

In Rising Tide of Life - It is Time to Build a Raft!

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THERE IS A SOBERING HYMN in Guru Granth Sahib (794) by Sheikh Farid (A.D. 1173-1266) under "Suhi Lalit", similar in content with one by Guru Nanak (1469-1539), also in Raag Suhi (SGGS: 729). There is no textual difference except that the 'building of the raft' to cross the world-ocean is viewed from a different perspective. On closer observation the message is the same. Let us explore:

(1) Suhi Lalit – Sheikh Farid

ਬੇੜਾ ਬੰਧਿ ਨ ਸਕਿਓ ਬੰਧਨ ਕੀ ਵੇਲਾ ॥

You didn't make the raft in time, when you ought to have done it.

ਭਰਿ ਸਰਵਰੁ ਜਬ ਊਛਲੈ ਤਬ ਤਰਣੁ ਦੁਹੇਲਾ ॥੧॥

When the ocean is full and over-flowing, then it would be difficult to swim across.

ਹਥੁ ਨ ਲਾਇ ਕਸੁੰਭੜੈ ਜਲਿ ਜਾਸੀ ਢੇਲਾ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ॥

O my dear! Do not touch the saf-flower for it will burn your hand and fade away.

ਇਕ ਆਪੀਣੈ ਪਤਲੀ ਸਹ ਕੇ ਰੇ ਬੋਲਾ ॥

Firstly, the bride herself is weak and her Spouse speaks harshly to her.

ਦੁਧਾ ਥਣੀ ਨ ਆਵਈ ਫਿਰਿ ਹੋਇ ਨ ਮੇਲਾ ॥੨॥

There is no milk in her breasts and it will not be possible to meet the Lord.

ਕਹੈ ਫਰੀਦੁ ਸਹੇਲੀਹੋ ਸਹੁ ਅਲਾਏਸੀ ॥

Says Farid, O my dear ones, the Spouse calls.

ਹੰਸੁ ਚਲਸੀ ਡੁੰਮਣਾ ਅਹਿ ਤਨੁ ਢੇਰੀ ਥੀਸੀ ॥੩॥

The soul will depart crest-fallen and this body will become a heap of ashes.

(2) The second hymn is by Guru Nanak, also in Raag Suhi

ਜਪ ਤਪ ਕਾ ਬੰਧ ਬੇੜਲਾ ਜਿਤੁ ਲੰਘਹਿ ਵਹੇਲਾ ॥

Make a raft of Lord's meditation and toil, and then you can cross the flowing ocean.

ਨਾ ਸਰਵਰੁ ਨਾ ਊਛਲੈ ਐਸਾ ਪੰਥੁ ਸੁਹੇਲਾ ॥੧॥

Then the path shall be so comfortable, as though there is no ocean, no overflowing.

ਤੇਰਾ ਏਕੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਮੰਜੀਠੜਾ ਰਤਾ ਮੇਰਾ ਚੋਲਾ ਸਦ ਰੰਗ ਢੇਲਾ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Your one Name alone is the madder with which my cloak is dyed; O my dear, this colour is ever-lasting.

ਸਾਜਨ ਚਲੇ ਪਿਆਰਿਆ ਕਿਉ ਮੇਲਾ ਹੋਈ ॥

My dear friends have departed – how shall they meet the Lord?

ਜੇ ਗੁਣ ਹੋਵਹਿ ਗੰਠੜੀਐ ਮੇਲੇਗਾ ਸੋਈ ॥੨॥

If they have their bag of virtues with them, that will unite them with God.

ਮਿਲਿਆ ਹੋਇ ਨ ਵੀਛੜੈ ਜੋ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਹੋਈ ॥

The one, who was already with the Lord in this world, cannot be separated from Him hereafter.

ਆਵਾਗਉਣੁ ਨਿਵਾਰਿਆ ਹੈ ਸਾਚਾ ਸੋਈ ॥੩॥

The True Lord has put an end to their coming and going.

ਹਉਮੈ ਮਾਰਿ ਨਿਵਾਰਿਆ ਸੀਤਾ ਹੈ ਚੋਲਾ ॥

By effacing her ego and pride, the bride has sewn for herself a cloak that pleases her Lord.

ਗੁਰ ਬਚਨੀ ਫਲੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਸਹ ਕੇ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਬੋਲਾ ॥੪॥

By the Guru's instructions, she, the soul has obtained the fruits of the ambrosial Word of the Guru.

ਨਾਨਕੁ ਕਹੈ ਸਹੇਲੀਹੋ ਸਹੁ ਖਰਾ ਪਿਆਰਾ ॥

Says Nanak, O my mates, my Lord is very dear to me.

ਹਮ ਸਹ ਕੇਰੀਆ ਦਾਸੀਆ ਸਾਚਾ ਖਸਮੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ ॥੫॥

We are our Lord's hand-maidens; the Lord is our True Master!

In the first stanza, Farid says that when it was time (one is young and strong) to build the raft, which would have enabled a person to cross the ocean to meet God, he wasted his time and neglected it. In life on earth, one is attracted by the love of wealth. When the time comes to bid goodbye one is stranded because the waters are deep and turbulent and we have no lifeboat. Farid is warning people not to neglect "the building of the raft". Guru Nanak says that one can make a strong raft through *jap tup* – meditation of God's Name and through hard toil. Having the raft of meditation and toil, one can easily cross the frightening ocean.

In the *rahao* (pause) lines the mention of a flower and a creeper is given. *Kasumba* is an attractive flower, but it fades away quickly and loses its beauty. In Gurbani, *kasumba* is contrasted with *majith*. The first stands for *Maya* or (illusion) and the latter for the Name of the Lord. *Maya* having a delusive appearance of external things, leads one to the five evils of passion, anger, covetousness, attachment, and pride. Hence, Baba Farid warns his friends not to touch the *kasumba* flower, lest it should burn their hands. Guru Nanak says that since the Lord's Name is forever; not only is its colour fast and lasting, but by effacing one's arrogance, one has a "cloak" for protection pleasing to the Master.

Farid warns that since prayer and meditation of God's Name have been neglected, the bride (representing the soul) has become weak and sickly. The five evils present in an egoistic (*manmukh*) bride, take their toll. Her bridegroom (representing God) is dissatisfied with her and has only harsh words for her – “*Seh Ke- Reh Bola*” (ਸਹ ਕੇਰੇ ਬੋਲਾ). The word “*reh*” in Punjabi is a derogatory word, when addressing a person. It is used for a person with whom one is very dissatisfied. In contrast, a God-oriented (*gurmukh*) bride is pleasing to the bridegroom and He addresses her with ambrosial words – “*Seh Ke Amrit Bola*”.

Since the self-oriented bride is weak and sickly, there is no milk in her breasts; hence there is no celebration, or a possible reunion with the bridegroom.

In another hymn, Guru Nanak confirms this in Raag Gauri Purbi Chant (page 242) as follows: “ਮੈ ਮਤ ਜੋਬਨਿ ਗਰਬ ਗਾਲੀ ਦੁਧਾ ਬਣੀ ਨ ਆਵਏ”, meaning, “intoxicated with the wine of youth's pride, the bride is ruined as there is no milk in her breasts”. The meeting with the Lord is only possible, if one has a bag full of virtues and good deeds.

Baba Farid warns his companions not to dabble with Maya, for its colour lingers only for a short period. He says that those who are attracted by the *kasumba* flower (maya) will become arrogant and receive only derogatory words from their Spouse.

In such a state, the bride will miss the time in this birth and a meeting (ਮੇਲਾ) with the bridegroom will not be possible.

Guru Nanak says that while there is time, one should build his raft to cross the world-ocean and have a reunion with the Lord. The devotee will be accepted in the Court of the Lord as he has with him his hard-earned bag of virtues.

Finally, what is this “raft”, but an assembly of virtuous deeds, meditation of God's Name and service to humanity.

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