, wealth, ease, and comfort in worldly vocations and giving super-human powers for doing good or ill.) These limited salvations and comforts they grant to their devotees are only up to the stage which they themselves have attained and they may ever permit nearness of sojourn in the various regions wherein they preside. They cannot help in the bringing about of union with the Almighty because these subordinate powers are themselves deprived of this highest privilege.

The *sidhis,* or extraordinary powers referred to above, are yogic powers which of themselves come to aspirants after Truth with a little *sadhan* (practice) but these are positive hindrances in the way to God-realisation, for one is generally tempted to indulge in miracles like thought-reading, fore-telling, trans-visions, trans-penetrations, wish-fulfilling, spiritual healing, hypnotic trances, magnetic influences and the like. These *sidhis* are of eight kinds:

Anima: To become invisible to all external eyes.
Mahima: To extend body to any size.
Garima: To make body as heavy as one wishes.
Laghima: To make body as light as one may like.
Prapti: To get anything one likes by mere wishing.
Ishtwa: To attain all glories for the self.
Prakayma: To be able to fulfill the wishes of others.
Vashitwa: To bring others under influence and control.

A practical *Mahatma,* on the other hand, having ac-

cess to the highest domain, forgives, liberates, and grants admittance to the Kingdom of God during one's lifetime, provided, of course, one is completely determined to surrender one's self to Him and do His bidding with a loving and a sincere heart.* This is rather a difficult task for those who are in the habit of obeying the dictates of their own minds. It is the fluctuating nature of the uncultured and uncontrolled mind to accept one thing at one time and to revolt against the same at another time. The Saints like Maulana Rumi even go so far as to say:

> Come, come again, and still again, even if thou hast broken thy troth a thousand times;
>
> For there is always a place for thee in the saving grace of a Master-Saint.

Once you have become Master's own, He will never abandon you although you may succumb to weakness in a moment of trial and tribulation and leave Him or go astray from the Path. The Christ-power has declared: "I shall never leave thee nor forsake thee till the ends of the world." He has His own law of love and mercy to deal with every one at every moment, even though one may prolong one's course of self-discipline by spurning the Master's love. The source of all peace and glory lies above the physical body and inside man. One who has no inner peace, should give proper nourishment to the self, the mind and the soul. The Word or *Naam* is the true "Comforter," the peace-giver and the bestower of tranquility and salvation. The common dictionary meaning of the word "salvation" may not be taken as mere release from sin. It is freeing oneself from the cycle of births and deaths and union of the spirit with the Lord, and spiritual life in Eternity.

* For details, refer to Appendix II at the end.

The average man makes a hoax of salvation. So also do various sectarian circles. The founders of the various religious orders have related their own spiritual experiences of the inner regions to which they had had an access, and described them as the climax or the ultimate goal of salvation and life-everlasting. The Master-Saint is a visitor of all the heavenly regions and describes His actual position sometimes in the form of parables. He, in no ambiguous words, declares: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me, shall not walk in darkness but shall have the Light of Life." The Saints, then, stand for eternal salvation during one's present life, and not after death, for who knows what may happen then. Salvation after death may prove a mere mirage in the long run, and it is no good living one's life in a state of perpetual and continuous suspense. If death is a pre-condition, then salvation is but a figment of one's imagination. A real Saint releases the soul from all bondage of births and deaths right here and now. He trusts in the "death-in-life" or liberation in one's lifetime, which is technically called "*Jivan-Mukti.*" The soul then can commune with the Ineffable One while in the body and ultimately merges in the Almighty God at the time of final snapping of the chords within.

It is generally thought that one gets salvation after physical death. The term "death," however, means and includes temporary and volitional withdrawal of spirit-current from the physical body and not only final disintegration and decomposition of the component parts of the physical body as is accepted in common parlance. It is absurd to think that one who has been worldly-minded during his lifetime, will instantly become a freed soul at death. The morally disciplined spiritual devotees do attain to salvation while alive and thus conquer death, the last enemy of mankind, in life. "Nevertheless I live;

yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," declared St. Paul. A *Pandit* in life remains a *Pandit* after death also, my Master used to say.

To wind up Karmas and to relieve the soul of all its shackles, is not the portfolio of any politician, diplomat, statesman or minister or even of any government. Even the *Avtaras* (incarnations of the higher power) are helpless in this behalf. The gods and goddesses representing the lower powers of the Supreme Being also have, as stated before, to wait for human birth before they can attain to the highest.

Those souls which have not come under the protection of a genuine Master or a *Sant-Satguru*, still carry the heavy load of the *Sanchit, Kriyaman* and *Pralabdha* Karmas on them. As for the destiny or the *Pralabdha,* the uninitiated into the *Science of the Beyond* get but a scant relief, for they have to tolerate these in full intensity with no relieving feature. As for the *Kriyaman* or deeds done during one's present lifetime by following the dictates of the mind, they will, without fail, have to reap in full measure the fruit thereof. This is a stringent and inexorable law, whether you believe in it or not. There is no exception to the law of Karma and relentlessly it works, grinding all alike in the treadmill of time.

Our actions: good or evil, will be brought before His Court,

And by our own deeds, shall we move higher or be cast into the depths.

Those who have communed with the Word, their toils shall end;

And their faces shall flame with glory,

Not only shall they have salvation, O Nanak!

But many more shall find freedom with them.

It is, therefore, of paramount importance that we should seek a Master competent to wind up the otherwise endless cycle of Karmas, and seek refuge at His Lotus Feet and free ourselves of the bewitching influence of our deeds.