



Stories for the Children of Light



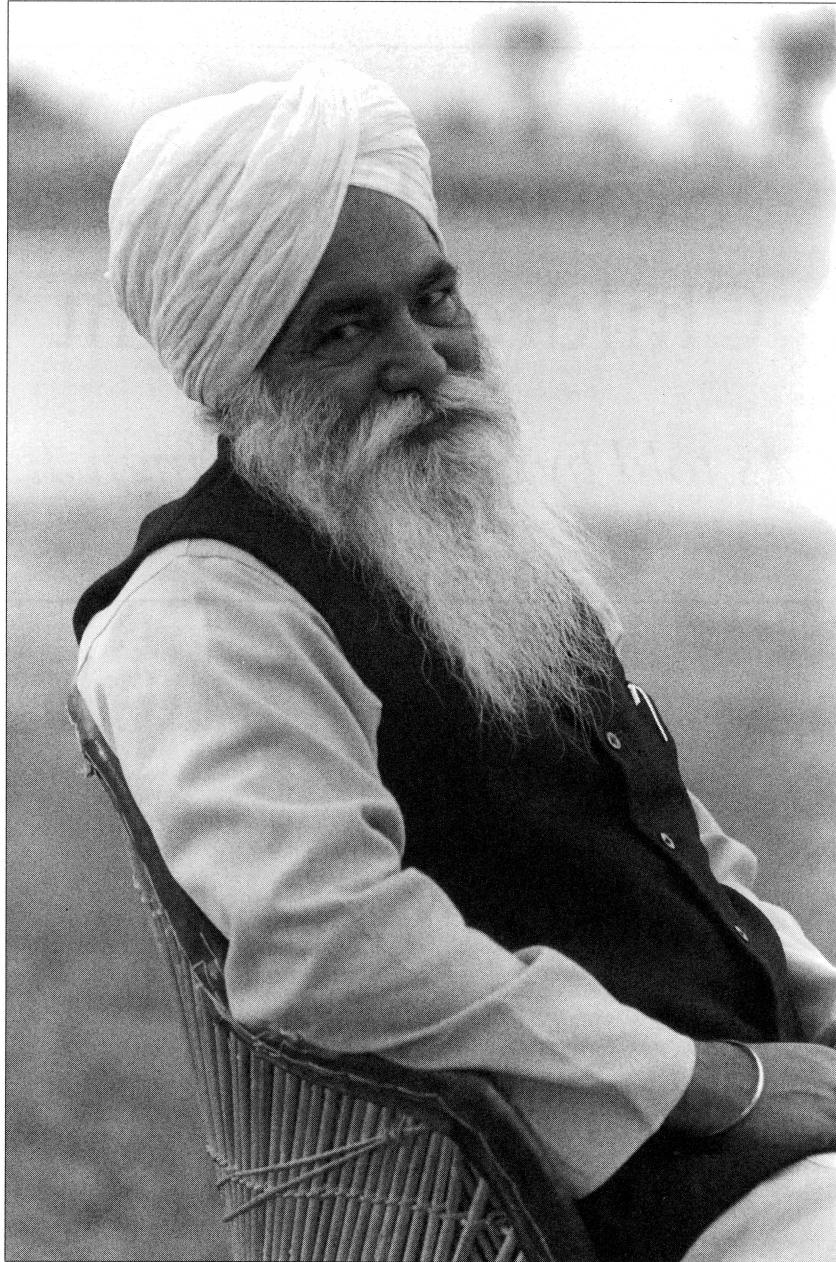
As Told by Sant Ajaib Singh



Stories For The Children of Light

As told by Sant Ajaib Singh Ji

*Illustrated by Krista Hubert • Edited by Claudia Giacinto
Typeset by Zoë Tassencourt*

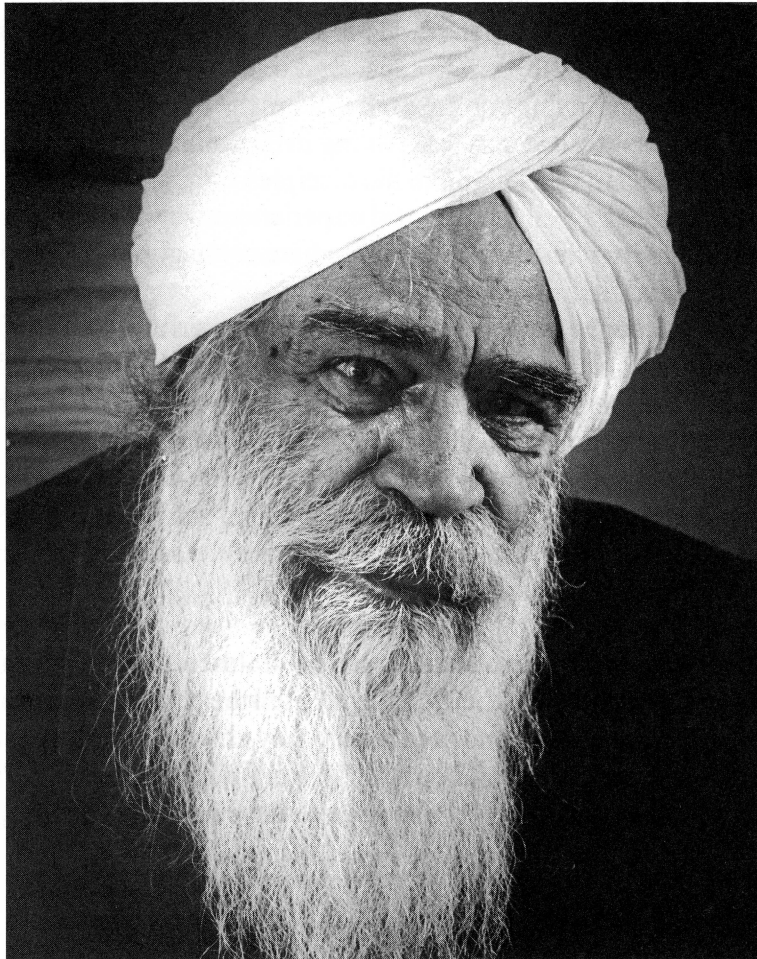


"This world was created from one light."

-- Ajaib Singh

*For more information about Ajaib Singh's teachings
or to order additional copies of this book, please write:
Sant Bani Ashram • Sanbornton, N.H. 03269*

*In Remembrance of Sant Kirpal Singh
"The Stories are Never-Ending..."*



"Bound by Kirpal's love — Almighty God was in Master Kirpal's control. And Kirpal had so much faith in this poor soul, Ajaib, that He gave the Living God to me. Now, day and night, whether I am sleeping or awake, I am always singing the praises of Perfect Master Kirpal. All of the cells of my body are telling stories of Him. And still the stories go on. They are never-ending..."

You may ask, since God is the owner of creation, who could ever be higher than God? The Saint, who comes to this world by God's orders, is higher than God. If anyone is punished by God, the Saint can forgive that person. When the Saint binds the Lord in His chains of love, there is no one who can set God free."

Sant Ajaib Singh

INTRODUCTION

Saints have always presented profound truths in the form of stories and parables. Such stories have been used by each of the great mystics to explain the truths that they each individually lived. These narratives help to persuade and motivate each of us who attempt to follow in their footsteps to take up the noble cause and live these truths ourselves.

The collection of stories in this book are taken from the Satsangs of Sant Ajaib Singh, the Great Master of Surat Shabd Yoga currently living in Rajasthan. These stories have been told several times by "Sant Ji" in talks given to his disciples.

Over the years I have had many delightful experiences when relating these stories to my children. I have repeatedly witnessed their immediate connection and fascination as we have explored these tales and their messages.

At some point the thought came: "Wouldn't it be wonderful if many of these stories could be brought together in one book especially edited for parents to read to their children (or for use in children's Satsangs)." Soon after, I spoke to Sant Ji about this idea. He responded by saying that I may go ahead and write the book, later adding that I should make the stories understandable to the children.

As I started collecting and editing these stories, I came across the following quotes. As you will see, Sant Ji encourages us, as parents, to share the tales of the saints with the younger members of our families.

"In your family life, you should tell the children good stories about Master's love and sympathy for them. When we tell the children these things, they start remembering Master and, as a result, they always find Him guiding them. When we tell our children about the Master, they begin to experience the same kind of love that we feel. In many cases, they receive even more grace than we do."

"When I lived in the Kunichuk Ashram in 77 RB, I adopted a boy. The boy, named Gopi, lived with me for eight years. When I would sit for meditation, Gopi would imitate me. I used to tell him stories about Master Kirpal and I would tell him how he should never be afraid because Master was always with him. I explained to him how no power could hurt him, if he would only remember Master's form. Gopi was very interested in the stories I told him, and he was very fond of Master Kirpal. As a result, during the night, Gopi would often see Kirpal, and tell me beautiful dreams about Him."

"When we tell our children loving stories about the Master, they develop such a remembrance of Him within themselves that every time they meditate, they see Master. If the children have love and faith in Him, because of loving things you have told them, you will find that Master will protect them even in places where nobody else can help..."

"One day a little boy from the village of Sangrana, which is two miles away from 77 RB, started walking. For some reason, he walked the entire two miles to 77 RB by himself. Before he realized that he was in a different village, it grew dark. The little boy knew that he needed to get home to his parents, but it was so dark that he was too scared to walk. So, afraid and alone, he sat down and could not move."

"On that particular night, we drove down that road near where the boy was sitting because we were on our way to 16 PS. Yet, when the boy saw the light of our headlights, he grew even more afraid, because he thought, being so young, that those lights were going to come and kill him. Suddenly, when this child was most afraid, an old man appeared to him and said, 'Don't worry, everything will be all right. I am with you. Just wait until this car comes and I will arrange for you to be taken home.' When our car came near to the boy, somehow Master made us stop and take the child with us."

"When the boy climbed in the car, I asked him what had happened, because I knew it was all Master's grace that we were taking the boy home. The boy told me that he had been very scared but then an old man appeared there to help him. I asked the child if the man was anyone he knew, and the boy said, "No." That boy's family was not initiated, but still Master came to protect him because Master is all gracious. IN 77 RB it was very common for the Master to appear to people in this way. He lead many people to the Path and showed them where to find me."

• • •

"So I hope that all of you who have children will teach them about the love and sympathy of the Master."

-- Rajasthan, 11/2/83

~ ~ ~

"You should tell the children stories that will inspire them to study hard and do well in school, and also stories that make their character good in life. When you give them good teachings, it will be very beneficial for them. Often I have said that children who are born in satsangi families are special. They are dear souls. It has been decided for them in the Court of the Lord that they will definitely come back to their Real Home in this lifetime. That is why they were given a birth in a satsangi family. It is the duty of the parents to teach them discipline and how to understand and follow the Path of the Masters."

-- Australia, 4/28/85

The appendix of this book contains two additional topics of great interest to children. The first is a brief and profound excerpt from Sant Ji's life, and the second explains God's love for each of us. Although not direct quotes from Sant Ji, these pages, as well as all commentaries found in the book, pull heavily from the Master's writings. I hope you and your children will find them helpful.

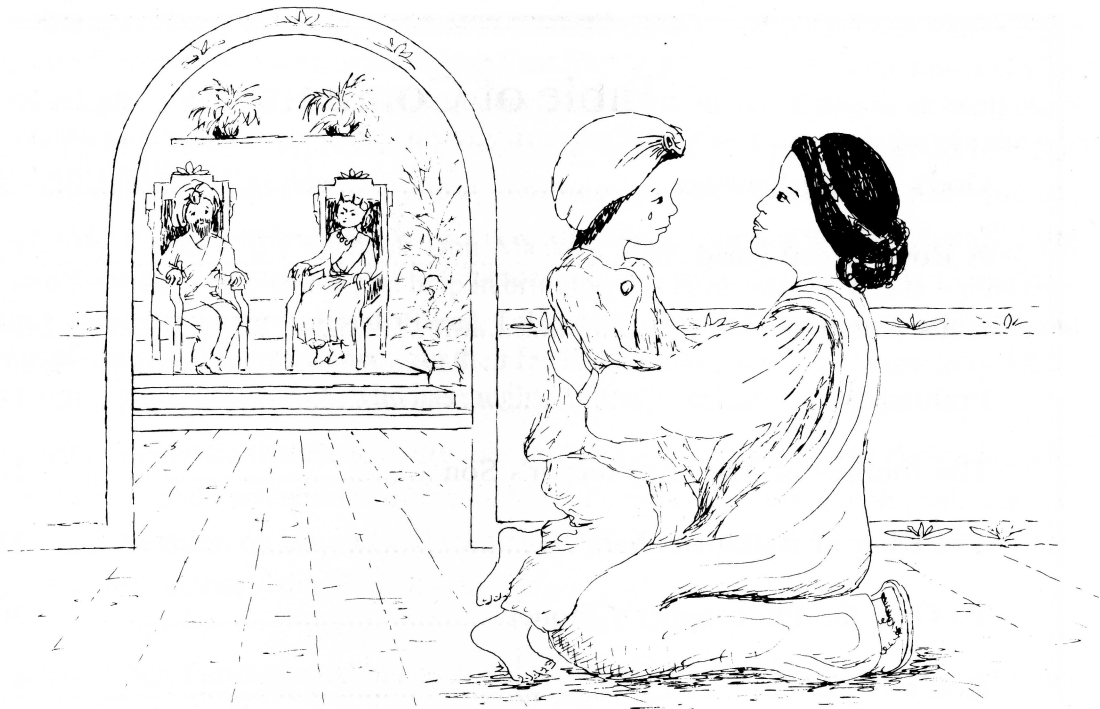
Lastly I would like to thank Don Macken, Dick and Susan Shannon, and Jane Jorgensen for their loving and expert help in bringing this book into our hands -- plus Brian Tate and Connie Brown for material offered. I also wish to thank Tom Giacinto and Nicholas, as well as Marvin and Harriett Reimer, for their feedback and support. Most especially, I thank the beautiful Saint, Ajaib Singh, who has taught my soul everything it knows.

Claudia Giacinto
Timber Cove, California
*Spring 1996**

**Second Edition, first printed in 1992*

Table of Contents

God's Young Devotee	8
A Boy Named Farid	11
Kal's Creation	14
Prahlad	17
The Journey of The Shopkeeper's Son	20
The King of Balkh Bokhara	23
To Gain the Philosopher's Stone	30
God's New Name	33
Three Stories About Namdev	
Feeding the Idols	36
Selling Cloth to God	37
The Divine Carpenter	38
The Missing Chapati	40
Vir Barbaru's Secret	43
The Devotion of Shivri	46
The Tiger and the Cow	48
Searching for the One to Blame	51
The Initiation of Sukhdev	53
• <i>Appendix</i>	
<i>The Mystic Child — A brief life excerpt</i>	59
<i>How Much Does God Love Me?</i>	61
• <i>Glossary</i>	62



God's Young Devotee

Ever since the beginning of time, brave souls have been born into this world who have spent their lives searching for God Almighty. Women have walked the holy path as well as men. But perhaps the most blessed souls of all have been the children who have pleased their beloved Lord and become saints while they were still young. One such child was a boy named Dru who lived long ago in India. Because of his devotion, he is remembered even today.

Dru was a prince and he lived in a grand palace, being the eldest son of a Queen. Dru's father, the king, was not only married to one wife, he had two. Yet, as fate would have it, Dru's mother was not the king's favorite. The more favored of the queens was the newer wife who sat by his side throughout the day and enjoyed most of the king's attention.

One day when Dru was five years old, he came running in from play to see his father. As he scampered into the palace, Dru ran straight up to the king, who was sitting with his favorite queen, and started to crawl up into the king's comfortable lap. But no sooner had he reached for his father than the queen stopped Dru, saying, "If you had wanted to sit on your father's lap, you should have been born from my body!"

Hearing these sharp words, Dru was horrified. Sad and afraid, he ran to his mother. "Mother!" he called, "Are you really the queen or are you just the king's slave?" "Dear son," she answered lovingly, "of course I am the queen. But I am not being treated with the kind of honor that a queen should be given because I didn't do good things in my past lifetime. This is the reason that the king has married a new wife and you are not allowed to enjoy your father's company." Deep in thought, Dru asked, "Mother, tell me what to do to change my enemies into friends — I want to be friends with everyone in the world!" Dru's mother answered, "Dear son, there is only one way to win the love of everyone in the world, and that's by giving your heart and mind to God. If you meditate on God's Naam, you can do anything, even turn an enemy into a friend."

Taking his mother's words deep into his heart, Dru began longing to know God, and to begin doing the holy meditation that his mother had spoken of. Day by day, the feeling grew stronger until one day Dru could wait no longer. Trusting the Lord's protection, he decided that he would give up his safe home and comfortable life in the palace to search for the path to God. Even though Dru was just a young child of five, he left the only home and family he had ever known and went to live alone in the jungle.

Now that Dru was no longer a prince, but a humble seeker of the Lord's favor, Dru tried to meditate, but he did not know how. Finally, because God always helps his dear children find Him, Dru's problem attracted the attention of a heavenly wiseman named Narada. From his high home, Narada could see that a brave young boy was setting out to look for God, but had no chance of finding Him because no Master lived nearby. So, to see that the boy was safely guided along the spiritual way, Narada appeared to Dru in the jungle to teach him himself.

At first Narada tested Dru. He told the boy, "Look at yourself! You're just a child. What are you doing trying to meditate? You'll never be able to do it!" Narada knew that if Dru could be talked out of finding God, that it meant Dru was not ready to meditate. But as Narada was soon to find out, Dru had no thought of giving up his holy search -- and nothing Narada said to Dru could change his mind. Seeing the strength of the boy's desire, Narada initiated him into the holy Naam.

Now that Dru had been put on the path which he so longed to find, he began the work of meditation. From that day onward, Dru meditated a lot, and after some time, became perfect. In the same way as a drop of bright water feels joy when it once again joins

its mother-ocean, so too, did Dru feel boundless joy to once more see God. With the Lord's Grace, Dru's heart found its home.

The fragrance of a Saint is sweet, and news of such a one can never be hidden for long. So it was with Dru. In time, Dru's father heard news of his son's success in meditation, and he wanted to come see him. When the king stood in front of Dru once again, his son was no longer the child who had left his kingdom behind. He was someone who had grown in wisdom and beauty and interested the king very much.

"Come back to where you belong, Dru," said the king. "Now that I am older, it's time for you to come and rule the kingdom in my place." But Dru had long ago learned that his true home was within. "No, father," Dru lovingly answered, "the kingdom that you are offering me is unreal — and I have no use for it. My kingdom is now the region of Sach Khand."

~ ~ ~

Even though Dru was only five years old, he had a great desire to do God's devotion. Because of this desire, his wish was granted. Even as a child, he meditated and won life's highest prize. He reached his beautiful and radiant home, Sach Khand, and found true happiness.



A Boy Named Farid

When Farid was just a little boy, his mother, who meditated a lot, used to tell him about meditation. She herself was a good meditator — in fact, she rose very high within. So she wanted to share this gift with her son.

One day his mother said to Farid, “Dear One, it’s time that you learned to meditate. Would you like to try?” Farid answered, “Why should I want to meditate? Will God give me candy if I do?” Farid’s mother, who knew children love candy, said, “Yes, of course, God will not only give you candy, but he will make you rich!” Hearing this, Farid perked up. “OK!” he said, “I’ll do it.”

Farid’s mother rolled out a prayer mat and seated her son comfortably in the middle of it. “Now, close your eyes, Son, and remember God. If you do, God will send you sweets!” she said. So Farid closed his eyes. After a few minutes, his mother came back. “Okay, Dear One, open your eyes and see what you have gotten from God,” she said cheerfully. When Farid reached under his prayer mat, he pulled out a delicious-looking piece of candy which he quickly popped into his mouth. Tasting its sweetness, Farid was very happy.

A couple of days went by the same way. On the third day, the mother thought, "I wonder if Farid is meditating because he wants to or because I told him to do it." She decided that she would test him to find out. The next day she told Farid, "Today you can skip meditation if you want to. Why don't you do something different with your day?" "But Farid wanted no part of such an idea. "Mother," he said seriously, "I've got to meditate right now! God wants to give me the candy and I don't want to keep Him waiting!" And with that he sat down and closed his eyes.

Seeing for certain that Farid really liked to meditate, Farid's mother decided to give him a taste of the real "sweetness" of meditation. Because she was a high soul, she was able to put her attention on her son and take him high enough in meditation to really feel the happiness that comes from God and, in fact, *is* God.

Later, when Farid opened his eyes, his mother said what she always said to him when he had finished, "Dear One, look under your prayer mat and see what God has left for you today!" But on this particular day, something was different for Farid; something was new. Farid did not reach eagerly with his fingers to try to find the delicious candy that was surely hidden there. Without even popping that brightly colored candy into his mouth, he was smiling — just sitting there, he was as bright as a flower in the noonday sun. After a time, Farid said, "Mother, candy and sugar are very delicious — milk and honey are sweet — but nothing in this world is as sweet as God's Naam. This is by far the sweetest thing of all!"

Nowadays, we read about "Sheikh" Farid in history books, because he grew up to be a very great saint who helped many people. But the story of his love for God, and God's love for Him really began at that moment when he loved God's Naam even more than candy.

~ ~ ~

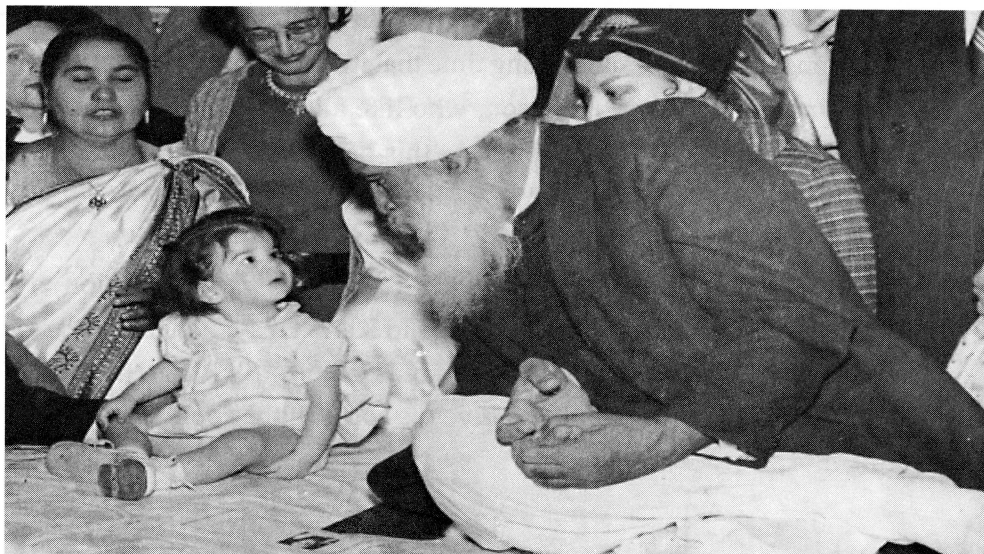
Sometimes, growing up in satsangi families, children are naturally curious as to why their family members or friends want to meditate. The children may ask themselves, "What is meditation — and why do people do it?" This is a good question.

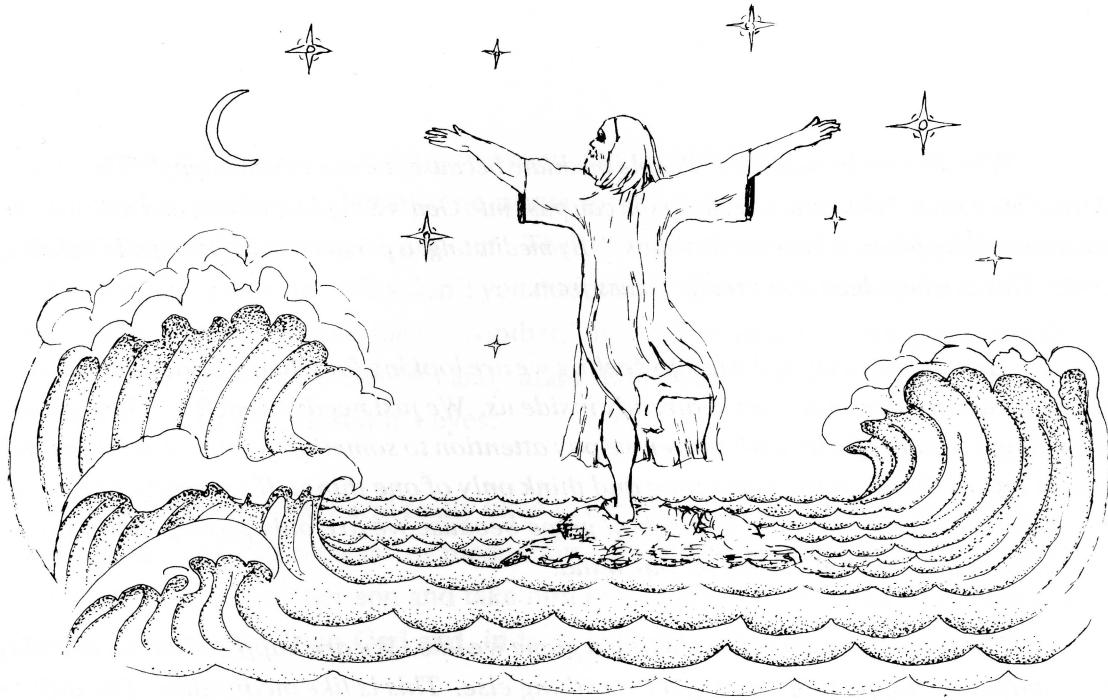
Why do people meditate? People meditate because it makes them happy! The great saint Kirpal once said, "With practice, a person can pass into God's Kingdom within, and take a dip in His fountain of Happiness whenever he wants." By meditating, a person can begin to feel God all of the time. This is where happiness really comes from.

Masters tell us that the happy feeling we are looking for when we go to movies or walk in the forest or play with a pet is already inside us. We just need to reach it. They tell us that we will get a happy feeling whenever we pay attention to something -- when we stop thinking about lots of things at the same time and think only of one thing. If we really like baseball, we may feel happy watching a baseball game because we are only paying attention to one thing; we have only one thing on our mind.

The same thing goes for playing a game we like. We are happy while we are playing it — maybe so happy that we forget everything else. This is like meditation. The difference is that we are happy seeing or playing the game only until the game is over. When the game stops, that happy feeling goes away. When we meditate, we are paying attention to God and God never goes away. There is no end to God. Worldly things all change, and sometimes they even disappear. God never changes. Years ago, the little boy named Farid found out what it feels like to put all of his attention on God, for at least a while. Today we have the opportunity to experience this too.

When we meet a Perfect Master who teaches us to meditate, we are given the chance, like Farid, to hear and see the beautiful things within ourselves that most people can only dream of. God's light comes within us and we feel blessed. When we hear God's sweet heavenly sounds singing inside us, we never feel alone. In this way, we come to feel the endless ocean of love that God shares with us — and, in fact, is us. Then, like the young boy Farid, we become very happy!





Kal's Creation

In the beginning there was God. When God decided to become many forms from just being one, he created his sons. One of these sons was Kal Niranjana, the Negative Power, who was born from the most beautiful part of God's body. And out of the Ocean of Love, which was God, the souls were born. The souls were drops of God's eternal ocean and were made from His love. The souls lived in God, drank His nectar and were very happy.

To win God's favor, Kal Niranjana did a most difficult task. He meditated standing on one foot for billions of years — such a long time that it stirred God's mercy. Seeing Kal's devotion, God was moved to reward this son, who like all of God's children, was dear to his father. God asked him, "Why have you done this hard task? What would you like me to give you?"

Kal answered, "Your creation is too small for me. I want a creation of my own where I can be Master and do what I want." God told Kal, "Okay, you may go make some worlds of your own." Then Kal asked for the souls. He told God, "I need life for my creation. Only You can make life, so please give me some of the souls to live in the worlds that I am making!"

Because God was Kal's loving father, he was merciful on his son and told him, "Yes, you may have the souls." But, in his heart, God worried whether they would do well in the land of the Negative Power. God thought, "How will I protect these dear souls who are made of my essence?" God told the souls what they had to do. He said, "I am sending you to live in Kal's creation where he will make many things for you." Hearing that they must leave Sach Khand, the souls answered, "How do we know that Kal will treat us well and put us in places that are good for us?" God promised, "If Kal causes you pain, you only have to call me and I will come to save you. Kal will make many bodies for you which you will have to live in. Some will be animal, some will be insect or vegetable, but he will also give you at least one human body. If you cry for me while you are in that body, I will come."

God told Kal his orders. He said, "Make your creation, but be sure to give a human body to my saint who I will send to your world; and you must give a human body to each soul who has finished going through the other lower bodies." Kal agreed to all that God told him to do. He said, "I'll do as you ask, but the saint that you send should not tell the souls in my creation anything about their past lives, and he should not perform miracles. I want all of the souls to think the body I give them is good, even if it is sick or hunchbacked." Kal knew that if the souls in his world could see how sad their lives really were, they would all want to go home.

So the souls were taken to Kal's world. And in Kal's many-formed, many-colored creation, the souls were made to forget who they were and where they had come from. Soon the souls, who had hoped for a good life in Kal's kingdom were feeling the pain of living under Kal's rule. Trapped and unhappy, the souls cried for God, and God heard them. He called his beloved son, Kabir, and said, "Go into the world and bring back every soul who is yearning for me."

As God requested, Kabir went to Kal's creation. When Kal saw him coming, he was deeply worried and told Kabir, "God has given this creation to me, and now you're coming to ruin it! You should give me something!" Then Kal tried to trick Kabir into telling him secrets about the disciples. Kal said, "If you'll let me know which souls are going to be initiated, I will be sure to leave them alone!" Kabir knew Kal was just looking for a way to bother the souls, and so he kept quiet. Now Kal was frightened, and made himself look very terrifying in order to show Kabir his great power. But Kabir was not afraid because he knew God's glory was within him.

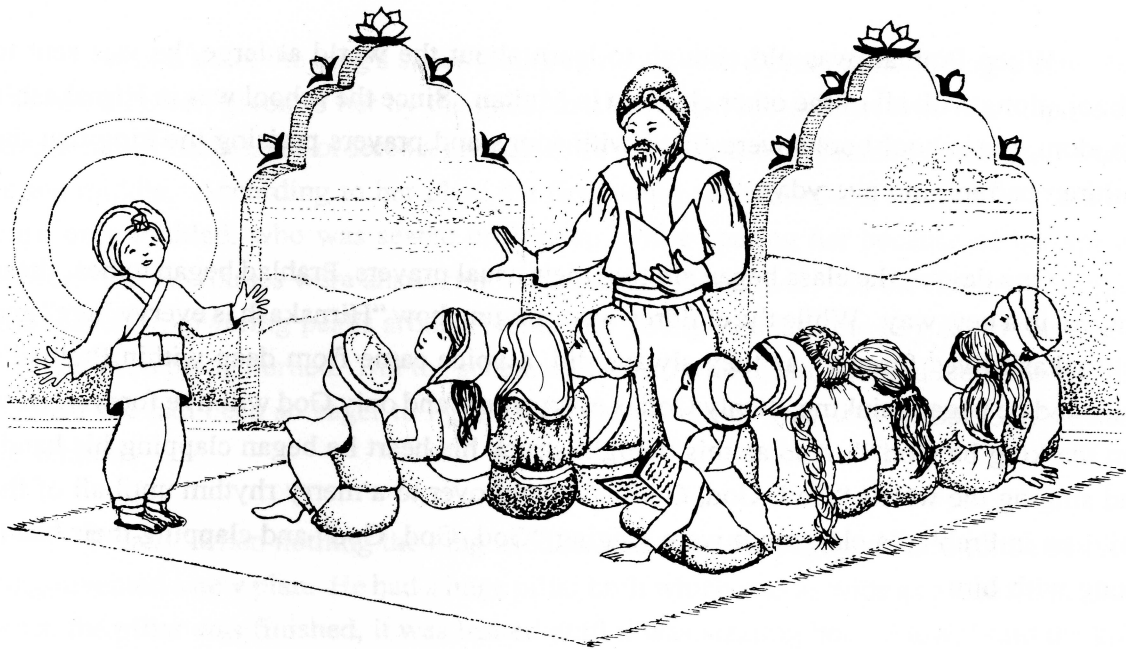
Having failed to defeat Kabir with tricks, Kal declared war. He told his servants, "Kabir is my enemy. He is here to take away the souls, so give him trouble!" From that time on, Kal worked against Kabir with all his might. Once Kabir was tied up in a bundle and thrown in front of a crazed elephant. But the elephant understood that Kabir was God's beloved and would not step on him no matter how much he was goaded. Instead, he came and bowed down at the Saint's feet.

Another time, Kabir's hands and feet were bound with heavy iron chains. Weights were attached to his body, and he was thrown into the Ganges River to drown. But with God's grace, the chains were broken, and Kabir floated up and sat on top of the water, cross-legged, as if in meditation.

Doing God's work, Kabir rescued many yearning souls scattered all over the world. Kabir traveled from place to place, telling the souls, "You are living in a foreign land! Listen within and you will hear the sound coming from your real home. Look inside and you will see the light of your true home!" Kabir was the very first saint to ever come into the world for the sake of the souls. Because God was protecting His children, he made a path that led to Him and He sent the Saints to guide souls back to His Ocean of Love. As long as there are souls in the world crying for Him, God will send Saints to show them the way.

~ ~ ~

What is it like for us to go back to Sach Khand, after being away so long? Kabir has told the story of his disciple, Queen Indra Mati so that we may get an idea of how it might feel: When Indra Mati's life in the world became too hard for her to bear, she begged her Master, Kabir, to take her Home — and this he did... When Indra stood at the door to Sach Khand, she felt happy just to look at the sights before her. As she entered, all of the souls came joyfully out to greet her, hugging her and singing the welcome song. Everyone gave her great honor. "You are a blessed soul!" said the souls. "You have seen and recognized the Great Master! It's good you are free from Kal. Come!" they said, "Come with us, Indra Mati, to get God's darshan!" Very excitedly, the souls and Indra Mati began walking together, singing the happy song, praying for a glimpse of the Lord. When God showed them all his enchanting form, the souls' faces became beautiful. They bowed before their Lord and put their attention on Him. When Indra Mati saw her shining God before her, and drank His bright nectar, she overflowed with joy. God put both His hands on her soul and she grew as happy as the lotus that blooms in sunlight. Now she glowed as brightly as sixteen suns!



Prahlad

In the land of Multan there lived a king by the name of Hirnakash who had a special power. The gods had given him a boon whereby no man or animal could ever kill him. He could never die during the day or night, and he could not be killed either inside a building or outdoors. Hirnakash was a proud, self-centered king, so he thought to himself, "There isn't a creature on earth that is neither man nor animal, and there is no time that is neither night or day. And no place under the sun is neither indoors or out. It's plain to see that I am never going to die! I will live forever. I am surely God!"

So the king told the people of Multan, "Hirnakash is God! From now on you will worship me!" So the people did as their king ordered. They began praising the name of Hirnakash and offering all of their prayers to him, because it was not safe to go against the wishes of their ruler. Throughout Multan, a new kind of prayer was spoken. "Hirnakash is in the sky and the sea. Hirnakash lives forever!" said the people of the kingdom praising their new God.

Now, seeing how the innocent souls in Multan were being led astray, God Almighty was not pleased. To set matters right, God sent a pure soul to earth who was born as the king's own son. The child's name was to be Prahlad.

When Prahlad was old enough to learn about the world at large, he was sent to school, along with all of the other children in Multan. Since the school was in Hirnakash's kingdom, the school books were filled with songs and prayers praising the king that the children had to sing everyday.

One day, as the class began singing their usual prayers, Prahlad began to hear these prayers in a new way. While the children were singing how "Hirnakash is everywhere" and "Hirnakash lives forever" as they always did, a voice came from deep within Prahlad's soul, and he began thinking, "Only God is everywhere and only God will live forever. How can the king be God?" And as this thought struck his heart he began clapping his hands and singing the words "God, God, God" over and over to a merry rhythm until all of the children in Prahlad's classroom were singing "God, God, God" and clapping their hands along with him.

As soon as the teacher saw what was happening, he began to worry and fret, thinking about what the king might do to him if he heard what the children were saying. So the teacher ran straight to Hirnakash to tell him all that had taken place. "King Hirnakash," cried the teacher as he stood before the king, "Your child is ruined, and now he is ruining all of the other children too!"

In order to persuade Prahlad to change his ways, the king called for his son. As hard as the king tried to prove to Prahlad that he, the king, was God and that there was no other God but he, Prahlad could only answer, "Father, I have to worship the true God of my soul! Who else can help me rise above this world?"

Finally realizing that all of his words were wasted on the young boy, the king lost all control. In an instant, he flew into a fit of anger, grabbed his sword from its scabbard and began to strike wildly at Prahlad hoping to be rid of this boy once and for all. Yet as fierce and as sharp as the king's sword surely was, the king could not touch Prahlad. Prahlad was protected by God.

Now the king's anger turned cold. "If Prahlad will not worship Hirnakash," thought the king, "then even if he is my son, he will have to be punished!" In hopes of fulfilling this desire, the king had Prahlad taken to the top of a high hill and thrown from its peak. Yet, just as before, Prahlad was not hurt. He was completely safe in the arms of God.

After a time, the king's sister Holka came up with a cruel idea. Being a magician, she had a power, given to her by the gods, that protected her against fire. To help rid the kingdom of Prahlad, she ordered a great bonfire to be built with Prahlad and herself seated in the middle. According to her plan, the fire would rise up around the two of them and burn only Prahlad, who was seated on her lap, while sparing her because of her special power. Yet the flames were answering to an even higher power. As the fire grew brighter and leaped in towering peaks around Holka and young Prahlad, the boy sat in the flames without even being burned. But the scheming Holka, who meant Prahlad harm, died in the bonfire she had been so eager to light. Once again Prahlad was safe within God's strong protection.

Finally, when nothing the king tried caused even the slightest harm to the boy, the king invented a new plan. He had a huge pillar built which was as wide as a tree trunk. And when the pillar was finished, it was heated until it was sizzling hot. "Now," said the king to Prahlad, "we will see if your God really protects you or not! Wrap your arms around this burning pillar." Before Prahlad had a chance to feel afraid, God appeared to Prahlad in the body of a tiny ant that walked lightly back and forth on the face of the burning pillar without suffering any pain. Seeing that the ant was not burned, Prahlad felt the courage to do exactly what Hirnakash had asked. Happily and with full trust in God, Prahlad put his body up against the hot pillar, wrapping his arms tightly around it.

Then something very surprising happened. Just as Prahlad touched the pillar, it grew cool to the touch and exploded into a mass of flying rubble. Then out of its midst stepped God himself in the body of the great beast, Narsing, who was half man and half lion. And so at twilight, which is neither day or night, the once all-powerful King Hirnakash was caught in a doorway, which is neither inside or out, and he died like an ordinary man. But the pure young devotee of God, Prahlad, was saved. In the boy's moment of greatest need, God came and protected him, just as God has sheltered all creatures who love and have faith in Him since time began.



The Journey of the Shopkeeper's Son

There was once a shopkeeper who always went to satsang. A time came, however, when he was not able to go, so he sent his son instead. As the son was still young, he had never been to satsang, but that day he heard two things: always be kind to the poor and to cows because they are sacred. Also, be good to the saints.

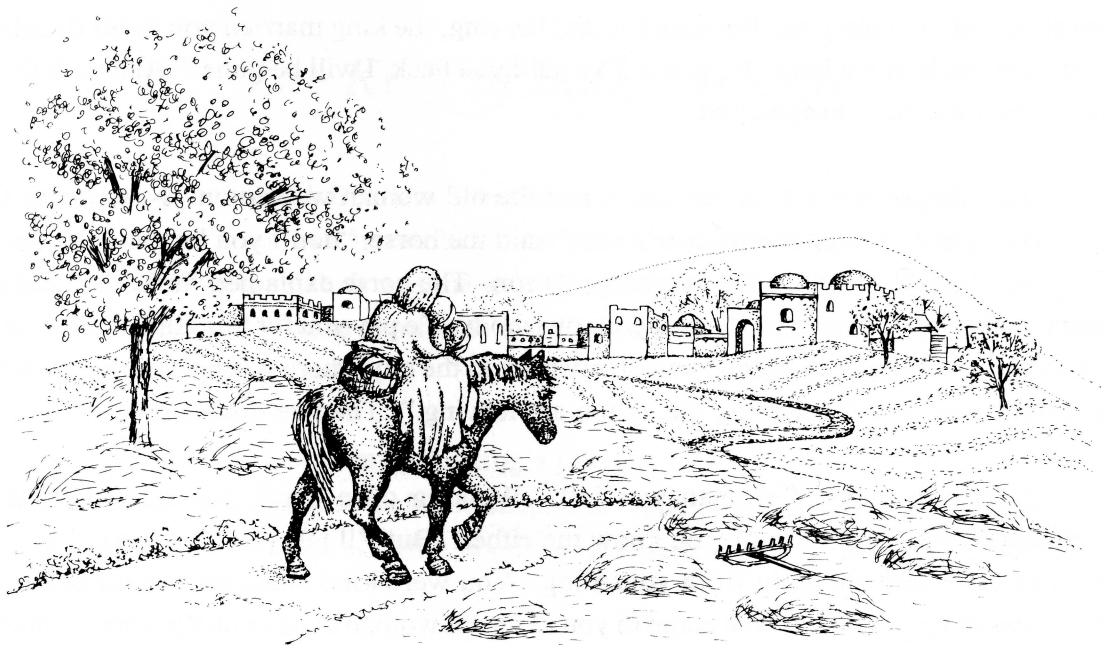
The next day while the son was working alone in the shop, a cow wandered in and began eating some of their grain. The son thought, "God has blessed my family with so much! What harm can it do if this cow takes a little food?" Soon the father came back. Seeing the cow in the shop, he demanded, "Are you blind? That cow is eating our food, and you're not even chasing her away!" The son answered, "Father, yesterday in satsang I heard that we should be kind to cows and to poor people. We earn plenty of money. What harm can it do if we share a little of our food?" Now the father was really angry. "If I did everything they said to do in satsang," he said, "I'd be a poor man! Leave my house. You're a bad son!"

So the boy left his home. He walked out of town and started down the road that led to distant places. When he had walked a short way, the boy came upon a snake about to catch and eat a frog. The frog was trying to get away. It didn't want to die. The shopkeeper's son helped to free the frog, but then he realized that the snake was very hungry. The frog was the only food the snake had caught in many days, and now it too was gone. Seeing this, the boy took his knife and cut a piece of flesh from his own body to feed to the snake.

Walking on, the boy was in terrible pain. He kept travelling until he met an old woman on the road who was walking with a little boy and carrying something very heavy on her head. Seeing the shopkeeper's son, she said, "Dear son, if you will carry this heavy load for me, I will be so thankful." In the same way as the shopkeeper's son had been kind to the cow, the frog and the snake, he carried the woman's load for her even though he was feeling a lot of pain.

Walking further down the road, the old woman and the shopkeeper's son and the little boy met a man who was leading a horse behind him. The old woman said to the shopkeeper's son, "Dear son, I have some money with me. If you wish, you may have it to buy this horse. Then we can ride for the rest of our journey." So he bought the horse. Then the old woman, the little boy and the shopkeeper's son rode it all the way to a city where they rested for the night.

The next day the old woman said, "Dear one, I have some more money that I'd like to give you. Please take it to buy food for yourself and to start some kind of business." The shopkeeper's son did as the old woman asked. Before long, he got a job working in the court of the king.



As it happened, the king of that land had a ring. It was a magic ring that gave him the power to play with the fairies in heaven. One day while the king was bathing in his pool, the ring slipped off his finger and was lost. The king offered a reward to get it back. He told the people of the court that he would give the person who found it anything he

wanted. "I will find it!" offered the little boy who had been traveling with the old woman and the shopkeeper's son; then he jumped into the king's pool and quickly pulled out the ring. The grateful king said, "Now you may ask for whatever you want." The boy answered, "I don't want anything for myself. I would like you to give the reward to the shopkeeper's son. Marry him to your daughter and then one day he too will be king."

So the shopkeeper's son and the princess were married, and in due time, he became king. Now that the shopkeeper's son was living comfortably as king, the old woman, the horse and the little boy told him, "Your life here is good and your future looks bright, so now it's time for us to go." And in a short while they began their trip homeward with the shopkeeper's son walking close beside them.

After some time on the road, the little boy told the shopkeeper's son, "It's time for me to leave you now, but before I go, please tell me, do you know who I really am?" The shopkeeper's son said, "No, I don't." Then the little boy said, "I am the frog you saved from the hungry snake. I came back to you as a little boy to pay you for your kindness. I was born especially to help you. Because I found the ring, the king married you to his daughter and in turn made you a king. Now that I've paid you back, I will be gone." And with those words, the little boy disappeared.

The shopkeeper's son, the horse, and the old woman walked on. Now it was the horse who spoke. "Dear shopkeeper's son," said the horse, "don't you know who I really am?" "No, I don't," replied the shopkeeper's son. The horse explained further, "I am the hungry snake you fed with the flesh of your own body. To pay you for this kind favor, I came back to you as a horse and carried you on my back to the city where you became King. Now that I have paid you for helping me, I too am leaving." Then he disappeared.

Now only the old woman was left. Walking on a ways, she said, "Oh, dear shopkeeper's son, I don't think you know me either! But I'll tell you who I am. I am the cow who came and ate grain from your shop. You were kind and didn't chase me away when I was hungry. Now I have come to you as an old woman to pay you for your kindness. To help make your life good, I gave you money to buy the horse, get food to eat, and find yourself a job. Now that you are finally king, there is nothing more for me to do." Before leaving she added, "You were made a King because you did what you learned in satsang. You were good to me and the other creatures whom you met. If you always go to satsang and obey the things you learn there, you will get the greatest happiness of all. Follow the saints and they will make you free from this world." And with this advice, she disappeared.



The King of Balkh Bokhara

Long ago in Balkh Bokhara, there lived a king named Ibrahim Adham. Being ruler of all the land, he lived in a beautiful palace surrounded by wealth and luxury. Even the bed he slept on was special. It was made of the most fragrant flowers that had been picked only for his pleasure. Yet, as comfortable as King Ibrahim surely was, his heart was heavy with a longing to meet God.

One evening, in answer to the king's prayers, God sent his beloved saint, Kabir, to Ibrahim's palace disguised as a simple shepherd. When the king discovered the so-called shepherd, the stranger was walking about on the palace roof as if he were looking for something.

Seeing that an outsider had somehow slipped past his guards and entered private quarters, the king was shocked. "Who are you?" asked the king, "and what are you doing here on my roof?" Kabir answered, "I am looking for my lost camels!" Hearing such an unbelievable answer, the king shouted, "You fool! You are on a palace roof. How could you ever hope to find camels up here?"

Kabir answered, "I am looking for camels on your roof in the same way that you are looking for God while sleeping on a bed of flowers!" After the shepherd left, King Ibrahim was left to ponder the saint's words. "Why didn't I ask that man how I do find God?" wondered the king.

The next morning, the king was once again visited by a mysterious stranger who walked into the king's court without being invited. So powerful was their visitor that the guards could do nothing to stop him. Passing the palace servants as though they were not even there, the stranger walked straight up to the king and said in a strong voice, "I would like to spend the night in this hotel. How do I go about it?"

The king was so surprised to hear his great palace called a hotel, he could barely speak. "Sir," answered King Ibrahim, "this building is not a mere hotel — it is the palace of the king!" The stranger, who was really Kabir, asked, "Okay, if this place is not a hotel, then tell me, how many people have lived here besides you?" The king thought about the stranger's question and answered, "All my ancestors have lived in this palace. This was my father's home and my grandfather's before him. In fact, it has been the home of every king of Balkh Bokhara for hundreds of years."

Kabir looked at the king with his holy eyes and said, "If so many people have come here and then left, isn't it really just a hotel for travelers?" And with those words, the stranger disappeared. With the sound of the saint's words still ringing in his ears, the king was left to think about all he had heard. "That man was telling the truth," thought Ibrahim. "No one stays here forever, so even this mighty palace is nothing better than a hotel! But why didn't I ask him where our real home can be found?" Somehow King Ibrahim knew that God was calling him.

The Search

Now the longing in King Ibrahim's heart began to grow into a fire such as he had never felt before. Drawn by his love for God, the king of Balkh Bokhara left his fine palace and began wandering the world looking for the one true master who could teach him. In his travels, he heard about the land of India with its great holy men and saintly people, so Ibrahim decided to look there too. When the king finally found his way to Kabir, he knew that his long search for a teacher was over. "Master," the king cried, bowing before the holy saint, "I want only to stay here with you! Please teach me the way to meet God!" Kabir

lovingly answered, "How can you stay here and learn from me when I live as a poor weaver, and you are a king?" Tired and humbled by the long, dusty search which he just suffered, the king said, "I am not a king. I am just a beggar. Feed me anything you want and give me whatever work you like, but just let me live here with you!"

The king of Balkh Bokhara was allowed to stay with Kabir as he had hoped. For six years, he lived as Kabir's household servant, weaving, making thread and doing whatever chores he was told to do. Mata Loi, Kabir's tender-hearted wife, watched the king with great amazement, noticing how he worked hard without complaining, and never asked for anything. Finally, she went to Kabir with her thoughts. She said, "Kabir, this poor king has lived as our lowly servant for many years without any reward. Isn't it time for him to get something for all his hard work? Why don't you initiate him now?"

Kabir looked at Mat Loi seriously, "He's not ready," he answered. But Mata Loi could not believe it. She had watched the king change with her very own eyes. "Okay, we'll test him," suggested Kabir, "and if he passes the test, he can be initiated." To prepare for the king's test, Kabir asked Mata Loi to collect a large basketful of vegetable peelings, and to go up onto the roof. Then Kabir told her, "When I call Ibrahim into my room, empty the basketful of garbage onto his head. We'll see what he does."

So Kabir called for the king. "Could you please bring me my coat?" And right away Ibrahim started toward Kabir's door with the coat hanging over his arm. But just as he reached the door, down came the peelings and trash right on the king's head, covering him with juice and bits of vegetable. Suddenly the quiet king, who had grown so humble in his six long years, became angry. He cried, "If we were in Balkh Bokhara, I would see that you were punished for that!" And in a loud voice, he yelled toward the unseen garbage thrower, the same angry words that he would have said if he had been back in his royal palace. Now Mata Loi understood what Kabir had been trying to tell her. The king had served them faithfully, but, in his heart of hearts, he still thought like a king. He would still need a little more time before he was ready to be put on the Path to God.

Six more years passed. Just as before, Ibrahim carried out his chores and served Kabir's family without even the slightest thought for his own comfort. One day Kabir said to Mata Loi, "Okay, the king is ready." Mata Loi answered, "But he is just the same as he was six years ago. I don't see any change in him!" Kabir said, "No, I will show you the difference. Ibrahim has changed a lot."

This time, to test the king, Kabir told Mata Loi to collect garbage, dirt, and filth of the worst kind and to wait, unseen, on the roof until the king came. When the king stood in the doorway, she dropped all of the filth straight onto his head, just as Kabir asked her to do. This time, a very new and different kind of king stood before Mata Loi, covered with garbage from head to toe. The king spoke cheerfully. "Oh, thank you. Thank God!" cried the humble king. "Whoever did this, God bless him! I am even dirtier than his dirt!"

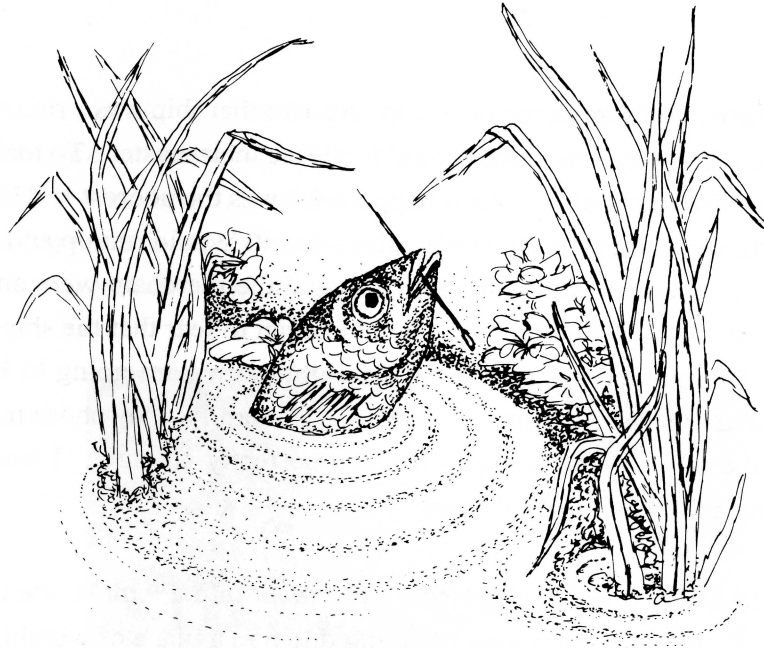


Now King Ibrahim Adham was truly ready for initiation. Twelve years after coming to his Master, the Saint took his disciple to a quiet place and gave him the highest gift of all — the heavenly Light of God and the Music of the Spheres. As Ibrahim sat before his beloved Master, Kabir began telling him about the wonderful worlds within him and, as Kabir spoke, the king began traveling inward to the bright and beautiful places the saint was describing. As region after region of God's glorious kingdom opened up before the king's eyes, Ibrahim's happiness knew no end. And so, because Kabir was a Perfect Master and his disciple was also great in his love for God, the king who had served Kabir so well became perfect in meditation at his very first sitting.

A Visitor From the Court

After the initiation, the king went to live alone and meditate by the side of a river. One day while the king was sitting on the river bank, a hunter happened by. But as fate would have it, the hunter was no stranger to King Ibrahim. He was, in fact, the king's old prime minister from the palace in Balkh Bokhara.

Seeing the king, the prime minister said, “King Ibrahim, it’s you! I’ve been waiting for you to come back and be our king in Balkh Bokhara once again. I have taken care of everything for you for the last twelve years, but I can’t be king. You need to do that. Please come back!”



At that moment, the king was quietly sewing on an old pillow, and in answer to the prime minister’s question, he took the needle he was holding and threw it into the deep, swiftly moving river. “Okay,” answered the king, “I will come back with you if you can bring me that needle!”

The prime minister looked at the dark, cold water and said, “I can bring you a thousand needles just like it, if you will give me a half hour to go get them!” The king said, “No, I want that one.” Then he looked down into the river, putting his Godly attention on the water, and suddenly up popped a fish, carrying the needle in his mouth. Now that Ibrahim was perfect, even the animals wanted to serve him. Lovingly, the king told the minister, “Sir, if your power as prime minister isn’t even strong enough to bring up this tiny needle, what good is it?” Isn’t the power that brought the fish out of the water much better?” The king added, “Now go, I don’t need the kingdom of Balkh Bokhara. I have the kingdom of Sach Khand.”

The King's Happiness

The king of Balkh Bokhara never returned to his kingdom. King Ibrahim was once visited by a man who tried to make fun of him asking, "Have you ever been happy since you left your kingdom?" The king humbly replied, "Yes, I can tell you two times I was very happy."

"The first time, I was traveling on a ship. Aboard that ship was a rich merchant who had many servants. The servants worked hard to please their master. To make him laugh, they decided to put on a funny show. As it happened, I was the poorest and least important person on that ship, so, as a part of the show, the servants would run up and hit me on the head to be funny. Seeing how much the servants and the merchant were enjoying this, I felt very happy. Later during that trip, the captain began to fear that the ship was going to sink. He told us, "We are carrying too much weight, so we are going to have to throw somebody overboard to save this ship." Since I had no family, they chose me. But at that moment, I remembered God and the ship became perfectly all right. I was happy then, because I knew the ship was out of danger."

"Another happy moment took place when I went into a temple one night to sleep. When the Kazi, who was in charge, saw me lying down in a place of worship, he got very upset. He grabbed me by the leg and tried to throw me out. While he was pulling me down the stairs, my head banged on each stair, all the way down. Each time my head would hit

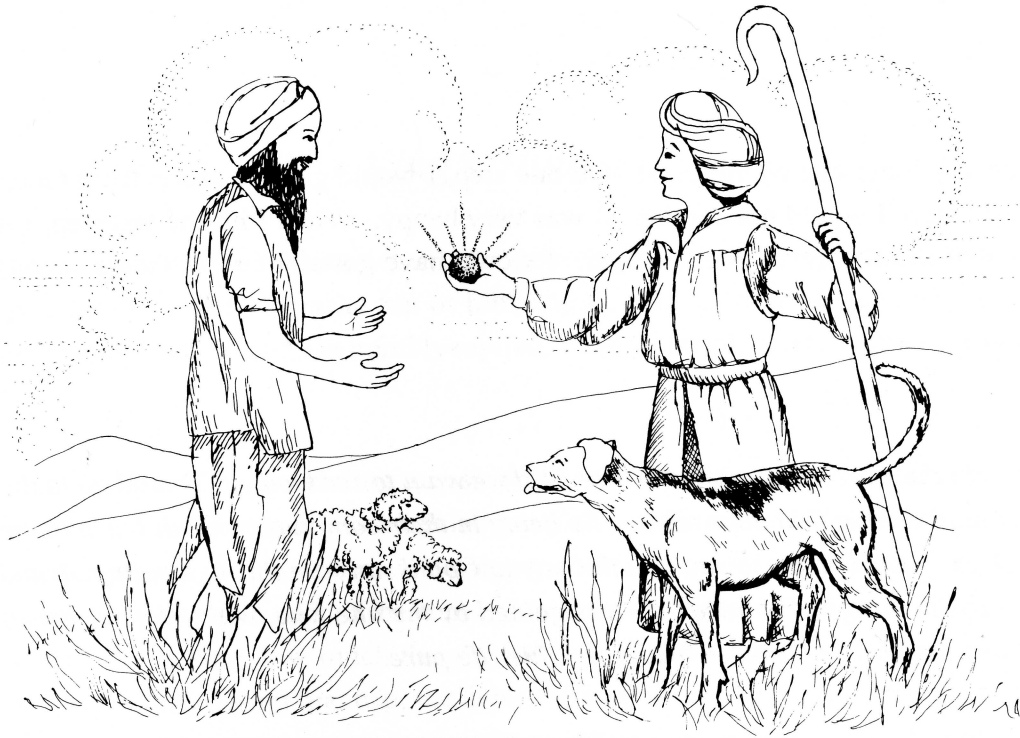


a stair, my inner eye would open. On one step, I would get one secret from God, and on the next step, I would get another. I was very happy. When I hit the last step, I was just sorry that the staircase wasn't longer. I would have gotten more of God's secrets."

~ ~ ~

In the words of Guru Arjan Dev, "If we want to see God, we should go to those who have found God within themselves. By being in their company, we will learn to meet Him ourselves." Kabir used to say that the way to God is not won through eating, drinking and enjoying the things of this world. It is gained by the one who, with a loving heart, serves the Lord and his creation — and keeps his life pure.





To Gain the Philosopher's Stone

King Bhoj was a scholar, a man of books and learning. Throughout all of India, Bhoj was known as a great master of his country's writing and language. The king's court was also full of great experts. It was the job of the king's fine scholars to know almost everything about all subjects. Indeed, it did seem that there was not a question that these men could not answer.

One day, however, a man came to King Bhoj's court and asked a question that no one could figure out. The man asked, "What is the well that one can never get out of?" The wise scholars of the court listened to the question, and each in turn offered his best answer. But not one of the answers was good enough.

Finally King Bhoj went to the most honored wise man of all. "Pundit Ji," said the king to the valued scholar, who was a kind of priest. "I want you to answer a question for me. Bring me the answer in one week or your job here in my court is finished. You will be forced to leave in shame. The question is "What is the well that one can never get out of?" Of course, the pundit knew that a well was a very deep pit, but more than this, he could not say.

Afraid of what might happen to him if he failed, the pundit started thinking and thinking of what to tell King Bhoj. Finally, in a mood of utter misery, the pundit wandered into the green forest to find the answer. While he was roaming through the woods' most lonely places, he happened to meet a shepherd who was also an initiate of a Perfect Master.

Seeing the pundit's worried face, the shepherd kindly asked him, "Dear Pundit, is there something troubling you? You look so sad." The pundit answered, "Yes, it's true. I am very worried. I have to find the answer to an almost impossible question! I just can't imagine what sort of well it could be that one could fall into and never be able to escape from. What could this question mean?"

The shepherd thought a moment and then answered, "Maybe I can help you. I have something very special in my pocket called a philosopher's stone. It is a magic stone that turns plain iron into gold. If you were to have this stone, you would never have to work for anyone again, not even the king, because you would be rich! You could turn all of the iron in the world into gold. I will give you this stone, but if you want it, you'll have to do exactly what I tell you to do."

Very excited at the idea of being suddenly rich and free of problems, the pundit answered, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do it!" "Okay," said the shepherd, "You've got to do one simple thing. You have to become my disciple. Just take me as your Master and I will give you the stone."

Hearing what the shepherd wanted in exchange for the magic stone, the pundit thought, "No, of course I can't take this simple man as my master. He is just a shepherd while I am a scholar for the king. It's impossible!" But suddenly he remembered the magic stone and quickly changed his mind. Imagining all the riches that could be his, he said, "Okay, I'll do it. Yes, okay, I'll take you as my Master!"

But the shepherd just shook his head. "I'm sorry," he said, "but it took you much too long to decide. I wasted so much time waiting for you that now the only way I can give you the stone is if you drink sheep milk." "Sheep milk!" thought the pundit, "People don't drink sheep milk! And anyway, it's against my religion." "No," he finally answered, "I'm not going to drink any milk that comes from a sheep!" But suddenly, as he was speaking, he remembered the stone. "Oh, but I have to have that stone!" said he, and he quickly added, "Okay, I'll do it. I'll drink sheep milk!" So, again he was willing to stoop.

But the shepherd did not soften. “No, I can’t give you the magic stone. You took much too long to decide. So, at this point, I can give you the stone only if you drink sheep milk from my dog’s drinking bowl.” “Drink from a dog’s dirty dish?” thought the pundit. “That’s too much!” But in that instant, he remembered the wonderful stone that was going to be his, and he gave in. “Okay!” said the pundit, “I’ll drink from your dog’s bowl.”

“No,” answered the shepherd, “You were still much too slow in giving me an answer. Have no doubts — this stone will soon be your very own, but first you have to do one thing: you will have to drink sheep milk from the dog’s bowl that I have mixed with some dirt and poured into a human skull. Drink it and the stone will be yours!” This time the pundit did not waste even a second in thinking about whether what he was being asked to do was right or wrong. As fast as he could get the words out of his mouth, he cried, “Yes, yes — I’ll do it! Whatever you ask, I’ll do it!”

So the shepherd went off to mix up the dirty drink, and then brought back the mixture and handed it to the waiting pundit. As the pundit lifted the skull full of filthy brown sheep milk to his lips, the shepherd suddenly spoke out. “Dear pundit,” said the shepherd, “look at what you are willing to do! And it’s only because you are desiring something. You want the gold!” As the pundit quietly listened, the shepherd explained. “This is the pit. This desire you have is the bottomless well that you were wondering about.” Suddenly, the pundit remembered the question which he had come to the woods to answer! “Now, dear Pundit,” added the shepherd, “I am sure that you can easily grasp the answer to your question: Desire, or greed, is the treacherous well that one can never get out of, once one has jumped in!”

~ ~ ~

In this way, the king’s honored pundit learned a lesson that he would never forget, and, at the same time, was, no doubt, able to give his king a most wise and knowing answer. Greed is a disease that only the Perfect Master and his Naam can cure. As Nanak says, “A greedy man will spend his last hour on earth trying to get rich.”



God's New Name

There once lived a farmer who tilled the land. This farmer plowed his field, watered the garden, and worked from sun up to sun down, doing the one thing he knew, which was farming. But, regarding other things like reading, writing, and the ways of the world, he knew next to nothing, having never been to school. The farmer was a very simple man.

One day while the farmer was working, a holy man happened to pass by. He was the kind of holy man who had meditated and seen a little of the inner planes, but was certainly far from perfect. But the farmer was overjoyed — he could hardly believe his luck, to be visited by such a wise person who could tell him about God, of which the farmer also knew very little. "I don't know much," said the farmer to the holy man. "I can't read, write, or remember big words, but I would like you to teach me one easy holy word that I can say while I work, a name to remember God by. That way, I can do some kind of worship. Can you teach me a name that I will never forget?"

The holy man was not enjoying being with this simple farmer, so to get rid of him, the holy man asked, "Do you think you can remember the name, "Underpants?"

"Underpants" is a simple word!" Since the long, wrap-around Indian underpants were the only clothes the farmer ever wore, the farmer thought he could remember that word for sure, so he cheerfully answered, "Yes, I'm sure I can remember it. I'll use that name for my prayers!"

The farmer was very happy. Now he had a name to repeat that he could definitely remember and, moreover, it would bring him closer to God!" He had so much faith in the power of the word, that he said it to himself all day long. When he was plowing the field, he would say "Underpants." When he watered the garden, he repeated, "Underpants, Underpants," quietly to himself. He did not understand exactly what the word meant, but it was still his prayer. He just thought it was another name for God.

One day, the god Vishnu was sitting in the heavens with his wife, Laksmi, watching the action in the world below. Suddenly, Vishnu began to laugh. "What is it?" asked Laksmi. "What's making you laugh so hard?" Vishnu answered, "I have a new devotee, and this new person who's worshipping me has given me a new name."

Laksmi complained, "You are always talking to me about your devotees, and I've never seen one of them. Why don't you take me to the earth plane so I can see him for myself?" Vishnu agreed. So together they went straight to the home of the farmer.

When they arrived, the farmer was in the midst of a hard work day. Things were not going well. Tired and troubled with family problems, he was leaning over the well trying to draw up water. Yet, as upset as he was feeling, he was still remembering God and saying the name that he had been taught over and over to himself. "Underpants, Underpants," he mumbled under his breath. Vishnu said, "Laksmi, why don't you go over and talk to him? Ask him something about his worship."

So Laksmi walked up to the farmer, eager to find out if he was truly worshipping her husband, or another of the Indian gods. "Farmer," she asked curiously, as he lifted up another heavy pail, "which God are you remembering with this word you are saying?"

Now, Lord Vishnu was watching from a distance and protecting the farmer. Vishnu did not want the farmer to embarrass himself telling Laksmi he worshipped "Underpants." So in that instant, Vishnu made the farmer answer, "I am remembering your husband!" The farmer was in a very bad mood and when you say in India, "I am remembering your

husband," it means, "Don't bother me!" The farmer said it because he was much too fed up to talk.

But Laksmi only heard the farmer's words and thought, "He says he is remembering my husband? How can this be? How could he know that I am Lord Vishnu's wife?" She was so impressed with the poor farmer that she decided that he must be a very great man. "Surely this farmer is Vishnu's greatest devotee!" thought Laksmi, "He knows everything! He's almost a god!"

~ ~ ~

So the farmer who prayed to God, using the name "Underpants" was given honor and glory at least in the eyes of Laksmi. Because of his sincere devotion, his prayers were heard and he was blessed with God's protection.





Three Stories About Namdev

Feeding the Idols

Bhagat Namdev grew up in a family that earned its living through cloth dying and worshipped idols as its religion. The altar in their family home was filled with the many stone gods that his father had carved himself. Each morning, before beginning his prayers, Namdev's father would set bowls full of fresh food and milk in front of his idols as an offering. For his father, this was just a religious custom, because everyone knows that stones do not eat or drink. Later that day, he would go back to the altar and eat up the food himself. But, to Namdev, the empty bowls on his father's altar meant that God was pleased with their gift, and had taken it.

Once Namdev's father had to leave for a day or two because of work, so he told Namdev, "Dear son, I have to go now. But while I'm gone, I want you to worship the idols and give them food just as I do." When Namdev was alone the next morning, he gathered the food and milk and placed it in front of the idols in the same way as his father did. Then Namdev sat down to worship them and wait for the idols to start eating. But, in spite of the boy's hopes, the idols did not eat a bite. They just sat there as still as stone, and so did Namdev's offering, untouched in its bowls.

When Namdev's food was not accepted, he began to feel very upset. Thinking he must have done something wrong, he cried, "Oh God, if you are there, please come and take my milk and food or my father will be mad at me! I know you always take what he offers to you, so please come here and take my food too!"

Namdev kept praying this way, with all the sincerity in his heart, because he really did want to meet God. And so, while the boy sat deep in prayer, God came and showed himself to Namdev, just as Namdev had hoped, and he drank the milk that had been so lovingly offered.

Now that Namdev had seen God in his real form, he knew that his father's idol worship was useless. God had even told Namdev so. Namdev's heart ached to think that his parents were taking part in such a low form of worship, so he decided somehow to teach them the truth.

The next morning, Namdev went to his father's altar and broke every idol except for one. He left only the big one, and put a hammer right next to it. When Namdev's father got home, he went to his altar to offer food and to worship as usual, but found almost all his stone gods broken. Shocked and confused, he ran straight to Namdev and said, "I told you to offer food to the idols, but what's happened here?" Namdev answered, "Father, what can I say? Yesterday morning when I came in, I found all the gods fighting with each other. Then the biggest idol took a hammer and smashed all of the others. See, he still has the hammer laying beside him which proves that he did it!" Namdev's father said, "This is a shame, but how could the idols have possibly been fighting? They can't even move!" Bhagat Namdev answered, "Father, if you are really sure that your idols can't move by themselves, then how can they protect you and give you what you need? Father, why are you doing this kind of worship?" In this way, Namdev taught his father a lesson.

Selling Cloth to God

Bhagat Namdev earned his money working as a cloth dyer. He lived a simple life and did not work very hard. Whenever he came home, his family would ask him, "What are you doing here? Why aren't you out making money?" Namdev would answer, "I can't find anyone who can afford to buy my cloth." He was not a very good businessman.

Once Namdev's mother told him, "If anyone wants to buy your cloth and doesn't have the money, tell them they can take the cloth now and pay you later." So Namdev took the cloth and went out to the streets as his mother requested. Reaching the marketplace, he gave some of the cloth to beggars and spread the rest out on the rocks and went home. When he walked in, his mother asked him, "How is business?" He answered, "Business is fine! All of the cloth is gone. The people who've taken it will pay me later." His mother asked, "When will you get paid?" Namdev answered, "They told me that whenever they have the money, they'll come and pay us." Then, leaving all worldly cares to God, Namdev sat for meditation.

But, as free as Namdev surely was of worldly thoughts, the world was not free of thoughts about him. Neighbors and villagers in the market place had seen the way Namdev had carried on his business of the day and found it so strange that they came to talk to Namdev's family about it. The neighbors told his parents, "If you are expecting to be paid for the cloth that Namdev took to sell today, you should know that he gave part of the cloth to some passing beggars and laid the rest out on some rocks. Those rocks and beggars are not going to pay you, are they?" And they all shook their heads to think that Namdev had given away so much cloth for nothing.

But, God almighty knows the hearts of his dear ones. Namdev was not going to be of service to the business world because his heart and mind had already been given to God. He was now God's servant. So while Namdev was deep in meditation, God himself came to Namdev's home disguised as an ordinary customer and paid all the money for the cloth that Namdev had given away earlier that day. God told Namdev's family, "Namdev has given me some cloth. Here is the payment." While Namdev was remembering God, God came in the form of a man and did Namdev's work for him. In this way God protected the honor of his true devotee, Namdev, and took care of his family's needs.

The Divine Carpenter

When he was grown, Namdev lived in a beautiful hut. It was such a lovely home that his neighbor became jealous and wanted to ruin it. The day finally came when the neighbor got his way. His envy of Namdev grew to be so great that he went to the hut and destroyed it piece by piece until not a wall was left standing.

But Bhagat Namdev was not angry with the man. After looking at the rubble of his former home, he sat for meditation and said to himself, "I am not worried about having a hut. If God wants me to sit in a hut, he will make one for me." While Namdev sat meditating, lost in love for his Master, God came there and built His devoted Namdev a hut even more beautiful than the one before, and that hut had been the best in all his village.

Seeing Namdev's finely built hut, the villagers were impressed with its special beauty. All could plainly see that this hut was the work of a most wonderful craftsman. "Tell us — who has made you such a fine home?" said the neighbors, admiring its shape and style. They said, "I will pay your builder even more than you have paid him, if he will only build such a hut for me!"

But Namdev kept quiet, knowing that the Almighty God who built his wonderful hut does all things only for the pure lover who gives his everything to the Lord. Then, softly, Namdev answered the villagers, "The great builder who made my hut will ask you to pay much more than you will ever want to pay! He will ask you to break away from the world and give your whole heart to Him. Do this and my carpenter will come to you all by himself." God, who lives inside us, does everything for us.





The Missing Chapati

Once a perfect master was asked by dear ones to come and give satsang at their home. In those days, a master would have to travel long distances on foot if he were to visit the many people who wanted to see him. And so it was with this journey. The gracious Master walked to his disciple's house, gave satsang and then spent the night so as to rest up for the long trip home.

The next morning as the Master was leaving, the dear ones lovingly prepared three stuffed chapatis, which he tucked away in his bag for the journey. Then he left. As the Master started on his way, a greedy man saw him walking and joined him, thinking that perhaps the holy man might give him gold or riches to make his trip worthwhile.

In time, the two travelers came to a resting place near a pond deep enough for bathing. Slipping his bag from his shoulders, the Master said, "Dear One, please watch my things for me while I go wash myself in the water." The greedy man agreed, but as soon as he was sitting alone by the master's things, he began to think, "There might be some money hidden in this bag. I think I'll look inside and see!" So he looked inside and found nothing except three stuffed chapatis. Looking at the food, the greedy man started to feel very hungry. And being the greedy man that he was, he wanted some of it for himself.

Carefully, he reached in and grabbed one chapati and ate it. Then he wrapped up the other two to look as though they had never been touched.

When the Master finished bathing, he said to the man, "Okay, let's eat the chapatis that the dear ones made." But when he opened his bag, he found only two chapatis instead of the three he had packed that morning. "Dear one," said the Master, "did you take one of the chapatis?" The man answered, "Oh, no, Master, I didn't eat it." The Master knew it was wrong for the man to lie, but he kept quiet. He just said, "Okay, you take one chapati and I'll have the other."

When they were done eating, they again started on their way. In the course of their travels, they reached a very deep and swiftly moving river which they had to cross. Feeling perfectly safe in God's care, the Master started out with the dear one close at his side. But as they waded deeper into the river's dark waters, the man began to lose heart, fearing he would surely drown. "Master!" cried the man, "Do something to save us!" The Master calmly answered, "Don't be afraid. Just remember God, who made you. He will help you cross this river." When the greedy man remembered God, he found that he was easily able to cross the river just as the Master had said.

When they were safely out of danger, the Master said, "Dear One, God saved you from the river. You should be grateful and tell the truth. Who ate the missing chapati?" The greedy man answered, "I don't know who ate it. Master, I didn't even touch that chapati!" Master was still full of patience and he said nothing.

In due time, the two travelers came to a great forest which had to be crossed. As they walked, it stretched out before them in an almost endless sea of green. With tall trees looming up all around them, they ventured to the deepest center of the forest only to discover that the woods had burst into flames, and they were surrounded. "Master!" the man cried, as the flames climbed higher. "We were saved before, but that was only water. Now we're going to be burned! There's no way out!" "Don't worry," said the Master, "Just remember God who saved you from the river. If you remember Him, he will rescue you." So the man prayed to God with full faith, and he crossed through the fire of the burning forest. When they were out of the woods, the Master said to the man, "God has saved you two times. Now, why don't you think of God and tell me about that missing chapati?" The man still did not want to admit what he had done, so he answered, "I don't know who ate that chapati. I didn't even know you had it!" The Master was very patient. He just said, "It's okay."

Once more they began to walk. After traveling a ways, they entered a deep forest where many wild animals lived. Two tigers saw the two travelers and began moving steadily towards them. The Master was not afraid. He had faith in God. But the greedy man cried, "Those tigers are going to kill and eat us. What can we do?" "You should remember God," the Master answered. "Have faith that He will help you." So, the greedy man remembered God, and after some time, the tigers walked away.

The Master thought, "This man's life has been saved three times. He should know by now that God sees everything. If the man keeps telling lies, he will never be allowed into God's kingdom." Then the Master said to the greedy man, "First God saved you from the river and then from the fire. Now he has saved you from the tigers too. To show God your thankfulness, why don't you tell me about the missing chapati?" The man answered, "Master! I would have told you in the beginning if I knew anything about that chapati!" The Master said, "Okay," but he knew that the man was going to have to learn his lesson.

Master decided to do something that would change the dear fellow's lies into truth. "Dear One," the Master said, "You have been walking with me for such a long time. I would like to give you some kind of reward for your efforts. What would you like to have?" The greedy man answered, "Well, you know that I am poor, so I would like to have money!" The Master said, "Okay, then go collect some rocks and I will turn them into gold." So the man collected rocks. The Master covered them with a piece of cloth and touched them with his hand. Suddenly all of the rocks were turned into gold. Next, Master took all of the gold and stacked it into three separate piles. "Now," said the Master, "God has given us all of this gold. The first pile is for you. The second pile is for me and the third pile is for the person who ate the missing chapati! Let's see who comes and gets it." At once the greedy man spoke up. "Master!" he said, "I should get the third pile. I know I swore to you that I didn't know anything about the chapati, but now I'll tell you the truth: I am the person who ate the missing chapati, so I should get the gold."

~ ~ ~

Just by telling the truth, the greedy man was given the extra gold. Masters teach us that God is truth, God is everywhere and God knows everything. A person who tells one lie needs to tell a hundred more just to cover up the first one. By telling the truth and living a Godly life, we become filled with God's love, and our love and goodness shine out to others. So we must always use sweet words and tell the truth.



Vir Barbaru's Secret

There was once a king who had two horns on his head. The king had a special barber who knew about the horns, but the barber didn't tell anyone. The king had asked him not to. In the will of God, the barber left the body. With his faithful old barber gone, the king was worried about hiring someone new. He thought, "What if the new barber cannot keep my secret?" In spite of his worries, he called for a barber whose name was Vir Barbaru.

When Vir Barbaru came to meet the king for the first time, the king asked him a question. He asked, "Do you know why I have called you here?" Vir Barbaru answered, "Yes, you have called for me because you have heard that I cut hair very well." The king replied, "Yes, that's one reason. Then he pulled off his hat, showing the horns and said, "And this is the other reason!" I am going to make you my personal barber, but you cannot tell anyone what you have just seen. If you do, I will punish you and your family severely!"

Vir Barbaru was not good at keeping secrets. If he could not tell a secret to somebody, it made him feel sick. So, as Vir Barbaru started for home, he felt nervous and not at all well. During the next few days, Vir Barbaru became sicker and sicker, and, because he could not

tell his secret to anyone, his stomach grew bigger. Finally, doctors were called. Everyone looked at him, but on one could cure him. In time, a wise doctor came who knew about sicknesses of the mind. The doctor looked at Vir Barbaru and said, "Tell me the truth. What is really bothering you?" and he leaned his ear down so that Vir Barbaru could whisper in it. Vir Barbaru started to tell him, but then he remembered the king's stern warning and answered, "No, no, I can't. If I tell you anything, I will be in terrible trouble."

By this time, Vir Barbaru had grown weak, and his stomach was so big that he could hardly walk. The wise doctor knew that the barber would surely die if he could not tell his secret to someone. So, the doctor suggested, "Okay, tell four people to carry you on your bed into the forest. When you are sure no one is listening, tell your secret to a tree."

Vir Barbaru arranged to be carried into the woods, as the doctor had ordered. Then he told everyone to leave. When he was sure that he was completely alone, he walked as far as he could, which was not very far. His stomach was so big that he had to stop at the first tree. Standing up tall in front of that tree, he called out in a big voice, "Vir Barbaru says this: "The King has two horns! But don't tell anyone else!""

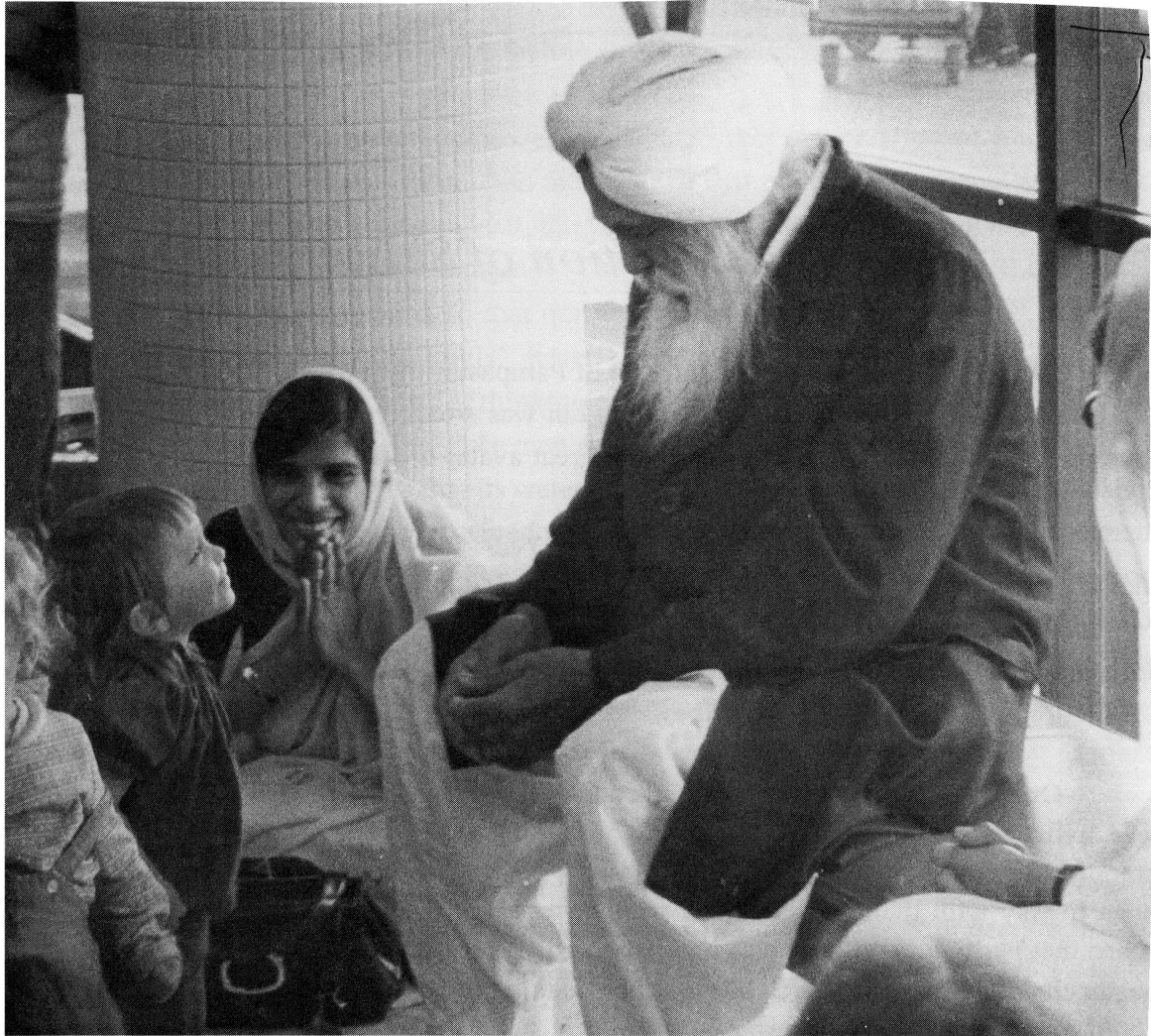
As soon as Vir Barbaru spoke those words, he felt better. All signs of sickness left him, and he went home. Now the tree held the king's secret. As it is nature's law that sound never dies, the sound of Vir Barbaru's voice went straight into the body of the tree. One day wood cutters came into the forest and cut the tree down. Since it was very good wood, it was sold and made into musical instruments.

A few years later a son was born to the king and queen. Everyone was so happy that the king called all of the musicians and dancers in the area to come celebrate. It so happened that the instruments of the musicians who came to the royal party were made from the very same tree that Vir Barbaru had spoken to. Before starting to play, the musicians sat down to tune their instruments. The harmonium player played his first note and out came, "The king has two horns!" People in the audience were amazed. They asked, "Who is saying that?" The drummer started to tune his drum which said, "Vir Barbaru says this, but don't tell anyone else!" Everyone started laughing. When the king saw that no matter what he had told Vir Barbaru, the barber still could not keep the secret; he took off his hat and said, "Yes, it's true. I really do have two horns on my head!"

~ ~ ~

Secrets are hard to keep. As Saint Kabir said in one of his beautiful hymns to God, "How can I keep quiet when I know all of your glory!" When Kabir sang those words, he was praising the secrets that God had freely shared with him.

Many secrets lose their special glow when they are shared with someone. Secrets confided by a trusting friend are like this, but so are secrets told by God. If, for example, when we are meditating, Master kindly shows us beautiful inner scenes or faces, this is the kind of secret we ought to keep. We should receive these precious gifts in a spirit of humble thankfulness, and keep them in a quiet place in our heart shared only with the Master. If we can guard the holy treasure which God has given us, he will surely give us even more. We should not be like Vir Barbaru. We should learn to keep a secret.





The Devotion of Shivri

During the Silver Age in the forest of Pampasur, there lived a woman by the name of Shivri. Shivri was poor and her humble hut was small, yet her heart overflowed with love for God and her dear Lord Rama, the great avatar of that time.

Shivri was not alone in Pampasur. Many yogis and holy men lived there too because the land was thought to be especially good for meditation. Yet these yogis knew nothing of Shivri. Being poor and old, she was thought to be a low-class person and, therefore, somehow unclean. Yet the yogis thought of themselves as being important because of the meditation and spiritual practices they did each day.

One day exciting news spread throughout Pampasur. It was said that Lord Rama was on his way to their area and he would be coming to see them. The yogis talked eagerly among themselves and decided that if Rama were coming to Pampasur, he would surely want to stay with them because they were, after all, good and holy people. When Shivri heard that her beloved Rama was on his way to Pampasur, her heart filled with love. She began cleaning the earth which he would be walking upon to free it of rocks and sticks that could hurt his feet.

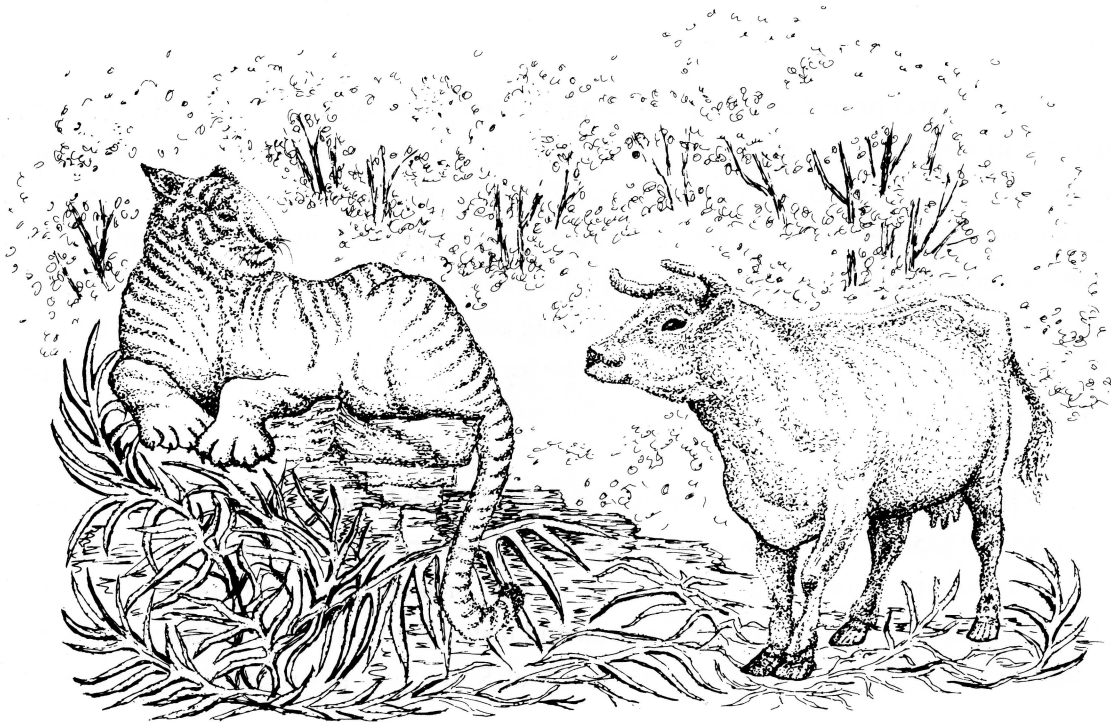
Then Shivri turned to the idea of what to feed her holy guest. "If God comes to my home, I don't have any food to offer him. I will go into the forest and hunt for bright red strawberries." Shivri did go into the woods and she picked many beautiful berries, but when she returned home, she began worrying that perhaps the strawberries she picked were not sweet enough to give to the Lord. Shivri thought, "If these berries are bitter, they will not be pleasing to Him." So she decided to taste each berry, one by one, and give only the sweetest fruit to her dear Rama. In her love, she forgot that, by tasting them, she was making them dirty, according to Hindu laws.

When Lord Rama finally came to Pampasur, he did not go to the homes of the holy men, or to the places where the yogis were doing their practices. He went instead to see the old, low-class woman, Shivri. And in her broken-down hut, he ate all of the strawberries that she had so lovingly picked and tasted for him. He ate them with so much love that the holy men began crying, feeling that Rama was not pleased with them.

The yogis of Pampasur owned a pond which they never allowed Shivri to use because they thought she was dirty. Yet the water of that pond was as brown as the earth of Pampasur. When Rama came to visit, the yogis showed them the pond in the hopes that Rama might perform a miracle and clean it. The yogis asked the great Rama, "Lord, please put your holy feet into our pond so that our water may again become sweet." Although Rama clearly understood the yogis' water problem, he also wanted to teach them something about pride, their habit of thinking of themselves as better than others. So Rama answered, "You are all such great holy men and you do a lot of hard practices -- why don't you put your feet in the pond so that its waters may be cleaned?" So the yogis slipped their feet into the pool, yet the color remained unchanged. The water was as dingy and dark as before. Then Lord Rama put his own feet into the dirty water, and once again, the pool looked as brown as the forest earth. "I have an idea," said Rama. "I cannot change the color of your pond, but perhaps we should call the old woman, Shivri, to come and try." So Shivri was called to the banks of the yogis' pool. The moment the devoted old woman slipped her small feet into its water, the dirty pond of Pampasur turned as clean and clear as glass.

~ ~ ~

This is the way Rama taught the holy men of Pampasur a valuable lesson: In the eyes of God, only devotion and love are important. These are the qualities that are pleasing to the Lord.



The Tiger and the Cow

Once there was a tiger who lived in the woods. In his last life, he had been a man, the kind of man who lived well and loved God. But, as with all creatures, the day came when it was time for the man to die. Just as he was leaving the body, a thought came into the man's mind. He started thinking about meat, and then he died. As his last thought had been about meat, he had to come back into the world in the body of a tiger.

Now that he was a tiger, he wanted to live a good life just as he had done before. Therefore, he made a rule for himself that he would not eat meat every day. According to his rule, he would hunt for something to eat on only one certain day. The day after that, he would kill and eat an animal, as tigers do, only if it came right to the place where he was sitting. He decided that on the third day, he would not eat anything at all.

Once it happened that a cow came wandering up to the spot where the tiger was sitting. It happened to be on the day when he would eat an animal only if it came to him. So when this cow accidentally walked right up to him, the tiger got ready to pounce on her. Just as he was about to leap, the cow pleaded, "Oh, tiger! I have a baby calf who is only one week old. If I am killed, he won't have anyone to take care of him."

The tiger answered, "God feeds and protects everyone. Don't worry, God will care for your baby." The cow said, "Now that I'm so near you, I am surely going to be killed. But first, please tell me a story that proves that God will take care of my calf."

The tiger had read many books in his life as a man, and he knew lots of stories, so he told one to the cow. "Once upon a time, a family was traveling by ship. As they were sailing, the ship began to break apart. Soon all were drowned except a mother and her newborn baby. The mother and baby were saved by floating on a piece of wood. After some time, the mother was also drowned. The baby floated on alone, lying on his scrap of wood. Suddenly a wave came and pushed him to a sandy shore where the baby lay sucking on his toe. For two days, the baby rested there, quiet and safe. During all that time, he was never bothered at all."

"On the third day, a fisherman happened by on his way to fish. Passing along the shore, he couldn't believe his eyes when he came upon a beautiful little baby lying there looking happy and well. He wondered who could be taking care of him. Finding no one nearby, the fisherman picked up the baby in his arms and saw, to his surprise, that the baby was being fed through his own toe. Even though it seemed impossible, he could see that God had chosen this way to care for the child, who looked perfectly healthy."

So the tiger told the cow, "You can see how the family began their trip together, then the ship broke apart. At first the baby was with his mother, then he drifted alone on the raft. But all the while, God cared for him. With the help of the wood and the wave, the child was pushed to shore where he rested for a while. Even though many animals lived there, not a single one came to bother him because he was protected by God. Finally, the fisherman found him and took him home. So cow, you can see that God watches over us. You don't have to worry about your calf."

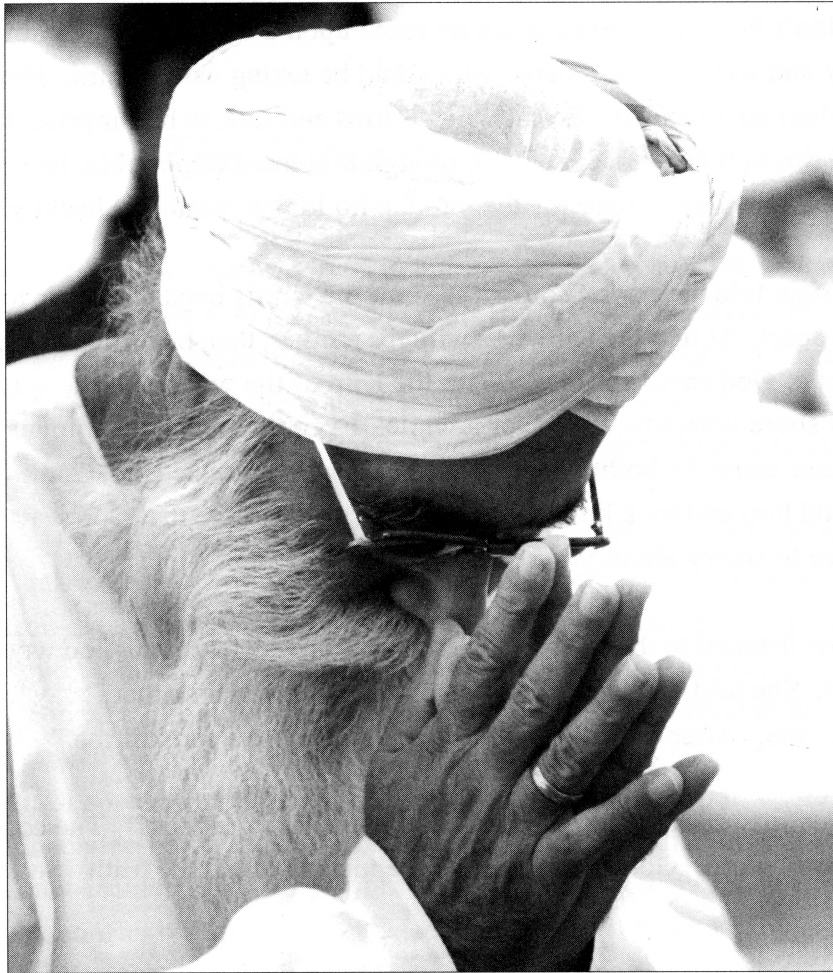
The cow listened to the tiger's story and was now certain that God would also take care of her calf. She told the tiger, "Let me go home to my calf so that I may love and feed him one more time. After that I will come back so that you can kill me."

The tiger answered, "How can I be sure you will come back?" The cow replied, "I am giving you my word. God says that we have to always tell the truth. So I will do as I say."

The tiger believed her and let her go. The cow went straight to her baby calf and let him drink his fill. Soon she returned to the tiger. When the tiger saw that the cow had really come back as she said she would, he was very amazed. His heart was touched. She had told him the truth. He told her, "You kept your promise to me, so I am going to set you free. From now on you may go wherever you want."

~ ~ ~

Truth is a great power. Because the cow told the truth, she won the tiger's heart and the mother cow's life was saved. In the times of Sawan Singh, satsangis were known, far and wide, as honest people who never told a lie. In our day-to-day life, truthfulness not only makes a disciple look like a great person in the eyes of his friends and neighbors, but it also gives glory to his or her Master. Masters always teach their disciples to tell the truth.





Searching for the One to Blame

There was once a pundit and his wife whose greatest joy in life was their bright and talented young son. This promising young man, who also happened to be a pundit like his father, was the very hope and future of his aging parents.

One day while the son was out walking, misfortune struck. Crossing the dusty ground, he stepped next to a poisonous snake and was bitten. In a very short time, the young man died. To the mother who had raised him, the death of her dear son was like an end to all of her dreams. Sad and angry, she cursed God. “You’ve taken my son!” she shouted at God. “He was too young to die. You should have waited until he was old!” said the mother. And in her misery, she called God many bad names.

But God is not deaf to the calling of his children. Hearing the woman’s bitter words, God appeared to her saying, “Dear Mother, why are you blaming me for your son’s accident? This is not my doing. It is the work of Kal, the Negative Power.” So the woman started accusing Lord Kal — with angry words she cursed him until Kal finally appeared before her saying, “Mother, why do you blame me for your boy’s death? I had nothing to do with it! It’s the snake who bit him and not me.”

So the woman called out to the snake saying, "Snake, why did you have to bite my son? He was just beginning his life and now he's already gone!" Answering the mother's call, the snake appeared in front of her, slithering and hissing as snakes do. "Mother," said the snake, "Why are you saying that I killed your son? I lived on my little piece of ground long before your son was even born. When his time came to be bitten, he simply walked in front of me and I bit him. That's all. But, truly speaking, his death is not my fault. You should blame Time, because, surely, your son's time was up!"

Hearing the snake, the mother asked him further, "Yes, Snake, I understand what you say, but tell me, what is Time and where do I find him?" The snake answered, "Time has to do with the sun. When the sun comes up, the day begins, and when it sets, the day is over. This is what makes the wheel of time go around."

So, next, the woman called the god of the Sun. "You cruel Sun god!" she said, "It's because of you that my son is gone! Have you no heart?" In an instant the god of sunlight stood shining before her. "Woman," said the god, "Why do you call me bad names? I didn't kill your son. When daytime is here and my rays light up the earth, people do their good and bad deeds. The same thing happens when I'm away during the nighttime. People still do those things. But the truth is, whatever people do will have to be paid for. Their good deeds will be rewarded, and bad deeds will be punished -- this is the law of karma. Knowing this, dear mother, blame the bad deed that your son once did that caused him to be taken from this world while he was still so young. This bad deed he did is the real reason he is gone!"

In a mood of quiet acceptance, the mother listened to the sun god's wise words, because in her heart of hearts, she knew he was right. "If my boy is gone because of something bad he did in this life or any other — then who do I have to blame?" thought the mother. "I cannot blame God or Kal, and I no longer want to blame the snake or the sun god; I have no one to blame except my son's own deeds!"

~ ~ ~

When we have to pay for every bad thought, word, or deed we do, then we should do only good deeds. We are making our future with our own hands — let us make it bright. And with God's help, and through meditation, we can mend the mistakes of the past.



The Initiation of Sukhdev

Sukhdev was the son of a great holy man named Ved Vyas. Even as a baby growing in his mother's womb, Sukhdev loved God and felt afraid of the world. Remembering his many past lives when he suffered in one lower body after another, he knew he never wanted to return to worldly life. Sukhdev also remembered that souls on earth forgot God, and, to Sukhdev, this seemed like the biggest punishment of all. More than anything, Sukhdev wanted to remember God.

It is said that Sukhdev stayed in his mother's womb for twelve long years, refusing to be born, while his father, Ved Vyas, prayed. Ved Vyas was a good meditator, so he went within and asked God to help the poor unborn child. In answer to Ved Vyas' prayers, God blessed Sukhdev with a great miracle. For five seconds, he put a stop to all "maya" in the world, or the trickery of Kal, and made earth a land overflowing with God's truth and grace. The lucky souls who were born during this time were to become great devotees. Because of the Lord's mercy, Sukhdev was to be one of those souls.

So, protected by God, Sukhdev was finally born. And, being free of the blind forgetfulness that covered most worldly souls, Sukhdev worshipped God from the moment he came into the world. He was also born an Avatar, with fourteen supernatural powers.

As soon as he was old enough to walk, he began leaving his home for long periods of time to go meditate in the quiet forests. This was very surprising to his parents who had waited so long for him to be born. Seeing that their dear son planned to give his life to meditation, they said, "How can it be that you have just come to live with us and yet, you are already going? Can't you just stay here with us?"

Sukhdev answered, "My dear father and mother, I know you don't understand why I have to do God's devotion, so I will explain it to you: The reason is that I remember my last one hundred lifetimes, and every time I think of them, I feel scared to death because I was so unhappy. I can tell you, for example, that I was a cat ten times. During each one of those lives, when I was still very small, a bigger cat would come along and kill me."

"In another life, I was a donkey owned by a man who washed clothes for a living. Every morning, after I would carry his heavy load of clothes down to the river, he would set me free to go to find something to eat. All day long, I would wander looking for a little green grass, but I could never find any. In the evening, still hungry, I would carry the clean laundry back to the washerman's home. After many years of this hard life, a day came when I was too weak to walk. One day, on the way back from the river, I fell into the canal, which I was trying to cross, and could not get back up. The washerman had no pity for me. He beat me, and then left me there to die. All that day, people used my body as a bridge to cross the canal. The crows hovered about me, looking on me as their food. When I remember that birth, I know that human life is precious, and that I must not waste time on worldly things."

So, from the time Sukhdev was just a young child, he lived the rather lonely life of a holy man. His meditations were always fruitful. He could rise up out of his body at will and travel freely in the heavens. Being so blessed, Sukhdev felt no need for a Master. He thought it was enough that his father was such a famous holy man and meditator.

One day while sitting in meditation, Sukhdev went travelling within through the astral plane. But as soon as he started into the heaven governed by Vishnu, called "Vishnu Puri," he was quickly thrown out and told that he could never go into the higher heavens without a Master. Sukhdev was shocked. He ran to talk to his father. "Father!" he complained, "They won't let me into Vishnu's heaven. Is it true, what they say, that I have to have a Master?" Ved Vyas answered, "Yes, son, it's true. If you want to go higher within, you will have to be initiated by a Perfect Master. God himself has made this rule." "But

who will be my Master?" asked Sukhdev searchingly. Ved Vyas answered, "King Janak is the only perfect Saint in the world who has permission from God to give out Naam. Go to Him and He will take you further on the Inner Path." "King Janak!" said Sukhdev. "He's a worldly man. He must be because he lives in splendid palaces. I have given up the comforts of the world. How can I possibly learn anything from a king?"

Sukhdev was so proud that he could hardly make himself go ask for the king's help. Every time he tried to walk the rather long distance to the king's palace, he would quickly get caught up in thinking bad thoughts about the saintly king, and then he'd turn around and walk home. A few weeks later, he would again feel drawn to see the king. He would start off for the palace, and then begin to think the same bad thoughts that had bothered him before, only to turn around once more and make the long walk home. Twelve times Sukhdev left his home to go visit Janak, and twelve times he changed his mind. As it is nature's law that when we think badly of others, we lose what we have, Sukhdev began losing his supernatural powers. Each time he went home without seeing the Saint, he lost one power. Soon, twelve of the powers were gone, and he had only two left.

Even though Sukhdev did not know the terrible price he was paying for his doubts, there was one soul who did, and that was Narada, the heavenly sage. Narada knew what Sukhdev was losing, and he felt very sorry for the young man. So, to help him, he made a plan which he intended to carry out the next time Sukhdev went to see Janak.

One morning Sukhdev packed the only two things he owned into a bundle and started off for the saintly king's palace. Further down the road, in a spot of land Sukhdev was sure to pass, Narada made a river appear, and he, himself, stood waiting on its banks. When Sukhdev came walking by, he saw an old man, who was really Narada, throwing dirt and sand by the basketful into the swiftly flowing water. It was clear to Sukhdev that this foolish man was trying to build a dam, and yet every load of dirt he dumped there was being quickly washed away in the current. Sukhdev said to the man, "You're a fool! If you want to make a dam, put the heavy logs and rocks in first. Look at all of the dirt you're wasting!" Then Narada looked at Sukhdev, "You are worried about what I am wasting?" He said, "There is someone who is a much bigger fool than I am. His name is Sukhdev Muni! He has lost twelve of the powers he was born with, by thinking bad thoughts about a saint."

When Sukhdev heard these words, he fainted dead away. After a short while, Sukhdev woke up and looked around. The river was gone, and so was the old man. For

the first time, Sukhdev knew what he had lost by doubting King Janak. In a mood of deep regret, he walked on.

When Sukhdev finally reached the palace, he thought to himself, "I am Ved Vyas' son, so King Janak will surely want to invite me in!" So he stood by the door and waited for the king. But Janak did not come. For three days Sukhdev waited outside, yet no one invited him in. Finally, a servant came out and said, "The king will see you now." Sukhdev got up and walked into the palace, leaving his cooking gourd and loin cloth bundled in a corner of the courtyard. Walking into the Saint's room, Sukhdev waited for a greeting, yet Janak said nothing. In the next few minutes, Janak planned to teach young Sukhdev a lesson that he would never forget.

A servant came running into the king's quarters. "There's a fire!" he said. "The soldier's area is on fire and it's burning down." Hearing this, King Janak answered in a quiet voice, "It's God's will." Sukhdev saw the king's calm manner and thought, "If King Janak had a son living in those quarters, he would try to put the fire out! He's not worried because those soldiers are only other people's sons. Janak is not a very good king!" Sukhdev started thinking bad thoughts because he was looking at the Saint with his mind rather than his soul.

Once again, a servant came in. "Maharaj Ji!" he said. "The city is on fire! It's burning up!" King Janak listened quietly to the servant's report and answered, "It's God's will." Hearing Janak's calm reply, Sukhdev thought, "Of course King Janak doesn't care what goes on in the city. He's safe here in the palace!"

Some minutes later, a servant came running to the king with the most serious news of all. "Maharaj Ji!" the servant cried, "Your palace has caught fire. It's going to burn to the ground!" King Janak heard the servant and once again answered, "It's God's will." Hearing this, Sukhdev jumped up, remembering suddenly that he had left his cloth and cooking gourd in the courtyard. Starting towards the door to save them, he was stopped by the king. "Sukhdev," said the king, with a knowing look, "when my soldier's quarters, my city and my palace were burning to the ground, I didn't do anything to try to save them. But you are running out to save an old pot and piece of cloth which are worth nothing. Tell me, which of us is really the worldly man and who has truly given up the world?" Hearing this, Sukhdev had no answer. "So I am the worldly man?" thought Sukhdev, with newfound humility. Suddenly he understood something about the greatness of Janak.

Sukhdev was finally ready to ask for initiation. Yet, when he asked the king to teach him about the Holy Path, Janak said, "No, I won't initiate you now. You will have to wait." Disappointed, Sukhdev went to Ved Vyas. "Father," said Sukhdev, "King Janak won't initiate me!" Ved Vyas answered, "You have thought so many bad things about Janak. Now you're going to have to learn how to be humble." It is said that Sukhdev stood for twelve years in the garbage dump outside Janak's palace to learn the lesson of humility. Waiting patiently for the king, he let trash be dumped on his head and never allowed his mind to think one bad thought about anyone. He knew that thinking good thoughts was the best punishment for a wild, unruly mind.

Finally King Janak spoke to Sukhdev. He said, "It's time to find out if you're ready for the Holy Path. If you can pass the test I am going to give you, I will give you initiation. To win this prize, you will have to carry a full cup of oil around my city without spilling one drop. If you spill even the smallest amount, the soldier behind you will strike you dead with his sword." Sukhdev was terrified, yet he wanted initiation so much that he was willing to do anything to get it. Sukhdev answered, "I'll do it."

Before Sukhdev started out on his task, Janak sent many dancers, singers and interesting actors into the town to put on their shows in the streets. There were enough sights and sounds to test the strength of any young man who said he wanted God. Yet as Sukhdev set out into the crowded streets, he thought of nothing but the job he had to do. He did not see the actors or hear the people singing songs. As he was escorted down every road in Janak's city, he kept his eyes only on the cup of oil which he held tightly in his hands.

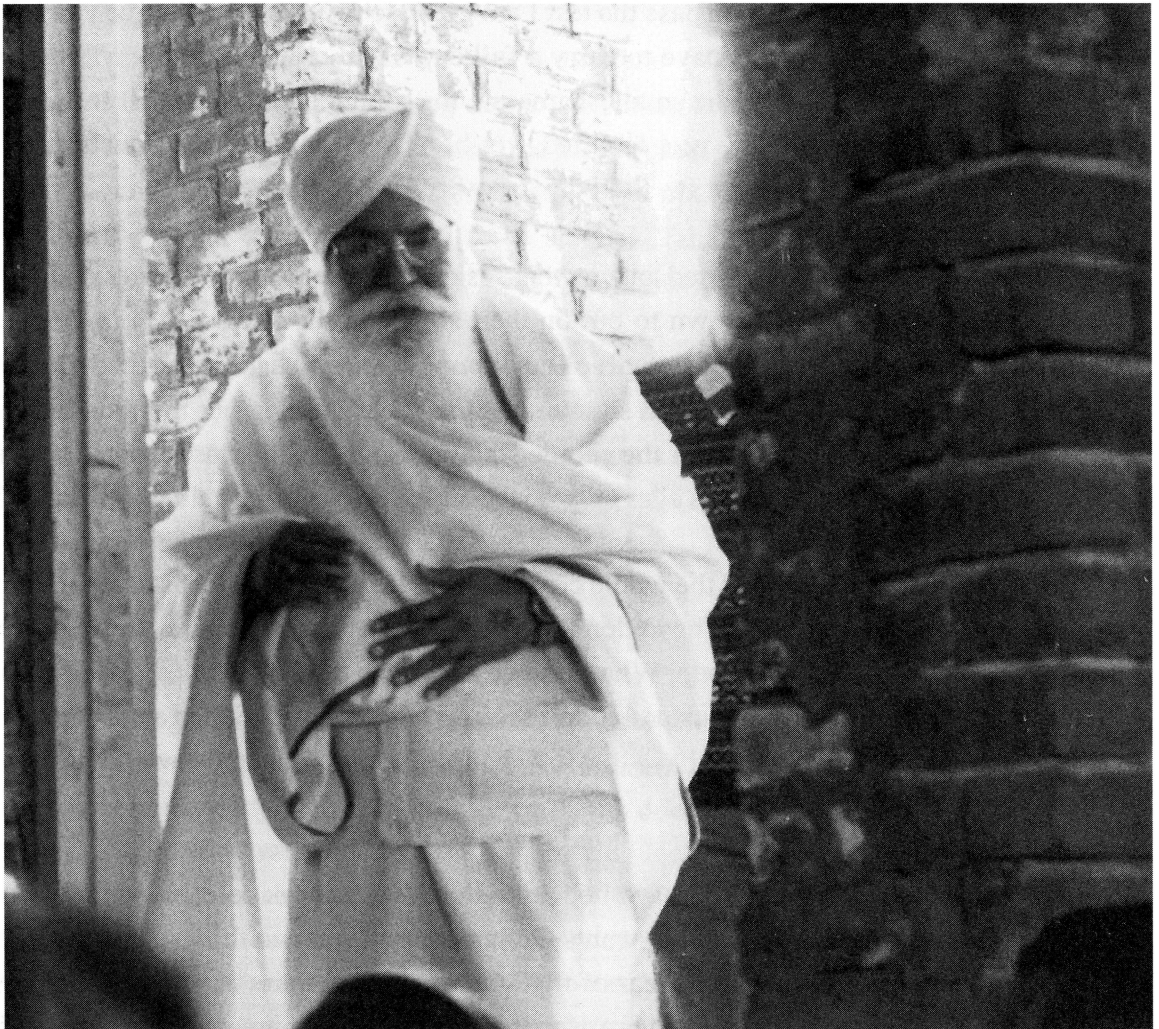
When he had circled the whole city and walked the last few steps back to the palace, King Janak said, "Since you have done well at the task I've given you, now I will initiate you." Then King Janak asked, "What did you see in the town while you were carrying the oil?" Sukhdev answered, "Master, I didn't see anything; if I had looked at all of those sights you put there for me, I would have lost my chance for initiation, and I would have also lost my life!"

During Sukhdev's long-awaited Initiation, King Janak told his new disciple, "A follower of the Master who really wants God needs to have two things. He needs love for the Master, and he has to have fear of the Master." Then Saint Janak added, "If you are afraid of the Master, just as you were afraid of the swordsman when you were carrying the oil, you will do what the Master teaches you to do. Only if you are a little afraid of Him

will you see only Him and forget all of the sights and attractions of the world. If we always try to please our Master, we will never do bad things.”

~ ~ ~

Once God Almighty opens his door to a soul, he holds him in his arms and makes him the owner of Sach Khand. Then he makes the soul rich in every possible way. After Sukhdev's Initiation, Ved Vyas asked his son, "What is your Master like? Is He like the sun?" Sukhdev answered, "Yes, He shines like the sun, but He is not at all hot." Then Ved Vyas asked, "Is He like the moon?" Sukhdev answered, "Yes, He is cool like the moon, but the moon has a stain on it. My Master is Perfect! My tongue cannot praise Him enough. My Master is everything. My Master is everywhere. He is perfect!"





The Mystic Child

*-- an excerpt from Ajaib Singh's early life
... in story form*

There was once a child who was so beautiful of face and countenance, and so wise in the ways of God and man, that all who met him loved him. All who looked in his gentle eyes, so wise beyond their years, or listened to his kind words of counsel, went away feeling lighter, brighter, and loved.

But the boy, who was a jewel above all other jewels, was not happy. Born as he was into a wealthy family, and showered with every worldly comfort, still there was no peace. The lovely mystic child, who brought such simple joy to others, was himself afflicted by a hidden wound, unseen by all but God, and the One whom God would send.

As soon as the boy was old enough to travel, he left his home of many comforts and began searching the countryside for the "True One," the wise Guru, who could lead him from worldly pain into light. Through countless towns and wild places, the boy traveled. He met holy men who could fly, and he met yogis who tortured their bodies to win God's favor, but the One his soul desired always remained hidden from his eyes.

His longing was the light
that made him search...
The search became his life...
The world itself became an endless road
that stretched out long before him...

In time the boy grew up, full of Grace and Beauty, truly a flower among men. To those who loved the Light, he shone like a beacon, guiding them over life's rough roads. Those who loved darkness hid in shame at the very sight of his perfect radiance.

The cry of the longing devotee never goes unheard, each tear being saved and counted in the boundless heart of God. And so it was with the young seeker. In God's most perfect time, the High One, for whom the young man had long been searching, came to him. First in meditations, in moments of fervent inner communion, the Holy One would grace the young man's inner eye with His shining form — so lovely his heart would overflow. Then he came in the flesh; as the flurry of summer rain blesses even the most parched land, the guru came, bringing every parcel of the young man's life into flower! The Great One who had lit up the young man's inner world, now made an auspicious entrance into the his outer world clothed in the body of a man — with height and substance — certainly not a spirit only! Like a storm of love, he arrived — giving, giving — without limit or explanation.

It was commonly said, after that memorable day when the young man met his soul's guide, that the beautiful Guru, on one occasion, turned into a ball of light for all to see. The young man later said that Light was the great visitor's real form — because the Holy One had been none other than God himself.

From that day onward, there was a change in the young man. From the outside he looked the same, yet, inside, he was new. When he breathed, it was the breath of his Beloved that stirred in his chest. When he laughed, it was the laughter of his guru bubbling up inside him. His step was no longer his step; his thoughts were no longer his thoughts. All the world had turned into a blooming garden where, in every stone and blade of grass, his Master's form was shining. It was as if the young man himself were no more — his heart had made room for God to enter, and now only the Holy One, whom he loved, lived there. And, as for the young man, for the first time in his life, he was happy!

~ ~ ~

The story of the mystic child is, in a most simplified form, the story of the beloved Saint Ajaib Singh — the teller of these tales — but it is also the magnificent story of all the great mystic saints who have graced this earth since time began. Their towering presence, known down the ages through scripture, myth and personal encounter, is a story of boundless love, sacrifice, and devotion. And for those who aspire to walk in their luminous footsteps, they are the secret keepers of the Kingdom, the humble saviors of humanity.

How Much Does God Love Me?

Love is the force of God that works through all of God's creation. Look at a mother cow, how lovingly she licks her calf. All animals and birds love each other. How much a fish loves the water that she swims in! When she is taken out of that water which is her very life, she cries in pain. And the little white moth that flutters against our window at night — this moth also has love. She is in love with the bright warmth of the lighted lamp. To the little moth, this shining light is more beautiful than anything else in the world. This love that the cow, fish and moths have within them has been made by God. God is an Ocean of Love.

A true Saint or Master is also an Ocean of Love. He is God living here among us in a body. He has come to teach us, love us, and be our best friend. Through the bright, beautiful face of the Master shines the Love, Light and Beauty of God.

There was once a man who looked for God. He writes, "One day my soul went flying up into the heavens looking for God, but I found all of the heavens empty. God was living in the heart of the saints."

A Master is in love with God. Just as the butterfly loves the bright pink and yellow flowers, so the Saint loves God. In return, God gives everything to the Saint. The Saint is God's beloved son. We are God's children too, and Love is what we are made of. As fathers often do, our Master, our God, gives us what we need without our even asking. Most of all, he gives us armfuls of his endless treasure of Love and Happiness — which is also the very gift that his Master gave him.

A worldly mother loves her child very much. When he is sick, she moves quietly around his bed all night to care for her child, giving no thought to herself. She never hates her child — she loves him no matter what he does. A mother will give the only food that she has had in days to her hungry child, even if she, herself, is hungry. She is full of kindness because she loves her child.

This is the way that a Saint loves his child. He loves the child more than a thousand mothers because God is Love. This love between the Master and his child disciple is the strongest tie in the world. Master is always by his child's side, like a shadow, even if the child does not know it. If the child is sad, he worries; and He is happy when the child is at peace. Like a loving mother, Master does not look at what we do wrong, He is always looking for ways to help. He sees God in His children and He knows it is His job to help them to become even greater and stronger than He.

If one feels lonely, Master is one's closest friend. When one has made a mistake, Master forgives one. When Master is far away, a child can write Him. Master has the answer to all problems and he can cure every hurt.

When one looks in His eyes, all sadness disappears and only happiness fills one's heart. Most important of all, He teaches us about our Real Home and guides us to inner places we never dreamed could be. To be loved by such a Saint is the greatest gift in the world!

Glossary of Terms

- Bhagat* - A devotee, one who gives himself to God.
- Darshan* - A glance from an enlightened being, the blessing given from Master to disciple through the eyes.
- Initiation* - The time when the Perfect Master puts his disciple on the true path to God. During initiation, the inner Light and Sound (expressions of God) are revealed. From this day forward, the Master is responsible for teaching the disciple and helping him to meet God.
- Kal* - The Negative Power, the name given to the power that rules the three lower worlds or planes. An equivalent of "Lucifer."
- Karma* - According to the law of karma, whatever we do while in this world is either rewarded or punished at some future time or in some future life. "Karmas" are the good and bad deeds we do.
- Naam* - "Name," the "Sound Current," the Power that radiates from God Almighty and takes us back to Him. The "Water of Life."
- Naam Meditation* - The practice of putting one's attention on the Light and Sound of God, or connecting with the "Naam."
- The Path* - The Way to God as shown by the Perfect Master to His disciples.
- Perfect Master* - A saint who is ordered by God to lead souls back to God. It is the job of the Perfect Master to teach the souls he initiates and to guide them at every step of the spiritual journey.
- Sach Khand* - The fifth spiritual region, the land of Happiness and Peace where Saints come from, our True Home.
- Satsang* - A gathering where the teachings of the Perfect Master are taught. The company of the Saints.

