

Manifestation of God within our Consciousness

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

“SHABAD GURU SURAT DHUN CHELLA”

BHAI SAHIB KIRPAL SINGH GILL (MALAYSIA)

This famous enigmatic and, at the same time, pragmatic proverbial statement appears in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh Scriptures) under the Chapter called *Siddha Gosht* (Dialogue with the miracle performing Yogis), by the first founding prophet of the Sikhs, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It mainly embodies a synopsis of Answers to searching Questions put to the Prophet by the premier Yogic Order of the 15th Century India. These answers cover a wide expanse of spiritual Reality and Truth. It thus lays down in brief the central basis of true Religion.

As a corollary, it puts into proper perspective the prevailing false beliefs and notions held by the Yogic cults of the times, who were then toting around some of their ignoramus views on the masses of India. As such, the *Siddha Gosht* is most revealing, inspirational and elevating. It embodies primordial truths of how the Soul, the *Atma* of man, can claim its high heritage by aligning into rightful resonance with the *Param-Atma*, the Cosmic Creator.

Among a host of other equally mystical and metaphoric outpourings, “Shabad Guru Surat Dhun Chella,” stands out as the cardinal Divine direction, which demands a comprehensive cognition of its true meaning and import. It is a far reaching, penetrative and all-embracing pervasive pointer, which when adequately understood and thereafter imbibed, opens the door to ultimate solace and salvation. We shall then need no external Master or Guru, to give us answers to our multifarious daily doubts and difficulties. Such is its importance and value, that the entire teaching of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (S.G.G.S.) can be encapsulated into its mystical meaning and allegory. The metaphor employed in it has hitherto defied a thorough and comprehensive comprehension of its true interpretation.

Pre-requisite

This short dissertation will attempt to unravel the mystical meaning behind this cryptic divine direction. Permit me to mention as a prelude, that until and unless one is already blessed with the actual experience and feeling of the profound spiritual states of arousal and euphoria in meaningful meditation (*Simran/Bhagti*), variously alluded to as *Vismaad, Rangan, Kheira, Vajjad, Anand*, etc., one will never be able to fully grasp and understand the Divine meaning behind this and many other such mystical utterances enshrined in our sanctified Scriptures. Until then, we will keep on giving only literal interpretations and providing merely academic expositions, thus inadvertently and ignorantly misleading the masses.

Such renderings and dissertations, when wantonly and egoistically continued, can even reach blasphemous proportions, which perforce have to be repaid in unimaginable and hellish after-lives. Hence, it is prudent to be mindful of our present inadequacies and incompetencies and thus wait for the ripe moment when God, through His benevolence and grace, has eventually prepared us for such an onerous task of correct translation of our Sanctified Scriptures.

Shabad:

The first word *Shabad* depending upon the context in which it occurs, can have 4 main meanings. They are,

- (i) The Word or Teaching of the Guru, which in its elevated connotation originates from God.
- (ii) Through the Teaching of the Guru and/or God.
- (iii) The all-pervading Divine power, the Holy Spirit, which percolates the entire Universe. This is also alluded to as *Naam* or *Naam Kallaah* which is resident inside of man but normally in a dormant, inert state.

“ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕਾ ਨਾਮੁ ॥ ਦੇਹੀ ਮਹਿ ਇਸ ਕਾ ਬਿਸਮੁ ॥ [SGGS:293]

meaning, “The providential naam which can bestow on us with plentiful treasures and is a Nectar, is resident inside of man in a restful, dormant state.”

- (iv) The fourth meaning is, “the process and the actual vibratory experience of this awakening of *Naam* (the Holy Spirit), which under normal circumstances is usually lying sleeping, and dormant but docile in man as brought out under (iii) above.

In the title phase under review, this first word **Shabad** carries all the four meanings heretofore enumerated, but more emphatically the connotation at (iii) above, which is **Naam Kalla** (the Holy Life Force). Additionally, it also refers to the hidden aspect of God within us, the Jeev-Atma, which has the potential of manifesting multitudinal attributes of the *Paramatma*, *the Creator*.

Guru

This second word Guru does not require much explaining:

It simply means a Guide, a Master; someone who removes darkness, an Enlightener. But the third and fourth words *Surat dhun* need careful study.

Surat(i)

Just like the word *Shabad*, *Surat* and also *Dhun*, reflect many a meaning depending upon the context in which they are employed. **Surat** can mean,

- (i) Normal Consciousness.
- (ii) Sub- and Super-consciousness, or *Buddhi*.
- (iii) Inner superior knowledge; knowing or *gyan*.
- (iv) Contemplation, profound prayer/meditation.

There is a cogent quotation from Bhai Gurdas Ji's (a notable Sikh divines) *Varaan* (the lyrics) which uses the words *Shabad* and *surat* in the context of the meaning enumerated above.

“*Raag naad Sabkoe Sunai, Shabad Surat Samjai Veirloee*”, meaning “Each and sundry listen to melodious music (practice of praise for the Divine in devotional Bhagti), only a fortunate few can understand (imbibe and feel the depth of such devotion.)”

This quotation of Bhai Gurdas Ji is itself rather enigmatic and is replete with mystical meaning. In the title phrase under consideration, this word, *Surat* reflects all the various definitions listed above but more particularly those under (ii), (iii) and (iv).

Dhun

Likewise, the word *Dhun* can also be used in various applications and connotations such as:

- (i) Sound, Spontaneous utterance or Reaction, as referred to in the S.G.G.S. Ramkali by Guru Nanak, “.... *Dhun Vaajei anhad ghoeraa....*”
- (ii) Escatic Vibration, or Euphoric feeling and experience.
- (iii) Echo, reveberation, automatic outcome, spontaneity.
- (iv) A song or tune’s basic central theme, as in the Science of Music (*Sangeet Vidya.*)

In the title phrase under deliberation, this word *Dhun* manifests all the meanings categorised under (i), (ii) and (iii) above, but more pregnantly that listed at (ii), which is a Feeling, a religious spiritual Experience and Reaction, variously referred to as *Anhad Dhun, Shabad Dhun, Akath Kathaa*, etc.

Chella

The last word *Chella* here has a deeper and more profound meaning than ordinarily attributed to it, which is, ‘a Disciple’. In the phrase under discussion, it is more akin to Discipleship or better still, Receivership.

Having briefly explained the meaning of each word, the correct translation or interpretation of this famous proverbial but pragmatic and pithy passage, “*Shabad Guru Surat Dhun Chella*”, would read as below. Having laid down the possible meanings of each word in the unique quotation under review, a translation of it is herewith attempted, which perforce may yet require further elucidation:

“The potentially powerful and all-pervading Naam lying dormant within man, is our eternal and ever present Guru and Godly Guide (Shabad Discipleship) providing ever available guidance always from within; when it is awakened transforms into a vibrant, meaningful feeling and experience in effortless spontaneity (*Surat Dhun*).”

The above translation although appearing as a fairly detailed interpretation, would still require further clarification to render it more readable and understandable to an average aspirant, most of whom are still neophytes into the deeper spiritual insights of our scriptural utterances.

Naam and Shabad as a divine power and not a mere name of God

Before we can delve deeply into the Scriptures, we must first and foremost get established in our minds that on most occasions where the word *Naam* appears in the Gurbani, it does not connote a mere name of God, but a tangible entity, and a powerhouse of a tremendously potent and powerful source of all-pervading energy, normally lying still, dormant and inert in man. The following passages from the Sukhmani Sahib in SGGS will make this point clear:

ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਆਗਾਸ ਪਾਤਾਲ ॥ ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਸਗਲ ਆਕਾਰ ॥ ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਪੁਰੀਆ ਸਭ ਭਵਨ ॥

[SGGS:284]

“All the planets, whole galaxies and the entire cosmos is created and subsequently supported and sustained in their proper and precise orbits, by the Divine Power of **Naam**.”

Again it is recorded towards the end of the formal Sikh Ardaas, "Nanak Naam Charhdi Kalla, Terei Bhanei Sarbat da Bhalla."

We have seldom if ever, suspected that in this the daily prayer/ardaas of the Sikhs, that *Naam* is succinctly defined directly as a Chardhi Kalla, a Power House of limitless Energy that is never depleted but is ever in ascendancy, i.e. always self-replenishing and exuberant, which only God, the primordial Creator can actuate and personify.

The Way of Awakening the dynamic but dormant '*Naam*' in man

As already pointed out under the third attribute of *Shabad* above, *Naam* is also inherent inside of man, but normally existing in an inert and dormant state. This can be awakened but only through God's grace and benevolence, after we adopt a stance of total, utter and unconditional surrender/submission to the depths of the Divine within, during our meditative moments in meaningful worship. This is corroborated in the SGGS as follows:

ਅਸਥਿਰੁ ਭਗਤਿ ਸਾਧ ਕੀ ਸਰਨ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਜਪਿ ਜਪਿ ਜੀਵੈ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਚਰਨ ॥ [SGGS:268]

"The highest form of meditation (Bhagti) is carried out by completely surrendering oneself to God. Nanak liveth by worshipping submissively in a totally surrendered state".

Please not that "*Saadh*" here does not mean a Sadhu or a Saint, but God Himself, and since God, the formless all-pervading presence, cannot have any feet, "*Har(i) ke charan*" also alludes allegorically to surrender in complete submission.

ਹਰਿ ਕੀ ਭਗਤਿ ਸਦਾ ਰੰਗਿ ਰਾਤਾ ਹਉਮੈ ਵਿਚੁ ਜਾਲੇ ॥ [SGGS:754]

Meditation (Bhagti) actuated by God is always accompanied by a feeling of ecstasy and a reaction (run raatei) when the egoistic and other such self-willed tendencies are exterminated."

The Awakening or Arousal

When this all important charismatic commodity of life (*Naam Power*) is awakened from its state of slumber (*Bisraam*), it must leave behind in its wake, a tell-tale sign and an ecstatic experience. How could it be, that when this great sleeping giant (*Naam Power*) is aroused and awakened inside of us, that we will not receive any sort of feeling and experience? Surely we must!

If inspite of our many holistic efforts, there occurs none of the prescribed experiences as copiously described in our Sanctified Scriptures, then we can be certain that it has indeed not yet been stirred into the requisite and much sought after awakening, variously termed as *Naam Rung*, *Naam Rus*, *Naam Dhaan* (*Gift of the awakened Naam*), (*become recipients of Naam*) *Naam melai* ("nank namu iml{ ta: jlva: tnu mnu Tlv{ hirAa . ") - This is the last sentence in the S.G.G.S. (1429) meaning:

"Only when I received this Gift of the awakened Naam, can I be considered as really alive and living, resulting in my Body/Mind complex blooming in radiance."

Another synonymous statement: “ਨਾਮ ਰੰਗਿ ਸਰਬ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਬਡਭਾਗੀ ਕਿਸੈ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਹੋਇ ॥ (SGGS 279) meaning: “The experience of the arousal of Naam Power gives complete peace and solace, but only the fortunate few can attain to this high state”.

The dire need for the “*Naam Rung*”, the awakening in ecstasy of this Holy Life Force, is further emphasised in the next quotation which the Sikhs regularly recite in their morning obligatory prayers, without paying much heed to its importance and least of all, how to go about imbibing its Truth!

ਭਰੀਐ ਮਤਿ ਪਾਪਾ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ॥ ਓਹੁ ਧੋਏ ਨਾਵੈ ਕੈ ਰੰਗਿ ॥ [SGGS:4]

“When the mind and being is polluted brimful by sinful activities, this is cleansed and purified through a vibrant stirring of the awakened Naam power (in meditation).”

Application of “Shabad” Guru Surat Dhun Chela”

It is only when the *Naam Power (Shabad)* within us has already been stirred into an awakening as described above, that we are able to communicate meaningfully with the Divine centre, the *Shabad Guru* within us, which is the direct representative of the *Param-Atma*, the all-knowing aspect of our Being. He will then provide us internally with answers and solutions to any question or doubt which we need to pose to it.

The *modus operandi* of such sanctified and charismatic communication is through the vehicle of an ecstatic experience (*Surat Dhun*), similar to what we may have been used to receiving, in our usual *Simran-Bhagti* (meditation) sessions. The more sensitivity we have been gifted to experience, during these mystical higher states of altered consciousness (*Surat Dhun*), the more accurately will we begin to receive the desired answers from the awakened *Naam* within us!

These could manifest into a variety of vibrant and dynamic modes including physical, mental, visual (visions), auditory (*Sunanaa*), Vocal (*Akhath katha*), Sensory, i.e. through all our other supplementary senses, which our body-mind complex is capable of responding to. Through all these responses we assume the metaphoric receivership role of a *Chella*, (discipleship).

This is how the Master, the *Shabad Guru*, the motivating *Naam Power* within us, becomes the internal Guide and how our recipient and responsive aspect, assumes the Discipleship (*Chella*) through the all-important link of a sensitised *Surat Dhun*. This is similar to the Guru-Chella relationship, where the Guru is the Giver and the Chella, the Disciple, is usually the Receiver.

We are then able to claim our high heritage bestowed upon us by the Creator, and thence, we do not have to seek any external corporeal guru, because we have at long last found Him resplendent and awakened within our own noble being. Then the search stops, for we begin to become recipients of bountiful blessings of the awakened *Shabad*, the Divine Guru within us.

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