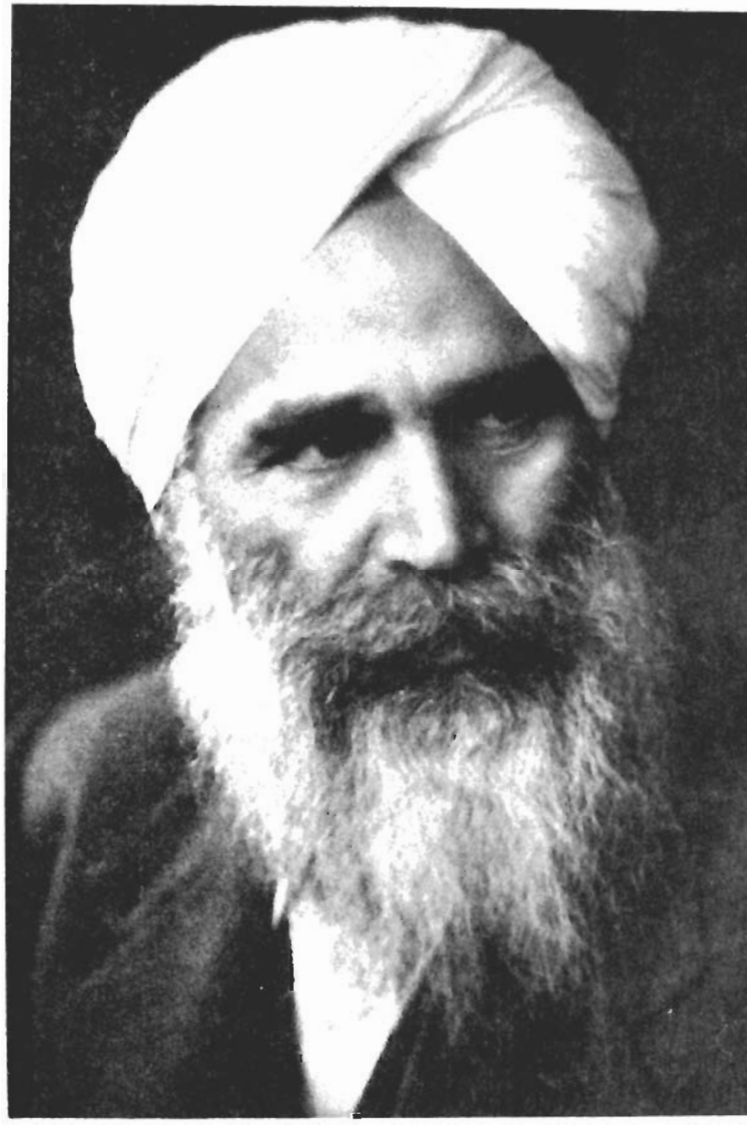
Its Nature & Technique

KIRPAL SINGH

PRAYER

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Considered by many people who met him in the East and in the West to have been a living example of a true Saint of spirituality, Kirpal Singh was born in a rural setting in Sayyad Kasran in the Punjab (then in India, now in Pakistan) on February 6, 1894. He followed the career of a civil servant in the government of India, and retired on his own pension in 1947. Following instructions from his Master (Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj, 1858-1948), he founded and directed RUHANI SATSANG. He was Commissioned by God and authorized by his Master to carry forward the spiritual work of contacting sincere seekers after God with the WORD (or NAAM). He continued in that capacity until he left the earth plane on August 21, 1974. Elected four times, consecutively, as President of the World Fellowship of Religions, he upheld the truth that, though the various religions are different schools of thought, the Aim of all religions is One and the Same. Kirpal Singh visited the major cities in the United States on the occasions of each of his three world tours: in 1955, in 1963-64, and again in 1972, staying in this country for three months or more, each time. From his intent study at the feet of Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj and from his own personal inner experiences of a spiritual nature, Kirpal Singh was eminently qualified to convey to sincere people everywhere the importance of self knowledge and God realization.



Sant Kirpal Singh Ji
(1894-1974)

PRAYER

Its Nature and Technique

KIRPAL SINGH

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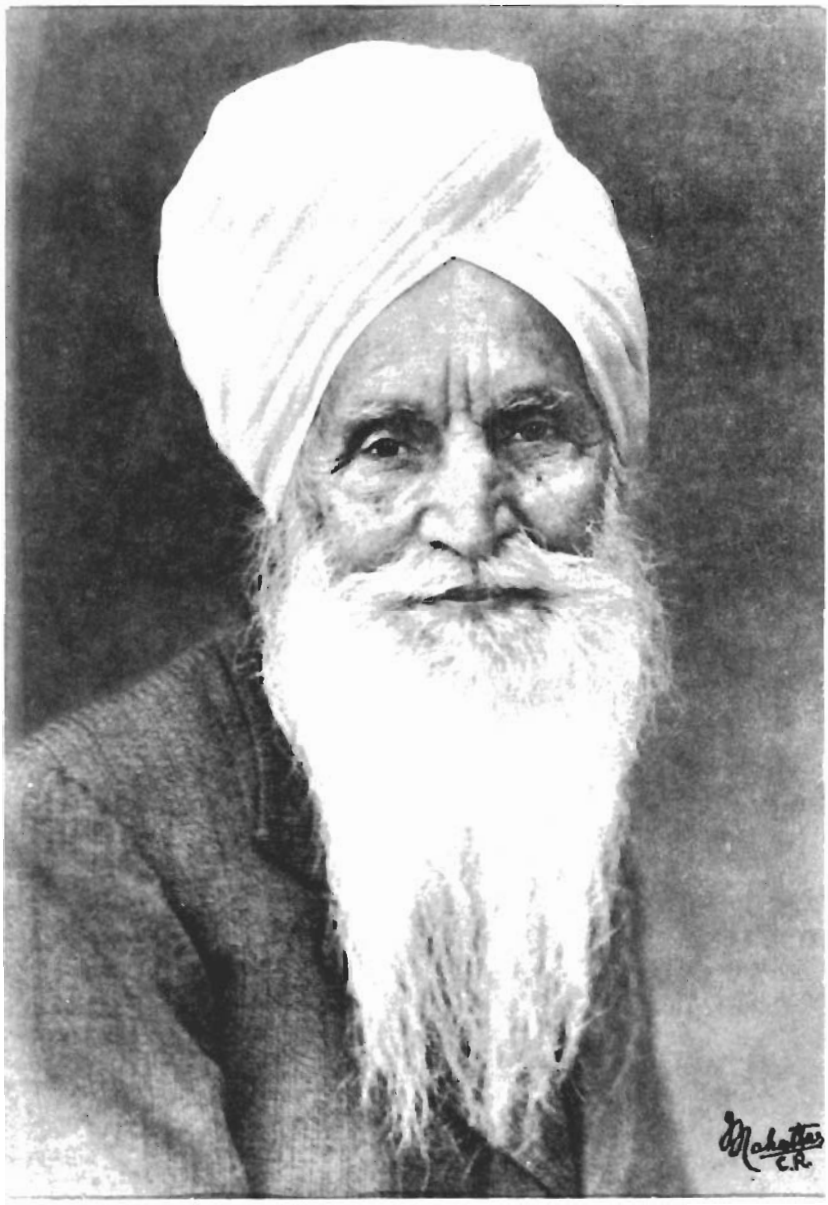
Dedicated
to the Almighty God
working through all Masters who have come
and Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj
at whose lotus feet
the writer imbibed sweet elixir of
Holy Naam—the Word



Baba Sawan Singh Ji
(1858-1948)

To The Reader

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

MATTHEW 4:4

PRAYER is the salt of life and we cannot do without it. It is ingrained in the nature of Man to pray for the fulfillment of his wishes whatever they be. But more often than not we do not know what we may really pray for, how to pray, and what we may do to make our prayer a great dynamic force as may stir up Heaven's mercy.

The secret of a successful prayer lies not so much in the words we use, nor in the time we devote to it, nor in the effort that we put into it, as it lies in the concentrated attention that we may give it at the seat of the soul so as to make it soulful. The most natural form for a fruitful prayer is the yearning of a soul without the agency of words, oral or mental, with the tongue of thought. A prayer like this generates and releases such a fund of spiritual energy that all the Cosmic Powers are attracted and combine together, shaping out things as best as possible.

A true prayer is one continuous process, independent of form, time and place, and leads ultimately to the stage of *Sehaj*—a halcyon calm, a perfect equipoise and a

complete satiety, with no desire whatsoever. This then is the climax of a genuine prayer, and here prayer itself ceases to be a prayer and becomes a state of being as one gradually rises first into Cosmic Consciousness with the Divine Will fully revealed unto him. This is the be-all and the end-all of prayer: and how to achieve it is the object of this enquiry.

At the end of the book, by way of an appendix, are collected, in classified form, specimen prayers from various Saints and Scriptures for the benefit of the interested reader.

KIRPAL SINGH

July 1, 1959
Sawan Ashram, Delhi, India

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My wishes count but little:
Let Thy Will prevail.

NANAK

PRAYER

Prayer

Prayer is the Master-Key that unlocks
the Kingdom of Heaven

PRAYER can be defined as an anguished cry of the soul in distress or helplessness, to a Power fuller and greater than itself for relief and comfort. It is, in the generic and commonly accepted sense, an invocation to God or a Godman (living Master), competent enough to grant solace and peace to a mind tortured by the problems of life and life's surroundings.

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

VISCOUNT MONTGOMERY

A worldly-wise man in this scientific age regards human life just as any other mechanical contrivance which moves and acts blindly on the lone principle of "Cause and Effect" with no guiding hand behind it. Against this mechanistic concept of man and the universe, there is an organic concept as well. Without denying the principle of "Cause and Effect" that is visibly in operation in human affairs, the exponents of the organic theory see behind it the hand of God, or the Law of God, in and through which the principle of "Cause and Effect" is

at work. The Law of God then is the motor power or seed force from which every conceivable principle—scientific or ethical—springs and works out the Divine Will according to His purpose. Unfortunately, we see only the surface currents and cannot penetrate into the depths beneath.

In common experience we see that a worldly-wise man, with all the material resources at his command, is actually in a state of dire helplessness. Ever dissatisfied with what he has, he cries for more and blindly works to that end, employing all means, fair or foul, to achieve his desires. But all his riches and possessions, pelf and power, name and fame, fail to give him any degree of satisfaction. He still continues, more helpless than ever in the face of disease, decay and death. His mind is always haunted by untold fears and imaginary horrors. With no moorings, he drifts rudderless upon the ocean of life, a prey to chance winds and waters. In this sad plight, either he flounders on the rock of suicide, or, if he escapes that, he drags on a weary existence until death comes to his rescue. But even in death he finds no comfort. He yields to it simply because he cannot help it. This is the sad story of a common man of the workaday world.

On the other hand, a really wise man also tries, like the former, to collect means of a comfortable existence; but unlike the other, these do not, in his case, form an obsession with him. Behind all his efforts, he sees the hand of God and is never bothered by success or failure in his endeavors. He leaves the result to the "Divine Will" for that alone knows what is good for him to

possess. If things come to him as he desires, he does not feel elated but accepts them with sincere thanks and with a grateful heart. But if things turn the other way he does not feel dejected, but smilingly bows down his head before the Supreme Judge who decided otherwise; and at every step he prays to God, for he knows that without His active aid, he cannot do anything by himself.

"Prayer" is, in a strict sense, another name for collecting the outgoing and wandering faculties of the mind, at the root of the mind. Like the rays of the sun, these spread out into the world, and likewise these can be withdrawn and collected at their source. A person in infatuation with a thing which he cannot get, or in distress and distraction over some calamity from which he cannot escape, sets his face toward God for success in his endeavors, or comfort in his woebegone condition as the case may be. This concentration while begging for help is called prayer.

Human mind is the throne of God and hence it is, at times, termed *Kaaba.*

Of all the pilgrimages, the one to the human mind is the most sacred,
Much better it is to win merit here, than countless trips to Mecca.

MAULANA RUMI

As soon as a person collects himself and focuses his attention at the seat of the mind, he stirs up the mercy of God, which, in turn, fills him with strength and fortitude never experienced before. These enable him to find

a way out of the difficulty whatever it be. A will, when concentrated, works wonders. "Where there is a will there is a way," is a common saying. Prayer is nothing but concentrated will falling back upon its source, the great reservoir of power in which are lodged all sorts of possibilities—physical, mental and spiritual—and one can draw upon any of these according to one's needs. Great indeed is man. He lives in a God-made temple along with God Himself. His very spirit is just a drop from the Ocean of Divine Life. Between God and spirit, there is no other obstacle but that of the veil of the mind. If this veil were to stop fluttering in the breeze of desires, as it does at present, the spirit could take in directly the Cosmic Energy from its very source.

"As you think, so you become," is a common adage. If a part thinks of the whole, it gradually begins to imbibe the characteristics of the latter. So is the case with the human spirit. It can gradually expand until it becomes all-embracing from the cribbed, cabined, cramped and cringing position that it occupies in its present state. When freed from its entanglements—physical, mental and causal—it triumphantly cries out: "I am soul," or "I am as Thou art," or "I and my Father are one" (as Christ put it).

There are two types of people in the world: firstly, those who can withdraw, introvert and take inspiration directly from the Great Power within. Secondly, those who depend on outer aids, like churches and temples, for worship and for offering prayers at altars or before idols and statues. Some try to seek inspiration from the great forces of Nature, like the sun, the moon, the snow-

covered hilltops, waters of the sacred rivers, as different manifestations of the One Power behind the entire Universe. Everyone according to his faith and degree of concentration gets some benefit from his mode of worship, for nothing is lost in Nature and no effort goes in vain.

Some people do not believe in the existence of God and as such have no faith in prayer, for they do not realize that God has no objective appearance and cannot be seen by the eyes of flesh.

> *O Nanak! the eyes that behold the Lord are quite different from those with which we see the world.*[1]
>
> GURU ARJAN

The truth, in fact, is that God is spirit, and can be worshiped in spirit only. We cannot worship Him with human hands and much less in handmade temples and synagogues. He dwells in the inmost depths of the human soul. He is the soul of our very soul. He is immanent in every form and not apart from forms. All colors and all patterns alike take their hue and design from Him alone. Whether we believe in Him or not, we actually live in Him and have our very being in Him.

True prayer then is the means to concentrate the wandering wits at one center—the center of the soul—to gather up the spirit currents at the still-point in the body, between and behind the eyes. Herein lies all worship, all prayers, all renunciation and all knowledge of here and hereafter. The path to salvation lies in direct

touch with the Inner Power rather than to get entangled in this or that thing. "Truth is one, though sages have described it variously," is a well known Upanishadic saying. Why not then search out the Eternal Truth, of which Nanak speaks:

> *Truth was in the beginning of Creation, Truth has been the beginning of each Age, and Truth shall ever remain when all ages and creations pass away.*
>
> JAP JI

2. *Prayer: Instinctive in Man*

PRAYER is instinctive with man and no one can do without prayer at one stage or another, whatever form it may take. The faithful and the faithless, a *Momin* and a *Kafir,* a man of God and a man who has no belief in God, all pray, each one of course in his own particular way. The need for prayer generally arises when one finds himself in distress, in calamity, or in the grip of some devastating disease, or when he desires satisfaction of some unusual physical and spiritual need which he cannot otherwise fulfill, or when he wants to combat forces of adversity or darkness. In such circumstances, he feels that by his own unaided efforts he cannot secure satisfaction of his wants, and in utter helplessness he seeks strength in prayer. In everyday life we see a student seeking the aid of a teacher in the solution of some difficult problems, a patient in illness that of a physician, an employee that of his employer and so on. All these

are prayers in varying degrees and forms. Again, for the satisfaction of his daily needs, a child looks up to his parents, a wife to her husband, etc.

In all trying circumstances, prayer is the last weapon in our armory. Where all human efforts fail, prayer succeeds.

> *. . . More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of . . .*
> *. . . For what are men better than sheep or goat,*
> *That nourish a blind life within the brain,*
> *If knowing God, they lift not their hands in prayer,*
> *Both for themselves and those they call friends.*
>
> TENNYSON

When prayer is the salt of life, we cannot do without it. But whom do we pray to? The answer naturally is, "To the One Supreme God or the Godman in whom His power resides and through whom it works in the world." All religions are in agreement on the point that prayer at the seat of the soul draws out all the latent powers of Godhood within and one can achieve spiritual beatitude through it. It is a connecting link between the Creator and His creation, between God and man. It is a supporting staff in the hands of a spiritual aspirant and a pilgrim soul cannot do without it, right from the beginning to the end of the journey, for it saves one from many a pitfall on the way and transforms the mind through and through until it shines forth and begins to reflect the light of the soul.

Through His Grace the osprey turns into a royal swan,
O Nanak! He may make a cygnet of a crow.[2]

GURU NANAK

3. Whom to Address

ONE must pray to the Lord God alone who is Omnipotent and competent to grant all wishes.

There is nothing which God cannot grant.

KABIR

Rich indeed is one who has Nature at his beck and call.[3]

GURU ARJAN

The various gods and goddesses have a limited scope and sphere of action and so work within limitations. They themselves draw their powers from Him and may not grant the petty boons that lie within their sphere, and certainly cannot grant salvation to the soul. A freed soul can grant freedom and no one else can. Guru Arjan tells us that God alone can remedy all types of maladies, no matter whether physical (like aches, ailments and various types of diseases), astral (like unforeseen and unpredictable disasters from accidents, thunder and lightning, floods and earthquakes, etc.), or causal (ingrained and inherent evil propensities like lust, anger, greed, attachment and egoism).

God! Thou art the dispeller of all evils and bestower of peace,
Whosoever prays unto Thee, can have no ill.[4]

GURU ARJAN

The dawn of Heaven's Light makes one a worshiper of Truth alone,
The blossoming of loving devotion makes one forget lifeless objects of adoration,
The knowledge of Him shows the futility of all rites and rituals,
The manifestation of the holy light within, distinguishes the pure from the impure.

GURU GOBIND SINGH

Again, Guru Arjan says:

I pray to Him who is the bestower of all blessings and savior from all ills,
Shower Thy mercy, O Merciful! for then will my efforts be well directed.[5]

Remember the One and sing thou His praises,
Chant His holy name and keep Him ensconced in thy heart.
Ceaselessly meditate on His endless attributes, and
Serve Him with all thy heart and soul.
God is one, peerless and precious,
Complete in Himself, all-pervasive and permeating,
Creator of the vast creation is that One.
Worship then the One and none besides,
Be saturated, body and mind, in His love,
O Nanak! through the Grace of the Master, is that One realized.[6]

GURU ARJAN

If ever thou hast a wish, ask the Lord for its fulfillment,
It shall be granted unto thee, the Master is witness thereto.
Boundless riches come from Him and so doth the Elixir of Life,
Merciful is the dispeller of all fears and ever abideth with His slave.[7]

GURU RAM DAS

I pray to Thee, O Lord, the Lord Thou art of my body and soul.
Nanak attributes his greatness to Thee, for none knew him ever before.[8]

GURU ARJAN

Thou art the woof and warp, O Lord, and I pray unto Thee,
For Thou art my altar, whether in pleasure or in pain I be.[9]

GURU RAM DAS

In vain we pray to the people of the world full of troubles as they are,
Pray alone to the Lord if wishest thou to cross the ocean of life.[10]

GURU ARJAN

In the holy Koran, it is clearly stated that God alone need be invoked, for an invocation to Him is the only true invocation in the correct sense of the word.

Similarly, Abraham, while denouncing his own followers, declared:

I leave you and all the gods that you worship.
I just call upon my God and I am confident that I shall not remain empty-handed.

Again he addressed them thus:

O ye faithful, let us unite and come to a common ground—the ground of Divinity—and worship none else but God and consider not anyone else on par with Him, for none can equal Him.[11]

KORAN

The instinct of love cannot come into play unless one sees the beloved. As long as we do not see Godhead or the glory of God, we cannot have any faith in the existence of God; and without this all prayers go in vain. But *Guru* or Godman is the abode of God's Light and is a radiating center of the same. We can pray with equal efficacy to the Master, who is at one with God. Connected as he is with the Powerhouse behind him, he is equally competent to grant our desires and fulfill our wishes. It is said that,

God manifests Himself in the form of a Sadh (a disciplined soul).[12]

GURU ARJAN

Again, the Bible tells us:

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.[13]

In Gurbani we have:

God speaks through a Sadh.

GURU ARJAN

A Muslim divine tells us:

His (the Master's) words are Allah's (God's) words, though seemingly these may appear to be coming from a human tongue.

A prayer to the living Master is as good as a prayer to God. One must, therefore, wholly and solely depend on the Master and turn to Him for the fulfillment of his desires.

So all prayers should be addressed to one who holds the mystery of life and death in his hands. We must have perfect faith in the living God, who lives and moves amongst us in a human form. With the attention fully focused on Him, we ought not to think of anyone else. This is the one way we can commune with Him. Kabir Sahib tells us that distance does not count in the relationship between the Master and the disciple. The two may be separated by vast oceans in between, but the very thought of the Master, in the disciple, is bound to attract the Master's attention and he can direct him (the disciple) wherever he may be. It is said of Vivekananda that when he rose to address the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago he felt diffident. He asked for a glass of water, closed his eyes for a moment, and thought of his Master (Paramhansa Ramakrishna, the sage of Dakshineshwar) and in an instant the floodgates of inspiration opened within him, and he delivered

an unprecedented and impassioned discourse lasting for several hours. A Godman is a veritable king, and at his door all the mighty kings of the earth bow down their heads in humble supplication and seek the fulfillment of their cherished desires and attainment of their otherwise unattainable ambitions.

Guru Arjan says in this context:

He has within his controlling power all the potentates,
Nay, the vast creation itself is under his sway.
His will reigns supreme everywhere,
And nothing lies outside his Divine Will;
O offer thy prayer to thy Master alone,
For he shall fulfill all thy heart's desires.
His seat is in the highest heavens, and
Devotion unto him lies in communion with His Word.
All-pervading, He is complete in Himself,
And His light shines in every heart,
His remembrance dispels all sorrows,
Even the angel of death does not come near his devotee.
The dead come to life by the Power of His Word, and
The lowliest and the lost are received and honored.
O Nanak! thy prayer has been heard and accepted, and
Through the Grace of the Master, His Light has been made manifest within.[15]

A Godman has within his grasp all that one may need—the gifts of *Dharma, Artha, Kaama* and *Moksha* (the merits of righteousness, earthly riches and possessions, fulfillment of wishes and desires, and salvation itself).

If one wants any of the four great boons
He must take to the service of a Sadh.
If one wishes to have riddance from affliction and sorrow,
One must commune with the Word, in the depths of one's soul.
If one is after name and fame,
One must lose his ego in the company of a saint.
If one be afraid of the pangs of birth and death,
One must seek shelter at the lotus feet of a saint.[16]

GURU ARJAN

From the above it is abundantly clear that we must go in prayer unto God or a Godman, and after being able to commune with Him, we should depend on Him alone and not on any other power; for He alone is capable of drawing one out from the mighty swirls and eddying pools of mind and matter, and of applying a healing balm to the lacerated hearts torn by wild desires and temptations. He is the strength of the weak, the sheet-anchor in the storm and stress of life and a haven of safety for the homeless. His glance of Grace soothes the broken hearts.

A perfect Master attends to the heart,
And from heart to heart, a life impulse darts.

BHAI NANDLAL

It behooves a disciple to unhesitatingly unburden his mind to his Master and place his difficulties before him, wherever he may be, for the Master is above time and space and can attend to his disciple's tale of woe.

Rip open thy mind before thy Master;
Cast aside all thy cunning and cleverness, and
Take refuge, body and soul, at His feet.[17]

GURU ARJAN

In the holy Koran, we have:

Except Him, there is none who listens to the woeful tale of the distressed and the agonized cry of the helpless and renders solace unto him.

Christ's remarks in this behalf are significant enough:

That whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.[18]

If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.[19]

Since God or a Godman is the treasure-house of all blessings, we must offer our prayer to either of Them and to none else.

4. A Direct Appeal to God Within

IN WORLDLY matters, we do seek the help of persons who are more intelligent and capable than we are. We also offer prayers for aid to God—the greatest power

conceivable—and that, no doubt, is a correct approach to the difficult and baffling problems which confront us every day in the course of our lives. But to regard that Omnipotent Power as something separate and apart from us, and to appeal to Him as to an outside benefactor, is assuredly a sorrowful mistake which is made by us; for He is the very soul of our soul, and is ever working within and without us, and we, in fact, live and have our very being in Him. The secret of success lies in direct prayer and appeal to the power within, as these bear sure fruit and in abundance. We do a great injustice both to Him and to ourselves when we think of God residing on snow-capped mountains, or under the depths of sacred rivers and water-springs, or in temples and mosques, or in churches and synagogues, or in this or that holy place. Limited as we are in time, space, and causation, we try to limit the Limitless within the narrow grooves that imagination can conceive of. Such belief on our part and consequent frustrations that result therefrom not infrequently tend to make us sceptical of Him.

When the reservoir of all power is in each one of us, we can, by a dip therein, become spiritually great and powerful. As physical exercises make us robust and strong physically, so do spiritual exercises awaken in us latent spiritual powers. By means of these we can pull up the sluice-gates and thus flood our very being with Divine Currents. When a person becomes Divinized or Divinity Personified, the very Nature, which is the handmaid of God, begins to dance at his beck and call to fulfill all his needs and requirements.

A strong will does forge ahead and make a way for itself. We do, at times, by praying to some supposed powers without, succeed in our endeavors. Such success is in fact due to a little concentrated effort on our part rather than to any outside agency. In this way we not only deceive ourselves, but gradually perpetuate the self-deception to the extent that in course of time it becomes a part of us, and we cannot but look upon God as something extraneous to us, and the worst of it is that we do not at all come in contact with the untold treasures of Divinity that lie within us and constitute our own heritage. It is only after the inner contact with Him has been established that we can truly understand His pervasiveness in the Universe and see His glory everywhere. Without this direct perception and first-hand experience of Him within, our conception of God is just hearsay or bookish and hence erroneous, and our prayers to Him a meaningless jargon.

5. *Prayer and Effort*

PRAYER and effort go cheek by jowl. We pray to God for what? For the success of our endeavors. Should we wish for a thing, we must try for it, and alongside our efforts to achieve it pray that God may grant it. Prayer is just the last weapon and a sure one that comes to our aid. Where all human efforts fail, prayer succeeds.

> . . . *More things are wrought by prayer, than this world dreams of.*
>
> TENNYSON

As a bird cannot fly on one wing only, nor a chariot

move on one wheel, so effort and prayer must go together if we want success in all our ventures. One of them by itself can achieve nothing. As long as a person is not fully Divinized, or in other words does not become a conscious co-worker with the Supreme Power by understanding His Will, he cannot do without endeavor, for God helps those who help themselves.

A mere prayer without endeavor seldom bears fruit. Just take the instance of a boy who is late for school. If he were to sit down on the roadside to pray, he would be running against time. If he wants to gain time, he must run and it is possible that even if he be late his teacher may forgive him because of the effort he has made to reach there in time. To have a ruling passion for an objective and to work hard for achieving the same is the right type of prayer in the truest sense of the word. Effort should be combined with prayer, for mere lip service to reach the goal will not help much. In all sincerity one should pray, and indeed the very striving for a thing with heart and soul is the greatest prayer and is bound to fructify. In all trials and tribulations, one must try to rid himself of his weariness and pray to God that He may help him in his endeavors. This is the only right attitude. In the Koran, it is said that when Moses and Aaron prayed for victory over the Pharaoh, God, accepting their prayers, commanded them to stand steadfast and not to follow the tracks of those who were ignorant of the Reality. Moses too commanded his followers to be true and seek the help of God. In moments of storm and stress, never grow disheartened, especially as you stand on the bedrock of

God and Godman. If, in spite of this, you fail in your endeavors, then take that failure as coming from God for your good.

6. The Essentials of Prayer

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him.[20]

CHRIST

A PRAYER never goes in vain. A cry from the heart is always heard and attended to; but how, and in what manner, depends on the Will of God.

A prayer of a devotee never goes in vain.[21]

Whatever a devotee asks of Him, that cannot but happen. [22]

He doth grant whatever is asked of Him,
O Nanak! the words of a devotee prove true here and hereafter.[23]

GURU ARJAN

In the Sikh scriptures it is mentioned that the Father God ordained that He would freely give whatsoever His children may ask of Him:

The Ever-kind Father has pledged to fulfill what His children may desire.[24]

GURU ARJAN

The Holy Koran likewise vouchsafes this very idea when it states:

God has said, call upon Me, and I shall accept thy call.

And again:

O Rasul! whenever any person enquires of Me, tell him that I reside in him and I listen to his prayers whatever the same may be.

In the Gospel of St. Matthew we have:

Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you:
For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.[25]

In actual experience, however, we find that most of our prayers do not bear any fruit. We have, therefore, to study the question critically as to what type of prayer is acceptable to God, how that prayer is offered, and why all prayers are not accepted. For success in prayers there are certain essential prerequisites:

(*i*) *Faith in God* is the root cause of success. We may deceive ourselves and those around us, but we cannot deceive the inner power—God. In offering prayers, we run a great handicap race. We are not true in our thoughts, words and deeds. There is, in fact, no harmony among the three. We depend too much on our own cunning, maneuvering and scheming. We have no confidence in God and His powers. Our prayers do not arise from the depths of our soul. Far from being an anguished cry, we mechanically utter a few words of hurried prayer. It is just doing a lip service to God

which is not even skin deep. No wonder then, that these perfunctory and ceremonial prayers for form's sake go in vain and are not heard. We must realize that God is great, and that He knows our inmost thoughts and the very working of our mind, and have faith in His munificence for:

He knows what lies within the folds of our mind,
And is fully aware of the afflictions of all: the virtuous and the vile.

GURU GOBIND SINGH

(*ii*) *Surrender to God.* With faith in God, the next step automatically is to surrender one's all at the feet of God. When the little self loses itself in the greater Self, the latter works and acts for and on behalf of the former. In such a case there hardly remains the need of actual prayer.

O mind! be acceptable to thy Lord,
Be ye all humble and lowly unto Him.[26]

GURU ARJAN

(*iii*) *Love for God* is another prerequisite for successful prayers. We ought to be grateful to Him for what He has done for us without our asking, before we ask Him for further boons. We must love and respect His commandments and strictly follow them. We bow down a thousand times before Him but we do not, unfortunately, take His words seriously. Little do we realize that He is not apart from His words.

If ye love me, keep my commandments.[27]

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.[28]

CHRIST

Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give the desires of thine heart.[29]

THE PSALMS

(*iv*) *Right attitude* is another essential for expecting favors of God. Right attitude may be considered in relation both to God and to man. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayers shall be abomination."

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Again, if we want God to forgive our trespasses, we must be prepared to forgive freely the trespasses of others.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. . . .
For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.[30]

CHRIST

(*v*) *Fear of God.* We do not live in fear of the Lord. He is the very soul of our souls but we shamelessly do things in secret as if He knows them not. We feel ashamed to do a sinful act in the presence of a toddler of tender years, but have not even that much regard for the King of kings enthroned within us and looking not only to all our deeds but even reading our thoughts and knowing the drift of our instincts and propensities lying in the limbo of our subconscious mind. His fear alone can make us fearless of the world, but unfortunately we live in a state of perpetual fear of all and sundry and go about cringing petty favors here and there.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.[81]

THE PSALMS

Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.[82]

ST. MARK

(*vi*) *Purification.* Purity of body, mind and soul is the most important factor in winning the love of the Lord. It may be considered in three different stages—Repentance, Forgiveness and Abstention.

(a) REPENTANCE. Nothing under heaven is perfect and each one of us has his own weaknesses. Sin has come to man as a heritage from Adam. Mind in man is the agent of the Negative Power, and it misses no opportunity to tempt man against God. In daily life we slip at every step. Our best resolves turn into airy nothings when temptations assail us. Unaided we cannot

possibly escape from the cunning wiles, subtle snares and wild clutches of *Kal* or the Lord of Time, i.e., the mind. It is only the saving arm of the Master that can protect us and rid us of its terrible onslaughts. But every time that we fall prey to temptations we must realize our weakness and sincerely repent for what we have done.

(b) FORGIVENESS. Repentance, though good in itself, cannot alter the past. Each act of omission or commission leaves its indelible impression on the mind and singles us out for its reaction or fruit. In this way countless Karmic impressions go on accumulating day in and day out, making additions to our *Sanchit Karmas* (a vast storehouse of unfructified actions). Nobody can escape from this tremendous load which has a far-reaching effect, extending sometimes to hundreds of lives and over. Is there no remedy, then, to burn away the powder magazine before it blows us up? The saints tell us that there is a way and a sure one indeed. Prayer for forgiveness is a positive weapon in the hands of a sinner. There is hope for everybody including the sinners. Saints come into the world to save the sinners and the lost. An association with a Master-soul goes a long way in liquidating the Karmic account. While He forgives in His Saving Grace our daily lapses, He at the same time enjoins abstention from repetition of the same. "So far and no further," is their admonition. "Go and sin no more," was the usual advice with Christ and Master Sawan Singh too, who used to advise his disciples to make a halt wherever they were and to sin no more.

The past actions can be washed off, provided we refrain from sowing any more of the dragon's teeth.

(c) ABSTENTION. While repentance and forgiveness help us in escaping the effect of *Kriyaman* or day-to-day acts, we have yet to guard against future repetitions. No purificatory process can help us through unless we put a stop to the incessant round of the Karmic wheel, which gains momentum from our every act.

At times a magistrate may award a lesser penalty for a crime but that may not ennoble the criminal. In the dispensation of the Master, there is always the stern admonition which is so necessary an element in keeping a person on his guard. He has to wash a sinner clean so as to fit him for his journey Homeward. Like a Master-sculptor, he has to chisel hard to bring shape and form out of a formless piece of stone.

In brief, it is necessary that we must first of all mould our life according to the instructions of the Master, and feel a genuine delight in thinking of Him. Secondly, we must understand His Will and pray for those things that are to His liking; and thirdly, we must learn to accept smilingly His decrees whatever they be.

Last but not least, love is the soil on which life thrives the most. A Lover gives and never takes favors. If one tries to live a godly life, all God's favors automatically flow down to him. One who loves God need not ask for any favor. It is enough for us to dedicate our very life to Him and become His bound slaves. It is up to Him to treat us as He wishes. To live in His Holy Presence is its own reward and there can be no reward greater and richer than this.

Downright heresy it is to pray,
To ask God to take the calamity away.

MAULANA RUMI

Thy frowns are fairer far
Than the smiles of many maidens are.

COLERIDGE

There is exhilarating sweetness
Even in thy frowns, O Master.[33]

GURU ARJAN

7. Hurdles in the Way of Prayer

SOME feel that when God knows even the innermost secrets of our minds, wherein lies the need for prayer? Some others think that when God is to grant a gift for the asking, we may in ignorance ask for things that may ultimately be harmful or injurious to us and we may have to repent for our folly. Still others believe that God, who is more than our earthly father, knowing what is good for His children would provide that without our asking and keep back that which may be detrimental to our interest. Despite all these arguments, the saints insist on offering prayers.

Doubtless God knows our needs:

Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.[34]

CHRIST

His greatness lies in His Omniscience.[35]

GURU ARJAN

He knows the secret of every heart,
And what lies hidden underneath.

GURU GOBIND SINGH

My Kirdgaar (Creator) knows my needs much better than I do.

A MUSLIM DIVINE

Still the underlying object in offering prayer is that *we* may know and understand our needs, be prepared for the fulfillment of the same when the time comes and be thankful to Him.

We are thy children, O Master,
Grant thou the gift of right understanding.[36]

To the ignorant children, Father giveth the light.[37]

GURU RAM DAS

Sometimes it might seem that our prayers for riddance from calamities are not heeded, but in all certainty we do get from them fortitude enough to withstand the calamities, and strength to successfully combat them without feeling their sting and their pinching effect.

8. How to Overcome Inner Difficulties

HEART is the pulpit for offering prayer and must, therefore, be cleaned and purified before we engage in prayer.

(i) *Purity of heart* consists in respectful and humble attitude toward God free from all cares and anxieties of the world.

The All-knowing Himself sets everything right,
To Him, O Nanak! offer ye thy prayer.[38]

GURU ANGAD

With folded hands offer thy prayers.[39]

GURU ARJAN

(*ii*) *Humility* born of helplessness, coupled with confidence and faith in Him.

(*iii*) *Loving Devotion.* Next we have to still the mind to make it free from the mental oscillations that continuously pull it this way and that. To achieve stillness of the mind we have to find within some center or pole to which it may be drawn time and again, so that gradually we succeed in stilling the mind at will. Until such ground is found, an aspirant is in a very delicate and slippery state. As he withdraws from the outer world and its associations, and waits for the dawn of the new world, he is haunted by countless seed impressions hitherto lying buried in the depth of unconsciousness. One can free himself from these either by right contemplation or by seeking aid through prayer to the Power within. The surest and the easiest way to cross over these hurdles is to think of the form of the Master and to fix one's attention in that form. This "tapping inside" or "knocking," as it grows continuous and steady, gradually forces open the "Way in," bringing to view endless vistas of spiritual visions and rapturous strains of Divine Symphonies.

Again there are myriads of obstacles in the inner path. Sometimes an aspirant gets no response to his prayers and begins to doubt their efficacy. At other times far

removed from God, he finds himself in a strange and vast stillness and feels his own vibrations. Others get entangled in the deep darkness behind the eyes and cannot penetrate into the Beyond. So bewildering and complicated are these regions of darkness and silence that one feels he has lost his way. In spite of his best efforts, he totters over and over again, tries to stand on his legs but slips over. This is indeed a very sad and delicate situation. By his unaided efforts he cannot safely come out of this labyrinth. It is in such weird and eerie surroundings that instructions from a Master-soul can be of avail to him. These are just a few of the countless difficulties with which this path is strewn. The Negative Power has a regular network of pitfalls to thwart designs even of the wisest and wariest of souls, and by all kinds of wiles tries to ambush the weary traveler on the path. Its triumph lies in keeping the *Jivas* or embodied souls entirely in its clutches so that its sway over them remains undiminished and its glory undimmed. One can escape these dark forces only through the help of one who has himself conquered them, for such forces live in fear of him and do not molest a soul that is in league with him. The long arm of the Master and his strong hand can lead a *Jiva* unscathed through all dangers with which the inner path is beset at every step.

9. *The Three Types of Prayer*

THERE are three ways of offering a prayer:

(*i*) *Vocal or oral*: that is to say a prayer offered by means of tongue or words of mouth. It consists in repeat-

ing some set prayer as recorded in scriptures or as given by this or that *Mahatma* as a "model prayer." Some feel that such prayers are not of much consequence. A prayer, in fact, is not a mere repetition of particular words but an anguished cry of an individual soul arising from its deepest depths. Such oral prayers may be likened to borrowed clothes which never fit the borrower. As models these are very valuable and we should try to make such impassioned appeals directly from the innermost recesses of our mind, truly depicting our feelings and emotions.

(*ii*) *Mental*: A prayer may be repeated by the tongue of thought alone. This can be done only when one can prepare a suitable ground for it within himself. One must see the presence of God and be able to concentrate his thoughts before offering a thanksgiving to Him, making free and frank confessions of all his shortcomings and seeking His aid in all his endeavors. It is an art, and like any other art requires a great deal of patience and steadfastness, such as is necessary in learning music or painting. To start with, the mind has to be trained and stilled by constant thought of the Master, which works like a goad (the steel rod used by *Mahouts* or elephant drivers for keeping the animal under control). After offering such a prayer one must for some time wait for His grace or blessedness, which "descends like a gentle dove," says Christ. With it also comes peace that thrills one throughout from head to foot. Once a person tastes of this he feels a perfect satiation within himself. The infatuation of the world with its wondrous charms falls off like a discarded and a long-forgotten thing in the

limbo of the past. In the world, he is now no longer of the world. What a wondrous change indeed! Some people consider this as the be-all and end-all of spirituality. But this is not the case. This change in outlook is but a precursor or a harbinger of the advent of the luminous form of the Master—and much more thereafter.

(*iii*) *Spiritual*: For true spirituality, a *Sadhak* has yet to wait and watch. As he continues his *Sadhna,* he occasionally transcends his physical body and meets the Master in his self-refulgent form. Thence onward countless vistas of spiritual scenes unfold themselves before his inner vision. These are beyond description. While yet a denizen of this world, he gets an access to higher regions, from whence come nothing but blessedness. Here he gets dyed through and through in the true color of pure spirituality. Now he is no more "worldly-wise" as he used to be, but is charged with spirituality. He is altogether transformed into a person established in his Divinity or God-head. This may be termed *mystical prayer.* In this type of prayer an aspirant has nothing to do. It is all wrought by the Master. Once he takes charge of the soul, it becomes his responsibility to work out this transformation by gradually eliminating all traces of dross and converting the soul into pure gold. Even a most elementary experience of this stage sets at rest all doubts and misgivings. It is enough to awaken a soul into Cosmic Awareness, and from then onward it is established on its own and is no longer a prey to scepticism. In its naked pristine glory it cries out—"I am the soul" or "I am as Thou art" or "I am *Brahm.*"

10. *Loud Prayers*

PRAYERS when uttered loudly do for the time being work like a lever in lifting the mind upward and bring about a sobriety, but as we do not understand their proper value and significance, these do not help in preparing the ground for raising the spiritual superstructure. On the contrary we often feel entangled in public applause and approbation. The result, more often than not, is that we fall an easy prey to self-deception. As these do not come from the depth of the soul, they sound hollow without a single true ring in them. They may be used to capture the imagination of an audience for the moment, but do no ultimate good to those engaged in it, either as performers or as listeners. These at times create physical sensation and bring about a trance but do not lead to Conscious Awareness, which can only come with Self-knowledge. God cannot be cowed down by loud and strong words nor does He need them. He is the very soul of our soul and can hear the faintest and feeblest tread of an ant. He knows our wants even more than we do, and long before we even feel them. The riches of spirituality do not at all come with loud professions or protestations. A prayer in the deep silence of the mind and uttered with the tongue of thought alone is capable of bearing any fruit. The rest is all in vain.

Call upon thy God in all humility and in all silence.

You need not shout, for He knows everything.

KORAN

He hears an ant's call before he does the trumpet of an elephant.[40]

GURU GOBIND SINGH

11. *Individual and Public Prayers*

IN INDIVIDUAL prayer, there is of course no need to utter words loudly. One has just to change the course of one's thoughts from one channel to another. In it, mental *Simran* is quite enough.

What is there in the quest of God?
Transplant the mind and see Him in all.

SHAH INAYAT

In public prayers we generally lose sight of real personal emotions and in spite of ourselves drift into hyperbole. In a prayer like this, there is no harmony between the mind and the tongue. Divorced from personal feelings, we are thinking only of the public applause of the moment. All the time we try to play upon the feelings of the audience, so as to draw more offerings from their pockets or tears from their eyes or words of praise for our accomplishment. These are more or less ceremonial prayers, mostly offered on the occasion of *Urs* or anniversary of the birth or death of various saints. Both *Qawwalis* among the Muslims and *Kirtans* among the Hindus fall into this category.

These set prayers are simply the outpourings of devotees in the past and not the spontaneous emotional outbursts of those who recite them, and as such are not likely to be accepted, nor do they bear any appreciable

fruit or make any lasting impression on the participants on such occasions, whether the singers or the hearers. An arrow that does not take its flight right from the archer's bow-string, strung well down to the chest, hardly hits the target. Similarly, mere oral prayers, not coming out of the depths of the soul, fail to reach the Godman, who is also the very soul of our soul and is already aware of our needs more than we ourselves are.

12. *Congregational Prayers*

THE same may be said of congregational prayers which too fall under the above head. These are offered in temples and mosques, churches and synagogues, gurdwaras and other sacred places. The man at the pulpit gives the sermon and the audience mechanically hears it, or he reads a prayer and the congregation just repeats it in a chorus. Except for some honorable exceptions, the rest just walk in for the weekly or monthly service, as the case may be, for form's sake. If such prayers do not create in us a longing for God, they avail nothing. This is the most elementary service that is expected from such prayers and if that too is not achieved, nothing is gained therefrom.

Such services, if conducted on proper lines, can do a lot of good to the people. We may pray in all humility for the welfare of humanity in general, which is a universal cause and dear to God. It is a powerful instrument that has been responsible for building nations and welding together societies.

O Nanak! great is His name.
May there be welfare of all under Thy Will,
O Lord.

GURU NANAK

O God! put us on the right path,
Make us steadfast in faith,
Grant us mercy, O Allah,
None is more merciful than Thee.

O God! forgive us our trespasses,
And ignore our high-handedness,
Make us true in Thy Path,
And grant us victory over the unbelievers and
the unfaithful.

KORAN

The object of such prayers is either to ennoble ourselves or to benefit the audience or to tell God of universal sufferings or some needs of humanity in general or, in the last resort, to ingratiate and push ourselves into public favor by a show of religiosity. Prayers offered and services conducted with the last of these motives are, of course, not only quite useless but definitely harmful and must therefore be avoided at all costs.

In Sura Baqar of the Koran, it is stated:

O God! if we err either in our endeavor or in practice, do not call Thou us on that account; but forgive us our shortcomings.
O God! never put us to hard trials and never impose on us restrictions and obligations as were ordained in times past.

O God! do not put a heavy load on us which we may not have the strength to bear.

O God! forgive us our transgressions and shower Thy blessings on us, for Thou art our Lord and Master; to whom may we turn except unto Thee. Grant us Thy victory and glory against the unbelievers and the unfaithful.

13. Place for Prayer

FOR prayer one needs no specific place. It grows best and thrives most on a leavened heart. All that is needed is a quiet place, free from the hubbub of the world or other distracting factors. It may be done within doors or without. Even one's sleeping room can serve the purpose or just a part of it if the whole be not available. In the absence of any place at home, one may walk down to a temple or a mosque, a church or a synagogue, for all such places are meant to satisfy this need of the public. If none of these are near at hand, one can by himself while walking, sitting, or lying down along a river bank or a mountain side, do *Simran* as ordained by the Master and commune with God and place before Him his inner feelings. Of course the entire world is God's creation and can be used as such.

This world is the abode of God, and God truly lives in the world.[41]

GURU ANGAD

Blessed becomes the place where one sits down to pray. The whole earth is sacred and one may offer his prayer wherever he likes.

Mosque is the Earth and as holy it is,
Pray ye the faithful when the time comes,
Care not for the place wherever it be.

ALAMSAEEN

God has created the whole world and He is the Lord of it all. He does not live in temples and mosques made by human hands. He, being spirit, can be worshiped in spirit only.

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of Heaven and Earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.[42]

ST. PAUL

All is holy where devotion kneels.

O. W. HOLMES

God is the Master of East and West
Turn whichsoever side thou may,
God shall look thee in the face,
For He pervades in all the space.[43]

KORAN

Human body is the temple of God, and it befits man to worship God in the God-made temple in which He resides. We on the contrary run out to man-made temples and mosques outside, to offer our prayers.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God,
and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?[44]

ST. PAUL

This body is the temple of God (Hari Mandir),
The true pearl of Jnana comes to shine in it.[45]

GURU AMAR DAS

Thy mind is the mosque,
Let thou be the worshiper therein.

A MUSLIM DIVINE

God can be best worshiped in the body. One need not wander from place to place like a shuttlecock. All glory and beauty lies within you. Outside the human body all structures are made of water and clay. The Vedas, the Puranas, the Koran and the Gospel all repeat the same tale.

The beloved is in the House,
I search for Him high and low without.
While the pitcher full of water stands beside,
Woe unto me for wandering athirst.

A MUSLIM DIVINE

But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.[46]

CHRIST

Here a question might arise as to why God, who is in

the body, is not visible to us. It may be explained that our eyes of flesh can see material things only. They are too gross to behold the Divine Glory of the most subtle. Unless the power of vision comes into conformity with the density of the object, we cannot see the object. It is, therefore, only the Inner Eye that can, when opened, see Him.

Different are the eyes, O Nanak,
That behold the vision of God.[47]

GURU ARJAN

O remove the scales from my eyes,
And show me the face of the True One.

KABIR

Again:

Rise up to the level of God,
Then alone shalt thou see Him.[48]

When thou closest the ten outlets of thy body,
The Light of God shall shine in thee.[49]

GURU ARJAN

If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.[50]

CHRIST

True prayer consists in withdrawing the spirit within with a pure mind and fully devotional attitude. Such a prayer cannot but bear fruit in abundance and in no time.

14. Prerequisites in Prayer

NEED OF GODMAN. As prayer is to be addressed to someone, it is but necessary that we must first have a firm belief in the existence of the Being whom we address. We have as yet no experience of God, and have therefore no conception of Him nor of His powers. Our knowledge of Him, however little it may be, is a secondary one, derived from the study of books or heard from persons as ignorant of Him as we are. In such a state we can contemplate nothing. But there may be a person who may have a direct knowledge of God and be inwardly in tune with the Infinite. There is a peculiar charm in his company. His weighty words of wisdom at once sink deep into the mind. His utterances, charged with His power, have a magnetic influence. One feels a kind of serenity and an inward calm in his holy presence. He does not reason of God. He simply talks of Him with authority, because he has a firsthand knowledge of Him and consciously lives in Him every moment of his life. Such a person may be termed a Prophet, a Messiah, or a Godman. The Gospel tells us that God speaks through His Prophets or the chosen ones. It is but a natural thing. Man alone can be a teacher of man, and for God's science we must have some Godman to teach us that. *Sant Satguru* is the pole from where God's Light is reflected. From him alone we can know of the Path leading to God; and he can be a sure guide who can be depended upon, in weal or woe, both here and hereafter.

He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father . . .
Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.[51]

CHRIST

From what has been said above, it naturally follows that Godman or *Sant Satguru* is the right person to be approached in the first instance and to whom all our prayers should be addressed. Faith is the keynote of success in all our endeavors. We must, then, have firm and full faith in the competency of the Master. With love and humility we must make an approach to him if we want to make a beginning in Spiritual Science. We must pray to him sincerely from the depth of our heart. We should think it fortunate indeed if in his grace he accepts us for imparting knowledge of *Para Vidya*—the Science of knowledge of Self and knowledge of God—which in fact is the seed-knowledge from which all knowledge springs.

(*ii*) *Complete Absorption.* The next essential in this connection is complete absorption. While offering prayer we must forget everything else, including our body and our bodily relations. Singleness of purpose is a *sine qua non* for hitting the target. It is common knowledge that one cannot serve two Masters at one time. We have to choose between God and Mammon and then forget the other. One by one we have to slip through the various sheaths enveloping the soul like funeral shrouds in their folds. The spirit is a living entity and cannot move ahead unless it discards the material appendages in which it is wrapped—physical, mental and causal. By

complete absorption these drop off one by one of their own accord, leaving the spirit free for flights in the spiritual regions. Mohammedans call this absorption *Fana-fil-Sheikh*, which ultimately leads to *Fana-fil-Allah*, thus completing the journey from *Fana* to *Baqa* (from death to immortality).

(*iii*) *Truthfulness and Contentment.* Our prayers can be fruitful only when we are true to ourselves in all aspects of life. We must have right thoughts, right aspirations, right contemplation, right livelihood and right conduct. Purity in thought, word and deed must precede everything else. Righteousness, chastity and truthfulness are all closely associated with and actually spring from *Brahmcharya* (self-control), which is a great motive force in life. It is on the bedrock of *Brahmcharya* that all these things grow and bear fruit.

Contentment is an active aid in controlling the wandering faculties of the mind. Unless mental oscillations stop and stillness is achieved we cannot offer a true and sincere prayer. A stilled mind alone can reflect God's Light when it may dawn.

> *God is attracted swift and sure,*
> *With prayer from mind contented and pure.*[52]
>
> GURU NANAK

> *To thine own self be true and then it must follow, as night the day, thou canst not be false to any man.*
>
> SHAKESPEARE

(*iv*) *Sincere and stirring sensation.* Prayer must arise

from the depths of the soul. It should not be a vain repetition of empty words with little meaning in them. What we pray for we must really wish for, not only intellectually but from the very core of our being. It must churn the very soul to its depths and the music of prayer should come out and tingle from the very nerves, tissues and fibres of the entire frame making us unmindful and oblivious of everything else beside the sweet music of the soul.

O Kabir! why to the minaret goest the Imam
for a call, for God is not deaf,
Why not address thy call to the mind so that it
goeth within.

(*v*) *Spontaneity.* A prayer being the cry of the soul in agony is most beautiful and most natural when it gushes forth spontaneously like a spring of cool water from the bowels of the Earth. It needs no embellishments of particular words and peculiar phrases. On the contrary, such adornments mar the true beauty of free expression, and very frequently the man of prayer is imperceptibly drawn in and imprisoned in the net of verbiage. All this makes a prayer artificial—a product of deliberate art divorced from feelings. Such prayers make us false to ourselves and are not at all beneficial. God is concerned with genuine emotions expressed in howsoever simple words and not with set speeches, vain repetitions, ostentatious phraseology and learned expostulations.

Maulana Rumi has given us a beautiful illustration of a loving prayer that a simple and unsophisticated

shepherd boy was muttering in his own humble way as Prophet Moses passed by him. He was saying:

> *O God! where art Thou? I would like to serve Thee. I would knit for Thee woolen garments and comb Thy hair. I would like to serve Thee with milk, curd, cheese and clarified butter, tend Thee in Thine illness, kiss Thy hands and massage Thy feet. I would like to make a sacrifice of all my sheep and goats for Thy sake.*

These words of the shepherd boy sounded as heresy to the Prophet, who in a rage began to reprimand the boy saying: "Shut up your mouth, O infidel. Why are you talking like a fool? Withdraw your insolent words or else God will curse us with hell-fires for your blasphemy. God is not a human being and He does not stand in need of any of the things that you offer Him. He is a spirit, without any hands and feet, and you have insulted Him with your idle talk." Stung to the quick, the simple-hearted boy tore his clothes, ran to the wilderness and wept bitterly for having incurred the displeasure of God. In the intensity of his agony he lost his consciousness, and behold, he saw within him the Light of God and heard a sweet and kind voice assuring him that all his prayers, sincere as they were, were acceptable to God and He was greatly pleased with him for his offerings. On the other hand, when Moses went into his wonted meditation, he felt that God was sorely vexed with him for having driven a loving soul away from Him. God reprimanded him,

You came into the world for uniting people unto Me, and not for separating those who were one with Me,

and spake thus:

Everyone remembers Me in his own words and according to his own inner feelings. I have accepted all that the shepherd boy offered Me spontaneously in his innocent and unpolished words as they may appear to you, but I am highly displeased with you for having driven him from his communing with Me. I am not affected by words alone, for whatever they be, they do not in any way sanctify Me but purify the heart of him who utters them. I see not to the glossy words but to the heart and the inner sincerity that lies therein behind the words, for it is from the abundance of heart that a man speaks, no matter in what broken and uncouth words he may give expression to his feelings. O Moses! there is a world of difference between the learned, entangled in the etiquette of polished speech, and the love-stricken hearts that give vent to what is within them, the withered souls in the waste-land of the heart, lost to all sense of decency and decorum as you would call it. Don't you know that even the Government does not impose any land revenue on a land that is *banjar* or a waste. A martyr in God needs thy care and attention. The religion of love is quite different from the religion of set formalism and ritual and for the lovers there is no religion higher than that of God Himself. A jewel remains a jewel even if it has no hallmark on it.

When Moses heard these words, he felt terrified and went to the jungle, found out the shepherd boy and said, "I have brought for you happy tidings. God has accepted all your prayer and your seemingly heretic words are as good as those of a devout and your devotion is the light of your body. Whatever comes to you from within, utter without any fear." The boy replied smilingly, "O Moses, I have now far transcended all the barriers of the flesh. Your rebuke was enough to bring in me a great change. Now I know the Great One and my condition is that which no words can portray."

15. *Time for Prayer*

PRAYER needs no specific time nor any particular hour. In fact, one can pray without ceasing. It is an ebullition of spirit and like a volcano may burst at any moment. Prayer should, however, be offered regularly at any time during the day or night. Early morning hours and evening twilight hours are, of course, very congenial and most suitable.

> *At the ambrosial hour of the early dawn,*
> *Be ye in communion with the Divine Word,*
> *And meditate on His glory.*[53]
>
> GURU NANAK

Most of us search for a time for prayer and unfortunately are so busy that in the end we find no time at all. A prayer does not need any philosophic dissertation or elaborate arrangement. One has just in loving faith to express his inner urge in the simplest words possible.

A true prayer needs no particular time and place. We have to sit quietly in the temple of the body, at the seat of the soul, and to gaze in between the eyebrows and mentally repeat whatever charged words have been given to us by the Master. That is more than enough of a prayer. But the trouble with us is that we do not know how to pray. We may in a case like this simply ask, "O Lord! teach us how to pray." In this respect, we can be guided by the specimen prayers given by the various Masters.

16. *Occasion for Prayer*

WE GENERALLY pray when we are in distress and trouble, but when we escape therefrom we begin thinking that we wrought liberation by our own efforts and thereafter do not feel the need for prayer. We must guard against such serious pitfalls. Prayer in fact is needed at every step. When in difficulty we must pray to escape therefrom. In distress, when all else fails, the thought of the Omnipotent Father gives solace to the mind. When success be in sight, then pray that you may not get elated and puffed up and ask for God's Grace and bounty for without these we can never succeed. After the fulfillment of our desires or riddance from difficulties, we must render thanks to the Almighty for His favors. When God is the loving Father and we cannot do without Him at all, prayer must become a part of our very being.

17. Prayer and Sin

A MERE confession of sins and shortcomings in prayer does not avail anything. If we think that by mere confession our sins can be washed off, and we can once again indulge in them freely we are wrong. Such an attitude, far from being a saving force, keeps us perpetually down in sins. Redemption is the gift that comes either from God or the Godman who specifically comes for the benefit of sinners. Our job is just to understand his commandments and to keep them scrupulously, leaving the rest to him.

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.[54]

GURU NANAK

Every action has a reaction. Every act of omission or commission has an appropriate penalty. We cannot escape from sin as long as we consider ourselves as born of the flesh, for flesh is the root cause of all evils in the world. Until a spirit learns to leave the sensual plane at will, enjoyments and distractions do thrive like a bay tree.

Too much indulgence means distress,
Enjoyments lead ultimately to disease.

Pleasures cannot chase away pain,
Without His acceptance one wanders in the wilderness.[55]

GURU NANAK

God is all love. To think that it is because of our forgiveness that He forgives us for trespasses, or else He would not do so, is to misunderstand Him and makes a misuse of prayers as a means for doing more wrongs.

The man of God, on the other hand, has a twofold plan of Dispensation. While granting forgiveness for faults on the one hand He remonstrates severely against repetition. "Thus far and no further," is His admonition. "Go and sin no more," was a familiar phrase with Christ when He used to forgive the sinners. In this way He works out his purificatory process and the spirit is chiseled into a shape and form that may be acceptable to God.

Prayer *per se* cannot alter His Law of Dispensation nor help to reach Him. It is only the loving and intense longing for God and strict obedience to the commandments of the Godman that make a prayer a means leading Godward. Love, and not loud prayers, is the cornerstone of God's Law of Redemption.

If we lovingly depend upon the strong arm of the Godman, his Grace gushes out spontaneously from the fountain of love in him. "Reciprocity in love" is proverbial indeed, and there is no limit to his saving Grace. Even the penalty that he imposes is tinted with rays of love, with no trace of rancor in it.

18. *Prayers for Others*

SINCE all souls are of the same essence as of God and are correlated with each other, one may as well pray for the benefit of others. High souls always pray for the good of the entire humanity. They are not content with the greatest good for the greatest number as is commonly sought by the leaders of society. Their prayers generally end with the words—"O God, do good unto all."

The Muslims first pray for the *Momins* (their brethren in faith), and thereafter for all the rest. The Buddhists likewise pray for all. Christ even suggested prayer for one's enemies. Amongst the Hindus it is a common practice to close their prayers with a few charitable words for all living creatures great and small. Some people offer prayers for the ills of the entire humanity and still others make use of it in the case of individual ailments. Telepathy has now conclusively proved how heartstrings between individuals play in unison, irrespective of distance between the two. There is a tremendous power in thought vibrations and their range is unlimited. Is not the coming into being of the countless universes and their dissolution the result of some thought-force, if we may be permitted to use the phrase as indicative of God's Will, no matter what we may call it—*Kalma,* Word, *Hukam,* or *Bhana.* Thus the sympathetic chords between the Master and the disciples carry silent messages of love to and fro between them with a force that is unimaginable. This wonderful relationship one can establish with God. By being in tune

with the Infinite one can by force of thought do a lot of good to others, as at bottom all are embedded in the same soil, the Divine ground.

19. Acceptance of Prayers

IT IS a common experience that most of our prayers get no response. The reason for this is not hard to find. We have not yet learned the Will of God and how that Will works entirely for our benefit. In our ignorance we very often pray for things that in the long run are likely to do more harm than good, and no wonder that the loving Father in His boundless compassion for us does not accept such prayers and they bear no fruit, or else we would never be able to escape from sensual enjoyments.

> *Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss*
> *that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

Again:

> *We ignorant of ourselves,*
> *Beg often our own harms, which the wise*
> *powers*
> *Deny us for our good; so find we profit*
> *By losing of our prayers.*
>
> SHAKESPEARE

George Meredith tells us to remember,

> *That he who rises from prayer a better man,*
> *his prayer alone is answered.*

Again, we generally pray to God for miracles and no wonder such prayers are not granted.

> *Whatever a man prays for, he prays for a miracle.*
> *Every prayer reduces itself to this: "Great God, grant that twice two be not four."*
>
> TURGENIEV

All the time we are living a sensual life and have not yet known that there is another side of the picture as well —life beyond the senses. Most of our prayers are, therefore, of a temporal nature and if they were granted without any exception we would naturally sink lower and lower in the scale of moral values and our sins would increase more and more day by day, and there would hardly be a chance to get out of these prison-houses of the world and of the body and bodily enjoyments, with the result that we would forever remain an exile from the Kingdom of God—a Lost Province—with no hope for reunion.

When a disciple remembers the Master, he experiences within him a soothing influence and a sort of Divine intoxication. This is known as telepathy or sympathetic communication from heart to heart from a distance. In the same way we can, by tuning our attention with the Infinite, draw upon the great reservoir of God-Power and utilize that for the beneficent good of others. For this purpose one has to unite his self in the Divine ground wherein all are embedded, and from there pass on the heavenly influence to the individual or society desired to be benefited. In this attitude one has not to

place the desires of others before the Creator, but has simply to invoke His loving pleasure and await His Grace to work out the desired result.

If Radio's slim fingers can pluck a melody
From night, and toss it over a continent or sea,
Why should mortals wonder if God hears prayer.

ETHIL ROMING FULLER

But man is just a part of the creation and each individual but an infinitesimal speck therein. Gifted as we are with a limited vision, we do not know and understand that Grand Plan, that "Mighty Maze" as Alexander Pope, the Laureate of peace, puts it: it is indeed too much for "presumptuous man . . . so weak, so little and so blind," a tiny part in the vast machinery of His creation. Again the great poet tells us:

Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate.
All but the page prescribed, their present state . . .
All Nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good.
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
The Truth is clear, "Whatever is, is right" . . .
Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is Man,
Chaos of Thought and Passion all confused . . .

Great Lord of all things, yet a prey to all,
Sole Judge of Truth, in endless Error hurled.

Each one, therefore, from his narrow angle of vision prays for a thing and knows not how it will fit in the Cosmic Order. In the hot and sultry months, for example, people living in towns pray for a refreshing shower, while in the rural areas peasants at the same time ask for more sunshine and heat for ripening their corn.

Man looks not beyond his nose. He does not even know what is good for him. Often he asks for things which, when granted, become a veritable source of nuisance to him, and with much regret he has to retrace his steps. The story of the "Golden Touch" is significant in this connection. King Midas after much longing and prayer got the boon of converting everything he touched into gold. After a few moments of happiness he realized his mistake. The food he put into his mouth turned into a lump of gold. The water as it touched his lips solidified into gold. His only daughter as she came running and embraced him became a statue of gold. As he went to the soft bed he found himself on hard metallic cushions.

God or Godman knows best. Our past and future are like an open book to Him. He would never grant such prayers as are ultimately baneful to us. How can the loving Father give to a child that which might prove a poison to him? A Persian poet says:

My God is more anxious than myself to fulfill
my needs,

All my endeavors in this behalf are but tortuous deeds.

One should pray to God for such gifts as He may consider beneficial.

O God, I know not what is good for me, for I am immersed head and ears in the maze of the world.[56]

RAVIDAS

Khwaja Nizami prayeth:

O God! Thou alone art my well-wisher. Show me the way whereby I may win Thy Grace and attain salvation.

In the holy Koran also it is stated that people ought to pray for that which may be useful both in this world and in the next.

20. Need for Prayer

WE CANNOT win God either by flattery or by vain repetitions, nor does He stand to gain or lose anything whether we offer prayers or not. Compassionate as He is, His Grace is always at work in each and all alike for we cannot live without It. We can, however, attract that Grace to our advantage by becoming a fit receptacle for It. Humility and faith purify the mind and make it a fit instrument for God's Grace. These two aids help in inverting the lotus of the mind which at present is attuned with the senses. Unless we are able to turn its direction upward, God's Grace cannot flow directly into it. Prayers, humble and sincere, help in

establishing a harmony between man's mind and God's Grace. He needs no forensic arguments and legal acumen in defense of our deeds and needs. All that is required is a pure and loving heart attuned to His Grace and the latter is automatically attracted to it.

God is all Love, and we cannot ask Him to be more loving. He is Omniscient, and we cannot by loud and strong prayers make Him any wiser. Perfection cannot be made more perfect by our protestations and prayers. We must learn to "stand and wait" as the classic poet Milton puts it, and His Grace shall of its own be attracted and flood our very being.

. . . God doth not need
Either man's work or His own gifts; who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best; His state
Is kingly, thousands at His bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve, who only stand and wait.

JOHN MILTON

God is an unchangeable permanence and eternally the same:

He was when there was nothing;
He was before all ages began;
He existeth now, O Nanak,
And shall exist forevermore.[57]

GURU NANAK

Eternity is ever in love with the products of time.

W. B. YEATS

The way to God's Grace lies not in striving and crying. It is enough for man to wait silently as a receptacle for Divine breath which bloweth where it listeth. It is merely by waiting and trusting that one arrives at the Ultimate Truth, which cannot be apprehended at all except as it is focused upon the soul of man. Here lies the advantage of prayer which molds a correct attitude for approach to the Divine Will.

Wheresoever I turn my face, Thou art there,
Why should I pray to anyone else, when I see
Thou art there to listen to my prayer, O Lord.[58]

GURU ARJAN

Man's only duty is to be ever grateful to God for His innumerable gifts and blessings. On the contrary, we become so infatuated by them that we not only lose Him but lose our own self also in the plenitude of His bounties and more often than not are carried off our feet by the whirlwind of desires.

We get attached to the gifts, forgetting the bountiful Lord.
For we have forgotten that we have to die some day.[59]

GURU ARJAN

21. *The Advantages of Prayer*

PRAYER is the essence of spirituality. It affords a wonderful recreation to the body, mind and soul. It brings in complete satisfaction and satiation which nothing else can give. The peace which comes with

prayer is of a unique nature, quite unimaginable. A kind of serenity descends upon the subliminal self within.

Prayer has in it a great dynamic force. It strengthens and befits a person to face and fight the battle of life fearlessly and successfully. It is in fact the only panacea for all types of ills: *Adhi Bhutak* (diseases and ailments), *Adhi Devak* (accidents over which man has no control), *Adhi Atmic* (evil propensities of the mind), and above all brings in inner peace and satiety. It buckles a person with courage and fortitude and brings about a complete reorientation.

Prayer is the key that unlocks the Kingdom of Heaven. It pulls up the sluice gates and releases from within immense power and resourcefulness.

> *Where all human efforts fail, there prayer succeeds.*

Lord Tennyson tells us,

> . . . *More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.*

Even if prayer may seem to fail to avert calamity, yet it has the power to take the sting out of it. With an inner transformation there comes a change in the angle of vision, which greatly affects the outlook on life. Everything puts on a new mantle of color superbly Divine.

Last but not least, prayer opens our eyes to Reality and enables us to see things in their true perspective. It gives new values to life and gradually transports an individual into a New World and initiates him into a

New Order. With a life of prayer a person eventually rises into cosmic awareness and sees the hidden hand of God working out His will and His purpose which otherwise remain a sealed book too subtle for the average man to pierce through and peep into. The more this inner contact is established, the more Godhead is imbibed by the spirit. Only when a complete identification comes about does one become a conscious co-worker with Him.

22. *Gradations in Prayer*

IN THE course of time an aspirant begins to feel more and more the need for spiritual uplift than for mere physical comforts. In *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* we have this prayer:

> *From the unreal lead me to the real, from darkness lead me to light and from death lead me to immortality.*

As soon as an aspirant begins to have inner experience, all worldly enjoyments lose their charm. Having had an experience, howsoever little, of the Unchangeable Permanence, he now finds no pleasure in the ever-changing objects of the world, subject as they are to gradual decay, disintegration and ultimate dissolution. He asks no more for physical comforts.

> *What shall I pray for, when nothing is permanent.*[60]
>
> KABIR

The whole world is slavishly mad, following the Epi-

curean principle "Eat, drink and be merry." None has time to think of God and the inner Self. But nothing in the world holds any attraction for a true aspirant. He makes best use of whatever comes in his way and works but to satisfy the bare needs of his body, and spends the rest of his time in *Sadhna* (spiritual discipline) so as to derive the greatest benefit for his soul.

For times without number have I drunk life to the lees.
Without Thy Saving Grace, O Lord! Nanak hath no release.[61]

GURU ARJAN

Hereafter the aspirant lives just for the manifestation of the God-head within himself and to sing the glory of His name.

Let the lotus feet of the Master rest in the heart,
Let the tongue repeat His Holy Word,
To live a life of constant remembrance nurture ye this living temple of the Lord.[62]

GURU ARJAN

While on this Path the pilgrim traveler realizes his ignorance, and knowing his incapacity extends to God his hands in prayer:

O Lord! make me swim safely to the other shore,
I know not swimming, extend to me Thy hand of help.[63]

NAMDEV

As his angle of vision changes, so does the nature of his prayer. At first a person prays for the fulfillment of his physical needs; but when one starts on the spiritual Path he prays for the removal of such obstacles as come in his way, e.g., sense-turmoil, mental chattering, ingrained karmic impressions.

This period is most critical in the life of a *sadhak*. Until actual self-realization he is in a state of perpetual restlessness, tossing back and forth. He belongs wholly neither to the world nor to God. While in the eyes of worldly people he is a man of piety, yet in the heart of his heart he knows he is full of iniquities.

Farid the sinful is still robed in black,
Though the people address him as Darvesh.

FARID SAHIB

In this state of uncertainty the *sadhak* at times tries to snap away and escape from the struggle; but after a time the inner urge once again comes upon him and he takes courage and starts Godward.

Should a traveler while traveling fall down,
There is nothing to wonder and cavil at.
O Kabir! one who sits and starts not on the journey,
Has an immeasurable distance yet to traverse.

But until a person is able to subdue his senses and sensory organs and rid the mind of oscillations, the kindly Light of God does not dawn upon him.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.[64]

If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.[65]

CHRIST

He who controls his ten organs,
Heaven's Light dawns within him.[66]

GURU ARJAN

The wiles of the mind are both very subtle and risky. It often lies in ambush and makes its inroads when least expected. The ingrained evil propensities though invisible are very strong, and time and again they come to the surface to deliver blows which often prove fatal. The coil strikes out like lightning, with such sharp and sudden twists and turns that man by himself is helpless in its clutches. Here comes the need for the long and strong arm of the Master, which stretches forth with equal agility to his rescue:

Subdue the mind with the Power of the Master.

SWAMI SHIV DAYAL SINGH

Mind cannot come to rest unless it is overshadowed by the power of the Master.

MAULANA RUMI

The sleeping mind comes to its own
By constant thought of the Master.[67]

GURU RAM DAS

23. What to Ask from God

A LADY on marriage entrusts her all to her husband and gladly accepts the new mode of life whatever it be. Now nothing else appeals to her but him. It is for

the husband now to provide all her needs and to look after her comforts.

Render unto Him all that belongs to Him,
And make His Will thine own.
In return He showers His blessings manifold,
O Nanak! He is ever so merciful.[68]

He who has Him as his boon companion,
He stands in need of naught.[69]

GURU ARJAN

Once a certain king intended to go abroad. He inquired of his queens as to what gift each of them would like him to bring for them from the foreign lands. One of them asked for costly jewels, another for rich apparel and still another for cosmetics. Some asked for fineries and others for delicacies, etc. The youngest of them, who loved the king most, requested his early return so that she would not have to languish long in his absence. The king on his return sent the various gifts to his other queens and himself went to the palace of the youngest and was highly pleased that there was someone who loved him the most, much more than his riches and wealth. The queen too thanked God for her good fortune that her husband was with her and that she needed nothing else. The rest of the queens, though each one of them had got what she wanted, had not the good fortune to claim their husband's attention. All their riches and gifts availed them not without their beloved.

In exactly the same way we, through shortsightedness, ask from God or Godman for trinkets of no consequence and not Him and His Saving Grace, and like the dif-

ferent queens in the parable, suffer most the pangs of separation. All the riches of the world fail to give the least satisfaction. On the contrary, these things distract us from the Truth and make us more miserable. If we could but win His Grace we would then be in want no more. All His riches come to us automatically, without asking. Even if they are denied for one reason or another, it matters not, for without Him and His love they are dirty trash.

All riches and fineries befit him who has won Him,
And even without them, what care if he were to live in poverty.[70]

GURU ARJAN

Our most elementary needs are of the body—to wit, food, clothing and shelter. For these things we strive hard, working madly and restlessly from morn till night. We sacrifice our very self to procure these comforts—if any comfort they provide. Do we not realize that when a child comes into the world his life plan is sketched out beforehand? Without this nobody would be here at all. With destiny all shaped, the mould is cast and the spirit enters therein, ready to take his life's journey in the world.

With a predestined plan one comes into the world,
O Tulsi! with all this, the mind does not accept it.

Dame Nature now gets ready for the royal reception of the Prince of the Universe, providing milk in the

mother's breast, shelter in the mother's lap, and an army of attendants to attend to his minutest needs. The Powers of Nature mobilize all their forces to claim the prince-child as their own. But as the child grows and develops into adolescence and begins to feel the life-impulse surging in him, the world, as a foster mother, claims him as her own and he fondly clings to her and her gifts forgetting his native and prenatal home in heaven.

Heaven lies about us in our infancy,
Shades of the prison-house begin to close upon
the growing boy.
Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearning she hath in her own natural kind,
And even with something of a mother's mind,
and no unworthy aim,
The homely nurse doth all she can,
To make her foster child, her inmate Man,
forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

WORDSWORTH

Again, all the gifts of the world are purely ephemeral. They are always in an unstable and changing state. Nothing is permanent. Everything is subject to decay and dissolution.

Momentarily things appear and then recede
back into the Fullness,
In the twinkling of an eye the world itself sinks
into the great deep.[71]

KABIR

Midst the ever-changing phenomena of the world, there is but one unchangeable permanence and that is God and God-in-action (the Holy Spirit, *Kalma, Naam* or Word), responsible for the creation, sustenance and dissolution of countless universes. Why then should we not long for, ask for and pray for that imperishable life principle, so that we too may have "Life Everlasting" and come to our eternal heritage, the everlasting Godhood which is our birthright.

Listen ye to the call of the hollow man, manifest Thyself, O Lord,
Nanak has humbly reached Thy door, through the Grace of Thy devotee.[72]

GURU ARJAN

Our native home is in *Sach Khand.* Ages upon ages have gone by since we parted from the Father and we are still in exile in this world.

The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.

WORDSWORTH

We must then yearn for a reunion with the Beloved, separated as we are from Him for myriads of ages.

For ages upon ages have we been separated,
Unite us unto Thee, O Lord, through sheer compassion if Thou wilt.
We have wandered high and low in all the points of the compass,

Now keep us O Thou under the shadow of Thy holy wings.[73]

GURU ARJAN

In countless births have I wandered away and away from Thee,
This (human) birth I have dedicated to Thee and staked on Thee,
Ravidas now lives in hope to meet Thee once again.[74]

RAVIDAS

Guru Amar Das, therefore, prayeth:

Through innumerable gyres have I gone without rest,
In Thy mercy, O Merciful! grant me the boon of Thy manifestation.[75]

Guru Arjan prayeth:

Many a birth I had in various species,
Every time I had to undergo many sufferings.
Through Thy Grace I have now a human birth,
This then is the time to manifest Thyself unto me, O Lord.[76]

Lift me O Lord! I have fallen at Thy door,
Accept me in compassion, tired as I am of my wanderings.
Savior of Thy devotees, save the sinners as well,
I know none besides Thee to offer my prayers,
O ferry me safely across the ocean of living matter.[77]

The soul pines in the separation of her Lord. Even if she is not worthy of the Lord, she prays for union with Him.

All are blessed in the love of their Lord,
But I alone am the unfortunate one.
So filled with spots through and through,
My consort does not like even to see my face.[78]

GURU AMAR DAS

Meritless as I am, I intensely pray for my turn, O Nanak,
All the spouses had Thee in abundance, spare a night for me as well.[79]

All the maidens have gone with their spouses,
Where should I, the unfortunate, turn my face?
With my parents I was the light of their eyes,
But woe unto me that my Lord looks not at me.[80]

GURU AMAR DAS

Kill me if Thou wilt but turn not away,
Hug me to Thy bosom, listen ye to my prayer,
Just look this way and earn my gratitude,
Why kill me by turning Thy face away.[81]

KABIR

Thirsty as I am for Thy sight,
My mind calls for Thee in agony,
I pray to Thee O Formless! and crave for Thy mercy.[82]

Life is worth living with Thee before me.
Be merciful, O sweet Beloved,
And drive away all doubts and delusions.[83]

I earnestly beseech and pray for just one thing,
I make a sacrifice of all my wealth and possessions for a union with Thee.[84]

GURU ARJAN

What may I ask for and repeat unto Thee except
That I hunger and thirst for Thy sight;
It is through the Word of the Master that one reaches Truth,
Nanak, therefore, prays for this alone.[85]

I have just one submission and listen ye to that,
Certainly Thou art great, compassionate, and immaculate.[86]

GURU NANAK

We never remember Thee and waste our life in fruitless pursuits.
Nanak sayeth, O God, remember Thou the pledge (of redemption), regardless of our defaults.[87]

Thou art the abode of all virtues and Lord of us all with no virtue in us,
No bondsman can praise Thee enough, when he holds even his body and life from Thee.
Thou saved me from the hell-fires, I have taken shelter at Thy feet,
Thou art the only stake of my life and honor, I depend on naught else.[88]

Great is the Lord, boundless, infinite and ineffable,
O Nanak! He is the Savior of all who take refuge in Him.[89]

I pray to Thee, O Lord! of body, mind and soul,
O Nanak! it is His greatness else none knew me before.[90]

GURU ARJAN

Thou alone art the Doer of all things,
To whom then should we offer prayers.[91]

GURU NANAK

Helpless are we and Merciful art Thou,
What can we, the sinners, say unto Thee.
In spite of our broken words of no meaning,
Accept us and grant us the gift of perfection.[92]

RAVIDAS

Thou art the woof and warp of my very existence,
I, therefore, pray unto Thee alone.
I have no other place to turn to for worship,
I place all my comforts and discomforts before Thee.[93]

I cannot do justice to Thy greatness,
For I am an ignorant fool.
O Lord! redeem poor Nanak,
For he has taken shelter at Thy feet.[94]

GURU RAM DAS

Again, we have in the Sikh Scriptures:

We, the ignorant, insensate and devoid of all virtues, have taken refuge with Thee, O Primal Being,
Through Thy Boundless Grace, O Lord! save us, in spite of all our shortcomings.[95]

O God! have mercy and ferry us across,
Save us with the help of Thy Melodious Song.
We are bogged in the mire of infatuation,
O extend to us Thy hand and pull us out.[96]

GURU RAM DAS

Look ye not on my merits and demerits,
But forgive me my faults, O Merciful.
How can the clay toy be washed clean?
That indeed is the fate of all human beings.[97]

O Lord! be Thou compassionate on the orphan at Thy door,
Sustain him in the blind well of the body,
For he is imbecile both in mind and intellect.[98]

We are the great defaulters and sinners with a galaxy of thefts to boot,
Now Nanak is at Thy feet, O Lord! save him as Thou wilt.[99]

GURU ARJAN

O Savior and Sustainer Peerless, listen ye to me,
O Nanak! the ignorant and the foolish never think of Him,

Nor do they know the pitch dark night in which they live.[100]

GURU NANAK

I have no virtues of the body or of the mind, and have come from afar,
I have neither riches nor beauty, save me the homeless one. [101]

One who slips at every step cannot escape on his own account,
O Nanak, He may forgive and pilot me across in His Divine Mercy.[102]

GURU ARJAN

We commit blunders without number, and know not their consequences,
O Lord! forgive us in Thy Grace for we are inveterate sinners.[103]

GURU AMAR DAS

Like the great deep sea, we are full of faults,
With Thy Mercy and Saving Grace, Thou canst save the millstones from sinking down.[104]

GURU NANAK

The whole world is in the throes of death pangs. God alone can save it, as He may with His limitless love.

The entire world is being consumed in the invisible flames of hellfire,
Save us all with Thy loving Grace in whatever way it may be possible.[105]

GURU AMAR DAS

O Lord! Thou art peerlessly deep and infinitely high and none reaches Thee,
We pray that we may not forget Thee, the fountain of all comforts.[106]

GURU ARJAN

O the Great Giver and perfect Master,
I ask of Thee but one gift, the gift of Hari.
Shower Thy blessings on Nanak,
O my oldest Friend, become manifest in me.[107]

GURU RAM DAS

Good and evil intentions are both in your control, O Lord. We are but instruments and You are the motor-power behind us. We only act and do as You actuate us from behind.

All our thoughts and good intentions are in Thy control,
Thou alone art the motor-power behind all our actions,
O Nanak! He is the overruling power that works as He Wills.[108]

GURU RAM DAS

We, *per se,* are incapable of rendering any service to God, and cannot pride ourselves on our so-called service. It is in the refulgence of God's Light that we live and have our very being. When He withdraws the life current, we become helpless:

None can serve Thee nor feel elated at anything.

When the life currents are withdrawn, how helpless we become.[109]

GURU AMAR DAS

We must ask for God from God, for all else means inviting headache. The greatest gift from Him is that of *Naam* or the Power of Godhead, which when granted brings with it contentment and satisfaction.

Except Thee all else is the source of trouble and misery,
Grant us the gift of Thy Word that brings in peace and satiation.[110]

GURU ARJAN

Maulana Rumi prayeth in this wise:

Ask from God nothing but God.
Except Him, all else is perishable.
Never ask God for a thing that must decay,
Ask not of God anything beside Himself.
Darken not thy mind with thoughts and cares that are chimerical.

(*i*) *Ask for God*:
One may invoke help in crucial moments of his life, from God or from a Godman, for He alone can rescue him from such slippery moments.

Full of the deadly sins and tormented by lusts of the flesh I cry,
Rescue me by Thy Grace, as best Thou may.
O Great and Compassionate One! I am at Thy mercy,

With austerities and penances one cannot escape,
But with Thy glance of Grace, take Nanak out of the blind well.[111]

O Lord! save me,
I am incapable of doing anything,
In Thy mercy, grant me the gift of Naam.[112]

GURU ARJAN

I pray to the Guru, the beloved of God,
A filthy worm am I, O grant me the light of Naam.[113]

GURU RAM DAS

Mind can be controlled only by the *Dhun* of *Naam* or the celestial strains of music, and it is for this that one has to pray. No other type of yoga—*Jnana, Hatha, Karma,* etc.— can be of any avail in this connection; nor has anyone been able to escape from the clutches of the mind with all his wits about him. One may tame the wild mind only through the practice of *Sat-Shabd* or *Naam* (the True Word) and one can have initiation into this practice from some adept in the line. The moment it comes into contact with *Naam,* the mind gets docile and instead of being an arch-traitor as hitherto, it turns into a positive ally and helps the spirit in its onward march on the Spiritual Path.

O I have got the treasure of Hari Naam,
My mind now wanders not but is in eternal rest.[114]

GURU TEG BAHADUR

Listening to the Dhun, the mind gets stilled,
None of the myriad of ways can work this miracle.
The yogin practices yogic exercises,
The Jnani is immersed in Jnana.
The hermit tires himself out in lone solitude,
The anchorite does endless austerities.
Those who meditate on the mental patterns,
They too suffer from a great delusion.
Learning and knowledge are of not much avail,
For the wise in the end have to rue their wisdom.
The Pandit engages in the recitation of the Vedas
But all his sacred lore fails to take him any nearer to God.
No other means are of any consequence whatever,
The only beneficial way is that of Shabd.
When a Master of the Sound Current appears on the scene,
The disciple too begins to feel the yearning of the new birth.
With the practice of the Surat Shabd Yoga,
The mind-stuff gradually sinks within itself till nothing remains.[115]

SWAMI SHIV DAYAL SINGH

When once this contact with Naam is established, the *Sadhak* always feels the presence of the Higher Power and the Power remains forever with him wherever he

may be—on the snowy mountain tops or in the burning desert sands. Reveling in the greatness of that Power he leaves all his cares to Him and becomes indifferent to everything around him. He cheerfully accepts whatever comes his way as coming from Him for his benefit alone. He consciously sees the Divine Will at work and smilingly surrenders himself to it with words of genuine gratitude on his lips. He has no longer any wishes and desires of his own except what may be of God. Now he works as a mere instrument moving like an automaton under the influence of that Power. He sees all creatures, high and low, just as tiny specks set in an orderly harmony in the immense Universe surrounding him. He now divines a procession which is orderly, an order which is harmonious, obeying a Will infinitely above him and yet infinitesimally careful of him. In this way is established a complete harmony between the soul of man and the soul of the Universe. At every step he cries forth, Let thy Will be done:

All creatures, the highest to the lowest, are at Thy mercy, and Thou carest for them one and all.
Whatever pleaseth Thee, that is best; Nanak has no other wish but this.[116]

Whatever pleaseth Thee is good,
Thou art forevermore,
O Formless one.[117]

GURU NANAK

O Nanak! Great is the Power of Naam,
Let there be peace unto all, through Thy Will.

The pontifical blessings generally end with the words: *Urbi et Orbi* (to the citizen and the world).

In the end there comes a stage when the *Sadhak* feels no necessity even for prayer.

Sweet art Thy doings,
Nanak desireth only Hari Naam.[118]

In whatsoever state I am, that is a Heaven unto me.[119]

GURU ARJAN

When God is the Knower of the secrets of all, there hardly remains anything to be told Him. With the Lord seated in each one of us and permeating our very being, what need is there to pray and to whom?

Hari is the Indweller and knoweth all,
To whom then art we to tell of us?[120]

GURU ARJAN

What should the lowly urge for
When God is seated within all?[121]

GURU RAM DAS

Saints always live in this state. Being one with His Will and conscious co-workers with Him, prayer of itself becomes a heresy for them and savors of scepticism. Nature's forces simply wait on them. However slight a thought may arise, it must, like an immutable law, prevail. God is ever with His devotee and looks after him with more care and attention than any loving mother would give her child.

Guru Arjan tells us:

He who asks from the Lord, whatever it be,
that is granted forthwith,
O Nanak! the words of the devotee do come
true wherever he may be.
For the sake of His devotee He runs far and
near,
And stands ever by his side,
Whatever the devotee asks of Him, that must
happen.[122]

Kabir, describing the condition of his mind, tells us that it has, like the water of Ganges, become so transparent that even God has become enamored of him:

Kabir, thy mind is now as clear as the Ganges
water.
Even God Himself restlessly follows thee shout-
ing, "Kabir, Kabir."[123]

When all the desires of a devotee get automatically fulfilled, he naturally becomes desireless. The wish-yielding treasure of *Naam*, becoming manifest within, takes care of him at every step.

With the Lord God as a loving Father, the
child has no hunger for aught, for
Thou art the treasure-house of Naam and he
gets whatever he wishes.[124]

The prayers of the devotee cannot go in vain.[125]

GURU ARJAN

When the Great Donor is with the devotee, the devotee

has nothing to pray for; for he is one with Him and there is nothing besides whom he may address.

Guru Arjan draws a wonderful pen-picture of this state of perfect satiety:

Deathless is He and I have nothing to fear,
He being Immortal, I have not to wail;
He is not poor and I have no want,
He being above sorrow and pain, I too have none;
Besides Him there is no destroyer, He and I live eternally,
When He is free, there is nothing to bind me,
Both of us are above the stage of bondage;
He being Immaculate, I too have no stain,
He being within me, what taint can I have?
He has nothing to think of and nothing is left for me to think,
Neither of us has anything to gloss over;
Desireless is He and I too desire nothing,
He is spotlessly pure and so am I,
I have no existence apart from Him, for He alone is:
O Nanak! through the Master has this delusion disappeared:
Having dipped in Him, we are dyed in one color.[126]

(*ii*) *Ask for Guru* (*A competent Living Master*)

The Lord is overflowing in the Guru. "Being immanent in the Guru, He distributes the Word." The Guru is God personified. Pray to the Lord:

Oh Merciful Father, the Destroyer of our ills, be kind and send us the Satguru. He is the very support of our life. Through Him alone we can attain to Thee.

Thou art Merciful and the Destroyer of all our ills. Attend to our prayer. Please make us search for the Satguru, through whom we know Thee.[127]

O Lord, the very Soul of the Universe, grant us faith in Naam (the Mystic Word), and the benevolent and purifying company of the true men.[128]

O Lord, allow us that Satguru, remembering whom we shall be liberated. At his very Darshan (a sight of him) the mind feels exhilarated. We shall again and again lay our very life at his lotus feet.[129]

GURU RAM DAS

Beg from the Lord and the Guru their Divine Vision, complete self-surrender and the gift of *Naam*. Pray also to be saved from the evil tendencies of the mind and the senses. Being Omnipotent, He is capable of granting us all these boons. Besides this, the seekers may pray for the gift of happily resigning to His sweet Will. We have no good qualities in us. Being ignorant and of low mental caliber, we are not well versed in religious ceremonies, etc. Therefore, oh Beloved! have mercy on us. Bestow on us the capacity to sing Thy praises and to remain happy in whatever be Thy Will.

Virtueless, blind, ignorant and unlettered as we are,
We know not what is good for us or for society,
Be merciful, O Lord! that Nanak may sing of Thee,
And may ever rejoice in Thy Will and Pleasure.[130]

GURU RAM DAS

In addition to this, pray for the grant of devotion and of *Naam*.

By repeatedly uttering Thy Naam, we are freed from doubt and fear,
Those who are absorbed in Thy sweet remembrance will be freed from the cycle of birth and death.[131]

GURU ARJAN

We are humble mendicants at Thy door,
Be gracious enough to bless us with Thine Amrit (Nectar) of the Word,
Satguru is my Master Friend, please grant me his contact.[132]

GURU RAM DAS

Forgive me for my lack of good qualities and make me your own, my Master,
Thou art Infinite and Unknowable,
Graciously make known to me Thyself through Shabd—the Mystic Word.[133]

GURU AMAR DAS

My Lord, the Creator, is the Ocean of all goodness,
Who can adequately praise Him?
Saints pray for the gift of the highest bliss of Naam.[134]

GURU ARJAN

We are but humble mendicants and beggars,
Thou art the Protector of our honor,
Be kind and give us the alms of Thy Naam, so that we may remain always intoxicated in Thy love.[135]

GURU AMAR DAS

O Lord! take us under the shadow of Thy protecting wings,
We are unable to do anything on our own,
Graciously give us Thy Naam.[136]

O my Divine Friend, grant that I may every day make an effort to think only of Thee all the time,
O give me a contact with Shabd—the Bread of life.[137]

The company of Saints dyes us with His Naam and all our desires are fulfilled,
Nanak prays for Thy Mercy and Thy Grace and that we may remain absorbed in the sweet memory of Thy lotus feet.[138]

GURU ARJAN

O Rama! make us the servant of Thy Servants.

Grant us the boon to bask in the light of Saints so long as the breath of our life lasts.[139]

GURU RAM DAS

O Merciful Lord! Graciously grant us the radiant dust from the feet of Saints.[140]

GURU AMAR DAS

24. *Guru Is the Greatest Gift of God*

THE truest riches and the greatest gift of God is the Godman, the person who, having realized himself, is established in his Godhead. He is in a sense a polarized God or pole from which God manifests Himself amongst His people. Limitless and Infinite as God is, He is beyond comprehension by finite powers of perception. He can, however, be apprehended in the Master somewhat as a vast sea can be apprehended at the beach with bathing *ghats,* where sea waters gently flow in so bathers can have a safe dip.

As like attracts like, man must of necessity have man as his teacher, for no one else can teach him. The way to God, therefore, lies through man. Some Godman alone can tell us of the "Way out" from the world and a "Way in" into the Kingdom of God, now a Lost Province to mankind in general. The fall of man was brought about by man and the regeneration of man too is to be brought about by man. But there is a world of difference between man and man—the latter being God-in-man.

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He

revealeth His secrets unto His servants the Prophets.[141]

AMOS

All scripture is given by inspiration of God.[142]

ST. PAUL

The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us.[143]

ST. JOHN

Guru is God personified, for God speaks through the Guru.

Poor Nanak speaks whenever He desires him to do so.

GURU NANAK

The words of the Master are the words of Allah, though seemingly uttered by Abdullah (the Servant of God).

MAULANA RUMI

I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works.[144]

CHRIST

The greatest prayer a person can therefore offer to God is that He may, in His unbounded mercy, establish his contact with His prophets who may lead him Godward. The Godman or the Prophet shows him the Way—the Grand Trunk Road that leads to God. It is nothing but the Sound Current or Sound Principle differently called by different sages: the Word or the Holy Spirit by the Christians, *Kalma, Bang-e-Asmani* or *Nida-e-Arshi* by the Mohammedans, *Udgit, Akash Bani, Naad* or *Sruti*

by the Hindus, and *Shabd* or *Naam* by the Sikhs. Zoroaster calls it *Sraosha* and the Theosophists "the Voice of the Silence." Christ speaks of it as "The Voice of the Son of God." God overflows in the Guru and unites man with the Word to reach back to his True Home.

When the dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.[145]

CHRIST

This Sound Current then is the means to salvation. It is the Master Key that unlocks the Kingdom of Heaven. It bestows life eternal on man and restores him once again to the Garden of Eden from which he was driven away by disobedience to God. What greater boon can a man seek from God but restoration to the Kingdom lost by him. It marks the end of his long exile through countless centuries as He hails back the lost sheep to His fold. The Master is the kind Shepherd who, out of compassion, does all this for erring humanity. Such high souls hold a commission from the Most High.

I am come in my Father's name.[146]

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.[147]

CHRIST

We have similar references in the Sikh Scriptures as well.

Kabir knows the secrets of God and brings His message to mankind.

KABIR

He who sent thee into the world, He calls thee

back again and wistfully awaits thy home-coming.

GURU ARJAN

Herein lies the greatness of Master-souls. They effect a reunion between man and God. The long-drawn period of separation comes to an end and the lost child is restored once again to the Father. It marks the Grand Homecoming through endless trials and tribulations. The Saving Grace of God is stirred by the Godman and the purpose of life is fulfilled. Henceforth the Son and the Father are not only reconciled but become one.

From the great deep to the great deep he goes.

TENNYSON

No longer is he an exile in the world but an inheritor of the Kingdom of God, established once more in his native Godhead.

This is the true fulfillment of the covenant between God and man, and the true resurrection or rising from the dead as vouchsafed by the Son of God to man. This is the fulfillment of God's Law and the purpose of human birth.

This is the fundamental Law of God: that no one can reach Him except through Satguru (the Master-soul).[148]

GURU RAM DAS

Again:

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

JOHN DONNE

Therefore, always pray to God to bring us in contact with a Godman—the Master.

25. *What One Should Ask from the Godman*

THE Master is the mouthpiece of God. He is the Pole at which God manifests His Godhood. He is the bathing *ghat* or beach where a person can safely enter into the sea for a dip. He is like a switch which has in it the concentrated energy of the powerhouse. The Son and the Father are one and administer the same Law. "I and my Father are one," says Christ. Clothed in Heavenly Light, He radiates Light into the world.

> *I am the light of the world, and he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.*[149]
>
> CHRIST

God or a Godman is the Treasure House of *Naam*. *Naam* is God's Master-instrument with which He created the Universe and with which He is sustaining it. The moment He withdraws this power of His, the result is disintegration, dissolution and death.

Saint John calls It "Word:"

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

man. And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not.[150]

A prophet, a saint, an apostle is truly the repository of God's Power. He is the veritable abode of God Himself:

God comes into the world in the garb of a Sadh (saint).[151]

GURU ARJAN

Whoever then has a longing for God must hasten to a true Saint and seek God from Him. Nothing but the Saving Grace of the Master can work a true transformation in the worldly-wise man, fully identified as he is with the sensual plane.

I think of Thee and lovingly long for Thee,
I pray to the saints to manifest Thee in me.[152]
I pray to the sadhs for I hear God is of His devotees,
Nanak has an intense longing for Him, O! have mercy.[153]

GURU ARJAN

Separate for ages, unite now O Lord,
This is the greatest desire of my heart.
Hear my prayers through the Master,
Nanak has no other wish but this.[154]

GURU RAM DAS

I pray to the saints for union,
That is what Nanak asks for.[155]

GURU ARJAN

The souls that have realized the Lord, I shall inquire of them,
In all humility, I shall supplicate to know the Way to Him.[156]

GURU NANAK

Saints are the representatives of God, and to them we pray,
We are but filthy worms, O Satguru, grant us the light of Naam.[157]

GURU RAM DAS

Bhai Gurdas has given us a beautiful specimen of prayer for the Sikhs:

I am a depraved sinner and a heretic,
A thief, a gambler and a housebreaker,
A thug that lives on illicit gains,
A constant prey to all kinds of lusts,
A slave to the five passions, viz., lust, anger, greed, attachment and egoism,
A betrayer, an ungrateful wretch, abhorred by all.
O ye, with all these faults, and still more,
Remember the Satguru for He is compassionate indeed.[158]

Once this relationship of Master and disciple is established, the latter becomes fully dependent upon him. The acceptance of the disciple by the Master means acceptance of the entire responsibility of his Karmic debt or burden, including *Prarabdh* (fate or destiny), *Kriyaman*

(actions or deeds performed from day to day), and *Sanchit* Karmas (the storehouse of unfructified karmic impressions). Like an official liquidator, it is now his job to liquidate the debts of the disciple, wind them up and free him from them so as to put him on his feet again for the second birth leading to the life of the spirit.

We are now of the Master, a bond-slave unto Him,
O Nanak! with the relationship of Master and servant, save us now.[159]

GURU RAM DAS

I long for an eternal friend,
Ever true, from end to end.[160]

GURU ARJAN

I pray to the Satguru to lead me to the Friend,
By meeting whom, peace descends and death vanishes.[161]

GURU NANAK

O Master! may I live by beholding Thee,
And my life's aim be fulfilled.
O fulfill my prayers that I may live by Thy Word,
May I ever abide under Thy protection,
Whose value only the blessed few may know,
And that too only through the Master's Grace.
Grant this boon, O my Beloved,
That Thou may ever dwell in my mind.
Nanak has but one wish alone,

That he may never forget the fountainhead of all virtues.[162]

Everything is in Thy Controlling Power, O Destroyer of fear,
So saith Nanak, save the ignorant, O Merciful One.[163]

GURU ARJAN

Seeing that the whole world is being consumed in invisible flames of fire, I come to Thy feet,
I pray, O perfect Master, save us as Thou wilt.[164]

GURU AMAR DAS