

BOOK TWO

Shabd

The Sound Principle

Shabd

IN SANSKRIT "Shabd" is a root but we do not know its construction, as with other words. It means awaz (sound), akhar (word), kalam (talk), Ism (name), zamir (essence), bachan (spoken word), wazahat (exposition), sarahat (clarity), izhar (expression), taqrir (speech), etc. Whatever is spoken or heard is Shabd, and it reveals the real nature of things and explains the hidden reality or mystery thereof. But in the terminology of the saints, the term "Shabd" has a much deeper significance, quite different from its commonly accepted meaning.

Shabd is God and is live principle

Before the creation, Shabd existed in its latent form and as such had no name. In this state, It was something completely established in Itself and was thus known as Ashabd (sound-less), Anaam (nameless), Alakh (ununderstandable), Agam (inconceivable), Akeh (unutterable) and Akath (indescribable). When It came into manifestation, It was called "Shabd" or "Naam."

Shabd when hidden was Anaam,
Shabd in manifestation became Naam.

SWAMI SHIVDAYAL SINGH

Before its manifestation, there was no form whatsoever; nor was there any sun nor moon nor sky nor earth, for then the Shabd existed by Itself in a formless state. The essence of Shabd is Pure Consciousness. It is the active life-principle of the whole creation. It is the Guiding and

Controlling Power behind all that exists. All manifestation is the result of Shabd and without It nothing exists. It is the very life-essence of everything. The Muslim divines call it Jauhar (essence) and the Hindu saints describe It as Mul (the root cause). It is the vital principle immanent in every form and permeating all, the visible and the invisible. It is the Causeless Cause, the eternal self-existing life, running endlessly in and out of time. It is the very soul of the Creative Power, all pervading even to the purely spiritual realm—Sat Lok. Shabd is the primal cause of both birth and dissolution.

Both birth and death come about by Shabd,
Rebirth too is because of Shabd.¹

GURU AMAR DAS

Everything from beginning to end exists in Shabd. The physical elements, the subtle and ethereal powers and vibrations, the causal seeds and essences, one and all are from Shabd and nothing but Shabd personified. We live and have our very being in Shabd and ultimately dissolve into Shabd. All the scriptures of the world tell us that Shabd is above the material and efficient cause and All-Controlling Power of the Universe.

He is all in all Himself and revels in His creation by
supporting it by Shabd.²

GURU NANAK

There is none like Thee in the entire creation,
In Thy Word Thou art manifesting Thyself.
Whatever Thou wishest, that comes to pass.³

GURU RAM DAS

Shabd: What It is

The subject of Shabd is such that we cannot do justice

to it by discursive reasoning. All that can be said is that "Shabd" implies the Power of God that has created and is sustaining the various grand divisions, divisions and subdivisions of the vast creation of God. It is a current from the Ocean of Consciousness and is characterized by Sound-vibration, or in other words, It is a live and active principle which, emanating from God, is enlivening all creation. It is the instrument with which God creates, controls and sustains His vast universe. It acts as a life-line between the Creator and His creation and serves as a golden bridge between the two. The divine currents, like the ethereal waves of a radio, are spread out in the atmosphere in all the directions of the compass, giving out delectable strains of music. We, however, cannot catch the ethereal vibrations and listen to the divine melody until we get in tune with the Infinite by adjusting our mental apparatus. Therefore we become etherealized more and more as we come in tune with the heavenly music. Shabd is the connecting link between God and man. In brief, Shabd alone is the true religion—a binding force that rebinds us to our Source. All the powers of Nature depend on and work through this Shabd or the Sound Principle. The Pranas or the vital airs, that are the source of all energy—electrical, mechanical, magnetic or atomic—and are the most active agents in the physical material plane, are but an outer manifested form of the Shabd. Like the electric waves with which the whole atmosphere is charged, Shabd in its most subtle form pervades everywhere in Its fullness and is thus the Creator. Guru Nanak, in the Jap Ji, has called It Hukam and describes Its working:

All things are manifestations of His Will,
But His Will is beyond description.

By His Will is matter quickened into life,
 By His Will is greatness obtained.
 By His Will some are born high and others low,
 By His Will (the impious) wander in endless trans-
 migration.
 All exists under His Will,
 And nothing stands outside.
 One attuned with His Will, O Nanak, is wholly free
 from ego.⁴

Shabd is of two kinds: outer and inner or Varn-Atmak and Dhun-Atmak, respectively. The Varn-Atmak to a certain extent gives a clue to the Dhun-Atmak Shabd. It is a matter of common experience how martial music stirs up men to arms, sad dirges bring tears to the eyes, loving strains bewitch the mind, doleful songs strike the spirit, solemn notes inspire awe and reverence. Again, the words of the wise act as a soothing balm for lacerated minds and smarting taunts cut us to the quick.

Words there be that cut the very heart-strings,
 And words may lead to profound renunciation,
 Words may work as soothing balm or may strike
 misery,
 Some of them inspire hope and others engender help-
 lessness.

KABIR

What passion cannot Music raise and quell.

DRYDEN

When there is so much magic in Varn-Atmak Shabd, one cannot possibly imagine the Power that lies hidden in the Dhun-Atmak Shabd, which is very subtle and ethereal in nature. The inner Shabd is sublime and pure, with an irresistible magnetic pull which a freed soul cannot but plunge into.

Shabd is the Creator

In all the religious scriptures, "Shabd" is stated to be the Creator of the Universe. The Vedas tell us that "Nad" brought into being fourteen Bhavans or regions. In the Koran, it is mentioned that "Kalma" created fourteen tabaqs or divisions. St. John, in his Gospel, has written that "Word" is the root cause of the creation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him: and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and life was the light of men . . .⁵

The sacred Sikh scriptures also tell of the same thing—the entire manifestation has sprung from "Shabd" and is being maintained by Him. The sun, the sky, the earth and the heavens all are within His Controlling Power and there is no place where He is not. The immanence of Shabd is all-pervasive.

Shabd is the directive agent of God,
And is the cause of all creation.⁶

GURU AMAR DAS

The earth and the sky were made by Shabd,
Shabd has been the source of all light.
The whole creation sprang from Shabd,
O Nanak! Shabd is the very life of life.⁷

Having set up everything, He beheld His own imprint therein,
He established the beautiful earth and the starry welkin,
He raised the tabernacle of heaven with no pillars to support.

He created the sun and the moon with all the starry
host and His light is pervading all.⁸

GURU NANAK

Again, "Shabd" is not only the Creator but He is the Destroyer also, and the rebirth of the creation takes place through Him.

Both the creation and the dissolution are from Shabd,
And Shabd again is the cause of re-creation.⁹

GURU AMAR DAS

In the Hindu scriptures, It is described as the essence of ether, which goes to show that It is more subtle than ether and is all-pervading. Its presence, in fact, is felt in the union of matter and spirit, for every union implies vibration and vibration is caused by Shabd or Sound—the active life-principle permeating all space, nay receding far back into Itself; for God too is described as "Shabd," as the Power of God (Shabd) is not distinct and separate from God: God and Godhood (God-in-action) always go together.

Thy "Shabd" is Thyself and whatever Thou ordaineth
that comes to pass.¹⁰

GURU RAM DAS

All the religious books, including the Vedas, the oldest of them, have described "Shabd" as the primal manifest form of God. In Sama Veda we have,

Shabd is *Brahm* and "Silence" too is *Brahm*,
Brahm alone is vibrating everywhere.

The Mohammedan divines tell us that the world owes its very life and existence to Shabd. Shamas Tabrez says:

World came into being through *Saut* (Shabd or Sound Principle).

And from *Saut* spread all light.

Again Abdul Razaq Kashi tells us,

The Great Name (*ism-i-azam*) is the very essence and life of all names.

Its manifested form (Shabd) is supporting the entire creation,

It is the great sea in which we all appear as waves.

He alone can understand this mystery who belongs to our order.

Shabd is not the subject of reading, ritual or reciting

The Inner Sound Principle is All-Conscious and too subtle for the ears, the tongue and the pen. It is an Unwritten Law and an Unspoken Language. It is self-existing, self-sustaining and self-supporting and yet is the very life of all that exists both in the animate and inanimate creation. But It can be realized in the deepest depths of the soul, for the two are of the same essence, the soul being but a drop of the Ocean of All-Consciousness. In the Sikh scriptures, It is also called "Sacha Shabd" or the True Word:

With the True Word, one knows the Truth,
With the True Sound, one sings the glory of the Lord.¹¹

GURU NANAK

Meditate on the feet of the Master, and leaving aside all thy cleverness, be absorbed in the True Word.¹²
Remember the Lord, O dear friend,
And ever love the True Word.¹³

GURU ARJAN

It can be seen without eyes,
It can be heard without ears.¹⁴

GURU NANAK

Lao Tze speaks of It:

The Tao that can be expressed is not the eternal Tao;
The name that can be defined is not the unchanging
Name.¹⁵

Maulana Rumi says:

The Turks, Kurds, Parsis, Goans and Arabs,
They have all known It without the aid of lips and
ears.

The Upanishadic sages have described It as "Pranav" or that which can be heard through the pranic vibrations, without the help of tongue, lips and palate, for It is reverberating of Itself in and out of space.

Sant Kabir has called It "Videh" for It is above the realm of physical existence and can be apprehended by the soul when it is unclogged from bodily raiment.

All sing of the Shabd without realizing that It is
Videh or the Bodiless,
No tongue can describe It, but soul may contact It
within.

KABIR

Hazrat Bahu says in this context:

Everyone repeats the *Kalma* orally, by word of
mouth,
A rare soul may repeat It with the tongue of thought;
And whoever repeats It within with loving devotion,
He cannot describe it in words.

Again,

My Master has taught me a lesson, a lesson that
 goes on repeating Itself,
 And is heard in the ears without the aid of stop-cocks.

Maulana Rumi has beautifully described It:

O God, lead my soul to that blessed place, wherein
 the symphonies flow.

All religions teach of Shabd

In all religious books we find references to Shabd or the Creative Sound Current: Hindu scriptures speak of It as Shabd Brahm and Ashabd Brahm or Nad, that is responsible for the creation of the world. The ancient sages and seers sang of It in their songs, and called It Shruti, meaning "that which is heard." The esoteric teachings were passed on from Master to disciple and the Word was made manifest individually after years of spiritual discipline. In the Upanishadic Age, it came to be known as Udgit or Song of the Beyond, meaning at once of the other world (spiritual) and beyond the senses, for senses could not comprehend It and one had to transcend them to catch Its strains.¹⁶ Other words that also came in to use for It are Pranav and Aum, for It could be heard in the mental ears alone and could be sung with the pranic vibrations without any outer aid of tongue or lips. In Chapter 6 of the Maitreya Upanishad it is stated that there are two Brahms, one Shabd Brahm and the other Ashabd Brahm and to reach Ashabd Brahm, one has to meditate, in the first instance, on the Shabd Brahm which has different kinds of Sounds that can be heard within by stop-cocking the ears with the thumbs; and by this means one can cross over to

the Ashabd or Gupt Brahm, a state beyond the three Gunas and the three mental conditions, and called Turiya Pad or super-sensual plane.

In Yog-Sandhya,¹⁷ it is enjoined that a yogin, practicing yogic disciplines, ought to close his ears with the thumbs and listen within him to the musical strains of the Chidakash or mental horizon and thereby still the mind and attain the Turiya state and merge in the Avyakat.

In Chhandogya Upanishad¹⁸ it is mentioned that Nad (heavenly music) springs from the Universal Sun (of Brahmend) and that this secret was given by Ingris Rishi to Krishna, the darling son of Devki.

Guru Amar Das tells us, in Rag Bhairon, that Bhakt Prehlad was saved by Shabd:

It (Shabd) has been the saving lifeline in all the ages,
Prehlad, the son of the demon-king, knew neither
Gayatri nor any rituals,
He became one with God through contact with the
Shabd.¹⁹

GURU AMAR DAS

In Gita it is said,

Though under the sway of the senses, one feels drawn
toward God by force of the habit acquired in pre-
vious births; nay, even the seeker of enlightenment
transcends the *Shabd Brahm*.

The yogi, however, who diligently takes up this
practice, attains perfection in this very life with the
help of latencies of many births and being thor-
oughly purged of sin, forthwith reaches the supreme
goal.²⁰

In the Nad-bind Upanishad,²¹ we find,

A yogin ought to sit in *Sidha Asan* (a yogic posture),

and adopting *Vaishnavi Mudra*, should hear within him the "Sound" coming from the right side.

In Yog Sandhya, an elaborate account is given of the practice of "hearing the Shabd."

In the Rig Veda²² and the Atharv Veda²³ there are hymns in praise of Shabd. In Hans Upanishad of the latter it is given that one who does japa of the Hans Mantra, millions of times, comes to the realization of Nad. It is also stated that Nad consists of ten different types of melodies, nine of which are to be passed over, and the tenth, which resembles the sound of the thunder of distant clouds, is to be meditated upon and practiced, for It takes one to Par-Brahm.

In Hath Yog Pradipka,²⁴ there are many Shlokas in praise of Shabd. In the Vedas, It is spoken of as Nad and Akash Bani (Voice of Heaven). In the Buddhist scriptures, It is referred to as Sonorous Light or Flaming Sound.

The ancient Greeks also spoke of Shabd. In the writings of Socrates, we read that he heard within him a peculiar Sound which pulled him irresistibly to higher spiritual realms. Pythagoras also talked of Shabd. Plato spoke of It as the "Music of the Spheres." In the Greek language we have the term Logos, from "logo," to speak, which stands for the "Word" or Second Person of the Trinity. This term Logos also figures in both Hebrew and Christian philosophy and theology and in its mystic sense is used both by the Hellenistic and Neo-platonist philosophies. St. John has used the term "Word." It is a Sound Principle (Shabd) emanating from the Great Silence (Ashabd). In Chinese scriptures, it is known as Tao. Lao Tze, in the fourth century B. C., used the word Tao meaning "Road" or "Way" to denote the Hidden Principle of the Universe.

In the Avestic writings of Zoroaster, the Persian prophet of life, we come across the word Sraosha, which stands for the angel of inspiration that inspires the Universe. It is a Power apart from the six spiritual Powers of which Zoroaster speaks. It is the cult of Eternal Life and is from the Sanskrit root "Shru" (to hear) and means that Power of God which can be heard. In the Zend Avesta, we have an invocation to Mazda praying for the gift of Sraosha for those whom He loves. It is the same as Shabd in the terminology of the saints.

In our own times from Sant Kabir and Guru Nanak down to Guru Gobind Singh, the ten Sikh Gurus, Dadu, Jagjiwan, Tulsi, Darya Sahib, Baba Lal Das, Paltu and many others preached of Shabd.

Many of the references to this subject in the Judaeo-Christian tradition have been given above, in Book One.

Madam Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, has described It as the "Voice of God." In the Masonic Order we hear of It as the "Lost Word" in search of which the Mason Masters set up their Order.

In Koran, there is an Ayat, "God commanded and it was done," Kun-feu-Kun. This, in fact, is the Kalma of the Muslims.

The Sufis, an Order of Muslim mystics, call it Vadan. It is said:

If the *Anaam* (Nameless) had not wished to manifest Himself and become Naam, there would have been no "Sound" and no Universe.

Hazrat Inayat Khan, a modern Sufi mystic, tells us that this creation is nothing but the "Music of God" for It is the outcome or manifestation of His Power. He calls it Saute Sarmadi or the intoxicating vintage from the Gar-

den of Allah (God) and has given an elaborate description of It, as appears from the following account:

All space is filled with *Saute Sarmad* or the "Abstract Sound." The vibrations of this Sound are too fine to be either audible or visible to the material ears or eyes, since it is even difficult for the eyes to see the form and colour of the ethereal vibrations on the external plane. It was the *Saute Sarmad*, the Sound of the abstract, which Mohammed heard in the cave, Ghar-e-Hira, when he became lost in his ideal. The Koran refers to this Sound in the words: "Be and all became" (*Kun-feu-Kun*). Moses heard this very Sound on Mount Sinai (*Koh-i-Toor*), when in communion with God. The same Word was audible to the Christ when absorbed in his Heavenly Father in the wilderness. Shiva heard the same *Anahad Naad* during his *Samadhi* in the Himalayas. The flute of Krishna is symbolic of the same Sound allegorically explained. This Sound is the source of all revelation to the Masters to whom It is revealed from within and it is, therefore, that they know and teach the one and the same Truth.

The knower of the mystery of the Sound knows the mystery of the whole Universe. Whosoever has followed the strains of this Sound has forgotten all earthly distinctions and differences; and has reached the same goal of Truth in which all the Blessed Ones of God unite. Space is within the body as well as around it; in other words the body is in space and space is in the body.

This being the case, the Sound of the Abstract is always going on within, around and about man. Man does not hear It as a rule, because his consciousness is entirely centered in his material existence. Man becomes so absorbed in his experiences in the external world through the medium of the physical body that

space, with all its wonders of Light and Sound, appears to him blank . . . The limited volume of earthly sound is so concrete, that it dims the effect of the Sound of the Abstract to the sense of hearing; although in comparison to It the sounds of the earth are like that of a whistle to a drum. When the Abstract Sound is audible, all other sounds become indistinct to the mystic.

The Sound of the Abstract is called *Anhad* in the Vedas, meaning unlimited sound. The Sufis name It *Sarmad*, which suggests the idea of intoxication. The word intoxication is here used to signify upliftment, the freedom of the soul from Its earthly bondage. Those who are able to hear the *Saute Sarmad* and meditate on It are relieved from all worries, anxieties, fears and diseases; and the soul is freed from captivity in the senses and in the physical body. The soul of the listener becomes All-pervading Consciousness; and his spirit becomes the battery which keeps the whole Universe in motion. . . .

This Sound develops through ten different aspects because of Its manifestation through the different tubes of the body (*Nadis*); it sounds like thunder, the roaring of the sea, the jingling of bells, running water, the buzzing of bees, the twittering of sparrows, the Vina, the whistle, or the sound of *Shankha* (Conch) until it finally becomes *Hu* the most sacred of all sounds. This Sound *Hu* is the beginning and end of all sounds, be they from man, bird, beast, or thing.

THE MYSTICISM OF SOUND

In the Muslim scriptures, It is variously described as *Kalam-i-Ilahi* (The Voice of God), *Nida-i-Asmani* (the Sound from Heaven), *Ism-i-Azam* (the Great Name), *Saut-i-Sarmadi* (the Intoxicating Sound), *Saut-i-Nasira* (the Sound Melodious), *Kalam-i-Majid* (the Great Commandment) and *Kalam-i-Haq* (the Voice of Truth) which

can be heard inside, and It was taught as Sultan-ul-Azkar or the King of prayers. We have innumerable references to this Sound in the teachings of the Mohammedan fakirs:

Rise above thy mental horizon, O brave soul,
And listen to the call of Music coming from above.

MAULANA RUMI

The whole world is reverberating with Sound,
To listen to It thou must unseal thine inner ears,
Then shalt thou hear an Unending Music,
And that shall lead thee beyond the confines of death.

SHAH NIAZ

An unceasing Sound is floating down from the
heaven,

I wonder how ye are engaged in pursuits of no avail.

HAFIZ

Drive away all scepticism from thy mind,
And listen to the strains of heavenly music,
And receive within thee the messages of God,
For these come only by holy communion with the self.

The Prophet declared that he heard the Voice of God,
And it fell on his ears as clearly as any other sound,
But God has sealed thy ears,
And so ye listen not to His Voice.

MAULANA RUMI

About the Prophet Mohammed it is said²⁵ that at the age of forty he began receiving messages from God, after he had for fifteen years practiced communion with Awaz-Mustqim (Anhad Shabd or the Ceaseless Word), and had seen the glimpses of Truth (flashes of heavenly light) for seven years. At one time he remained for two years in the cave of Hira in meditation.

It is further stated that the prophet practiced in the cave

of Hira, for six years, the Sultan-ul-Azkar (Surat Shabd Yoga) and that Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani, did the same for twelve years in that sacred cave.²⁶

All the Sikh Gurus and other saints, time and again, taught this very thing in very clear terms. Guru Nanak spoke thus:

With stone-deaf ears thou hast lost all thy wits,
 For thou hast not got contact with the *Shabd*,
 And by slavery to the Mind thou hast forfeited thy
 human birth;
 Without the Master-soul, one remains blind to the
 Reality.²⁷

GURU NANAK

Hundreds of moons and thousands of suns may illuminate the world,
 But without a Master-soul, they fail miserably to dispel the darkness of the human mind.
 Without contact with *Shabd*, one remains stark blind and deaf,
 Of what avail is their life in this world?
 They get not the Water of Life and escape not the endless cycle of births.²⁸

GURU AMAR DAS

Practice ye the Word of the Master,
 For one knows the Reality through the Word.²⁹

GURU RAM DAS

Without the Master, there is no holy congregation,
 Without the Word one cannot know the Reality.³⁰

GURU AMAR DAS

From the above it is sufficiently clear that all Master-souls, whether Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and countless others, were conversant with the practice of the Word, though they did not necessarily expound it as a regular science. Most of them tell of Anhad *Shabd* only, leading up to

Und and Brahmand or the subtle and cosmic regions. But perfect saints, irrespective of whether they belonged to one religion or the other, have gone even beyond this and have spoken of Sar Shabd and Sat Shabd as well, and of regions beyond Brahmand (Par-Brahmand, i.e., Sach Khand, Alakh and Agam Deshas).

Shabd signifies Sound Principle

What is the sound and how is sound produced, are the natural questions in this context. Some say that sound is produced when two things strike, one against the other. Others say that where there is vibration, there is sound. It is, of course, true that sound does follow concussion and vibration. But the Sound of which the saints speak is different from what we ordinarily mean in common parlance. It is something very subtle and is characterized by Consciousness as exhibited in fecundity and growth principles. It is the very life of life that permeates in all things, visible and invisible. It is an active and live agent of Godhead and may briefly be described as God-in-action. This Sound Principle is Jnana or the real knowledge of the Rishis of old, the Cult of Eternal Life of Zoroaster, Logos of the Greeks, Tao of the Chinese, Budhi or enlightenment of Gautama and Sphota or Sound-essence of the philosophers.

Dhun or the Sound Current is both true knowledge and true meditation and remains indescribable all the same.³¹

GURU NANAK

This Sound is in Its fullness in everything, though the measure of Its manifestation may vary from one thing to

another. It is even in stones and wood, apparently insensate things. The fact is that all things in Nature are of atoms and atoms are full of energy as the phrase "atomic energy" denotes. It is because of this energy that the atoms are always in a state of motion and as they vibrate, a natural rhythmic sound is produced. Recent researches in science testify to this truth.* "Change" is the law of life and it does follow vibration and motion, all of which ultimately depend on the Sound Principle working in space and out of space.

Every second, every minute and every hour, the world
is in a state of continuous flux.

Scientists have found that even the mighty Himalayas are growing from age to age. The growth may be imperceptible, but surely it is there—it may be a fraction of an inch in the course of a century or so. Thus all things in Nature are characterized by vibration of rhythmic movement and this in itself implies the presence therein of the Sound Principle, whether the things are moving visibly or not. This Sound Principle is the essence or "Jauhar" of one life in all things.

Things full or empty are yet filled with Music,
See! how the sound comes from out of the drum.

This Sound Principle is all-pervading and is the very soul of all that exists. This current of life-consciousness is so subtle that It cannot be heard unless one acquires transcendental hearing. A mystic has beautifully described It as follows:

Dry are the strings, the wooden body and the
stretched leather,

* Cf. Andrews, Donald Hatch, "The Harmonic Dimensions of Nature,"
MAIN CURRENTS *In Modern Thought*, Vol. 11, No. 5, May 1955.

How do they give out the divine melodies?

Sound or Word is in fact the Creator of the Universe. All this manifestation is because of Him.

Had not the Nameless assumed a name,
The world would not have come into being.

The beloved Lord God has been calling us back from time out of mind, but the pity is that we do not attend to Him.

My friend is ever in converse with thee,
What a pity! ye listen not to the ancient call.

SHAH NIAZ

The Sound of the Friend or Beloved (God) is reverberating everywhere. A Muslim mystic poet says of It:

All the seven heavens are echoing with the Sound,
The ignorant do not hear It nor catch the strains.

HAFIZ

By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand;
and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive.³²

CHRIST

The Sound is by Itself and of Itself. In the material or physical region and materio-spiritual realms (Pind and Und), It is mixed up with and enclosed by matter. The Master makes It manifest in the Sukhman or Shah Rag in the region of the forehead.

Hear ye the Music in the *Sukhman*, and get absorbed
in the unending song.

Again,

And thine ears shall hear a Word behind thee saying,
this is the Way, Walk ye in It, when ye turn to the
right hand, and when ye turn to the left.³³

ISAIAH

For spiritual knowledge and self-realization, the practice

of the Sound Current (Shugal-i-Naghma-i-yazdani) is very necessary, for it is by hearing the Divine Music that the soul is pulled out of the material and mental clogs of the body and is led to higher spiritual regions from where the Sound whose reverberations are heard below in the body emanates. It is a continuous and unending Music, of which Maulana Rumi says,

Catch hold of the Music that lasts through eternity,
Search for the sun that never sets.

Again, the people of the world are quite ignorant of It. A rare individual practices It after It is made manifest by some Master-soul.

Enter ye the temple of the body and listen to the
divine melodies,
Those sitting around thee, shall not hear them.

MAULANA RUMI

In the noisy swirl of the work-a-day hurried life that we lead, we cannot hear the soft and gentle echoes of the Music floating down from afar. All those who practiced the Sound Current, in whatever time and in whatever clime, have spoken of these melodies, of course to the extent of their approach and mental apparatus. Even now, those persons, whether young or old, who are put on the Way by some competent Satguru with authority from above, do bear testimony to this sempiternal experience.

In the Upanishads we have an account of these musical notes. These resemble to a certain extent the gentle murmurs of the vast sea, low rumbling thunders of the distant clouds, the continuous splash of a waterfall, and ultimately merge into the sound of a conch, and develop into the blast of a trumpet, a thundering drum, sharp violin and a flute.³⁴

Mahatma Charan Das, in his book "Bhakti Sagar," has described ten types of melodies—the sweet warblings of birds, the chirping of green hoppers, tinkling of bells, sound of the gong, conch, playing of cymbals, thunder of clouds, the roar of a lion, violin and flute.

In Hath-yoga Pradipka we have an account of ten kinds of Nad, like the buzz of flower flies, tinkling of anklets, sound of conch, bell and cymbals, flute, drum-beat and other musical instruments, and the roar of a lion, etc.

In Sar Bachan,³⁵ Swami Shiv Dayal Singh Ji gives a wonderful account of the divine orchestra, comprising ten musical notes resembling what has been said above, as one enters into Sahansdal Kanwal or the region of thousand petaled lights.

Madame Blavatsky, a Russian theosophist initiated into theosophy in 1856 while in Tibet, the founder of the Theosophical Society and the author of a controversial work, "Isis Unveiled," writes in her book "The Voice of the Silence:"

The first is like the nightingale's sweet voice chanting a song of parting to its mate. The second comes as the sound of silver cymbals of the *Dhyanis* awakening the twinkling stars. The next is as the plaint melodies of the ocean spirit imprisoned in its shell. And this is followed by the chant of *Vina*. The fifth like sound of bamboo flute shrills in thine ear. It changes next into a trumpet blast. The last vibrates like the dull rumbling of a thunder cloud.

Amir Khusro, a great scholar and mystic poet (disciple of Kh. Nizam-ud-Din Chishti), has described these sounds thus:

First is the hum of the bees and the second is the sound of anklets,

The third is that of the conch and the fourth that of
 a gong,
 The fifth is a trumpet-blast and the sixth that of a
 flute,
 The seventh is of a *Bhir*, the eighth of a *mardang*
 (drum beat) and the ninth of a *Shahnai* (*Najeri*).
 And the tenth doth resemble the roar of a lion,
 Such indeed is the Heavenly Orchestra, O Khusro.
 In these ten melodies a yogin gets absorbed,
 The senses get stilled and so doth the mind, saith
 Khusro.
 With the flourish of limitless Music within,
 All the lusts of the flesh and the deadly sins fly off,
 The Master too has a wonderful world of his own,
 Khusro is now fully engrossed within himself.⁸⁶

All these melodies come swarming within as the pilgrim
 soul starts on the Path; but of all these, one must catch the
 sound of a gong or a conch for these in particular are con-
 nected with the higher spiritual realms, the various man-
 sions in the house of our Father,

None knows where the abode of the Beloved is,
 But sure enough the sound of the gong comes floating
 therefrom.

HAFIZ

Shabd has divine melody in It:

True Word emanates the melodies of *Sehaj*, and the
 mind gets absorbed in Truth,
 Ineffable and wonderful is the Word of the Immacu-
 lately Pure, and only a Guru's devotee implants
 It.⁸⁷

GURU AMAR DAS

Why do we not hear the Sound Principle?

Though Shabd is ever reverberating in each one of us,
 we do not hear It. The reason for this is not hard to find.

So long as the mind stuff is in a state of perpetual storm and stress, is torn by countless conflicting passions and desires, feeds fat on the food of egotism, and is tossed about on the endless waves of worldly life, it cannot possibly catch the slow and sublime rhythmic vibrations of the subtle Sound, nor acquire any love for It.

As long as the mind is in a state of perpetual flux and unrest, and is filled with thoughts of I-am-ness, *Shabd* fails to impart its sweet fragrance and *Naam* fails to inspire love and attraction.³⁸

GURU RAM DAS

Maulana Rumi likewise says:

Your ears cannot listen to the Music of the Sound;
Perverted as you are, you have lost the very sense of hearing.

In the Gospel of St. Matthew, Christ says:

For this peoples' heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted and I should heal them.³⁹

Shabd is the Voice of God and His primal manifestation. It is pervading everywhere in and out of space.

The Word of the Master shows the Way to God-realization.⁴⁰

GURU NANAK

This Sound Principle has often been referred to as "Bani" as well:

Bani has been reverberating through the four ages,
Emanating from Truth, It sings of Truth.⁴¹

GURU AMAR DAS

The Bani pervades everywhere. It is known as Shabd or Naam, and has sweetness in It.

In every age, *Bani* has been known as Shabd,
Sweet is the Naam and mind longs for it.⁴²

GURU AMAR DAS

What a pity! for the Jiva, clogged as it is and hemmed in by mind and matter on all sides, has lost the angel in him and as such cannot listen to the subtle and sublime Sound of the Beloved.

Alas! Ye are imprisoned behind the walls of the
finitude (body and bodily adjuncts),
And listen not to the sublime Sound of the Merciful.

MAULANA RUMI

This sound is an eternal call for a return home:

There comes a perpetual call from afar,
Calling thee back to thine own home.

TULSI SAHIB

The Sublime Sound cannot of course be heard by the physical ears. There is a way for our listening to the divine Music which can be heard by the inner faculty of transcendental hearing, and this can be trained, developed and pressed into service through the grace of some Master-soul; for no amount of worldly knowledge, wisdom and ingenuity can help in this. Though science has not yet been able to probe into this mystery, yet it can be resolved and experienced by actual experimentation in the laboratory of the Self with the instruction and guidance of the Saints. The results of recent scientific investigations have now revealed the presence of rhythmic motion even in atoms, and scientific findings are every day coming closer to reality.

How can we listen to the Sound Principle?

The next natural question is how the Shabd can be contacted and attuned with. The saints tell us that we can listen to the Sound Principle if we can introvert and stop listening to the outer sounds of the world around us. In other words, we must learn to recede into our own Self by a process of inversion and become a Pure Self by releasing the soul from the prison of the facts of life, before we can qualify the Self for Self-realization, which comes by listening to the Sound Current. A holy communion with and practice of the Sound gradually disenfranchises the soul of all that is of the world and reveals the cult of love, life and light that is at the back of all creation. We have, in brief, to stop the energy flowing out through the sense-organs, particularly the eyes, ears, and tongue and concentrate it at the still-point in the body, the center of the soul, leaving the mind high and dry, before we can listen to the Music of the soul in Its fullness.

Close down the three outlets and attend to the ceaseless Music,

O Nanak! in the deep silence of the soul, there is a perpetual light with no sunrise and sunset.⁴⁸

Kabir says:

Close down thine eyes, ears and mouth,
And hear ye the unending melody of the Shabd.

Shah Niaz tells us:

Sound is pervading the whole world in Its fullness,
Ye can surely listen to It with transcendental hearing,
This ye can do by closing the outer bodily ears,
For surely then shall ye hear the endless song,

And It shall take you beyond the sway of destruction
and dissolution.

Apart from the physical senses, we have with us subtle senses much more powerful than the physical. At present these subtle senses are lying dormant and unused. They can, by regular practice, be wakened into consciousness and pressed into use in the astral world, where we can witness and experience supra-mental patterns and colors just as we do on the physical plane; nay, with much more clarity and understanding than we do here.

Along with the five physical senses, we are endowed
with five subtle senses as well,
These are of solid gold when compared with the
others of copper.

MAULANA RUMI

Shabd can thus be heard by the ears of thought. Both the soul and the Shabd are of the same spiritual essence and as such soul can, without the aid of physical senses, apprehend the subtle Sound.

Soul is of the essence of God and is His very own Self,
And It can sing His praises in an unspoken language
without any outer aids (tongue, lips or palate).

In the holy Koran also it is stated that soul is the fiat or decree of God. It is His authorization that pervades everywhere, upholding the sky and the earth and all that exists.

Where does Shabd dwell and how can It be contacted?

There are ten portals of the body, of which nine are visible while the tenth is invisible.

The citadel of the body has nine open doorways,
while the tenth is closely shut in secret,

None can have access through the tenth, the Way in,
except through practice of the *Guru's Word*.⁴⁴

GURU AMAR DAS

Enter ye in at the Strait gate: for wide is the gate and
broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and
many there be which go in thereat: because strait
is the gate and narrow is the Way, which leadeth
unto life, and few there be that find it.⁴⁵

Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say
unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be
able.⁴⁶

CHRIST

As long as the soul is wandering in and out of the nine
portals of the body, it is always unwillingly being drained
of its secret energy or Johar. With this constant flow of
energy outside, it remains a complete stranger to the Real-
ity within its own self and does not know the latent poten-
tialities of Godhood lodged in its very nature.

A whore (mind ridden soul) madly in love with the
nine portals can hardly get to Reality.⁴⁷

KABIR

Guru Amar Das also advises that we should close down
our nine portals, still the mind and then "tap inside" (as
Emerson puts it) and push our way into the mansion of
the Beloved from where unceasing Music is flowing down
day and night, which can be contacted through the practice
enjoined by a Master-soul.

Closing down the nine doors, seek ye the tenth that
leads to thy True Home,
There the ceaseless Music plays round the clock and
can be heard through the Master's Dispensation.⁴⁸

GURU AMAR DAS

Guru Nanak describes this so beautifully:

Sukhmana, Ida and Pingla cannot be known unless
the Inconceivable makes one conceive,
O Nanak! the True Master makes the Word audible
by bringing one above the three.⁴⁹

This means that one cannot fully commune with the Word of the True Master unless one completely transcends body consciousness. In the realm of mind and matter, as far as the five tattwas reign supreme, the Sound Current works through them for the benefit of the physical creation; but beyond them is the Word in Its primordial form unalloyed by any of these things.

The Sound Principle stands by Itself and is independent of everything for It is self-existing. The siddhas once asked Guru Nanak,

Where does the Sound abide that ferries us across the
ocean of delusive matter?
Whereon stand the *Pranas* (vibrations), as they extend
out ten fingers from the nostrils?

Guru Nanak thus replied,

The Sound Principle abides in us; though indescribable,
yet I find It immanent everywhere,
The *Pranas* are rooted in the region of silence, but the
Sound Principle is All-pervasive in Its fullness and
is self-existent.⁵⁰

Shabd is the very life of our life. It is a part of our being and we cannot do without It even for a single moment. But we cannot contact It unless we rise above body consciousness.

Search for the Sound (the soul essence) in the body,
and thou shalt be saved,

By devotion to the Master, I enjoy perpetual peace,
for in me is Sound, the crest jewel of all virtues.⁵¹

NANAK

Our human body is a receiving set for catching the Sound Current and like a radio, has to be adjusted properly to bring it in tune with the ethereal waves. The Master, at the time of initiation, connects the spirit within with the lowest link of the All-pervading Sound and this contact can be developed by day to day practice, to any length one may like.

Sound and Light

In the world there are two things that serve as guides to a weary traveler on a lonesome journey in a pitch dark night; to wit, Sound and Light (Kalam and Nur). These are the two aids also on the Path of Spirituality. Each of them has Its own purpose. We have the divine Light in us and from within It emanates Sound, and the two together have been described as Flaming Sound or Sounding Flame.

The mind when attuned with the Sound becomes
detached and gets engrossed,
In the heart of the Light within is a delectable Sound,
that makes one fully absorbed in God.⁵²

GURU NANAK

Incomprehensible is the real thing.⁵³

GURU ARJAN

Without the Light of Shabd, darkness prevails within,
Nor do we get to the Reality, nor end with the gyres.⁵⁴

GURU AMAR DAS

Without Shabd it is all darkness,
With Shabd manifested, the world came into being.⁵⁵

GURU RAM DAS

All life and all power come from It. From the sun to the candle flame, all light comes from this grand powerhouse. The energy of the scientist and the pranas of the yogins are but manifestations of this life-stream which, like electricity in the air, is all-pervading and all-powerful.

In Him was life; and the life was the light of man.
And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness
comprehendeth it not. . . .

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man
that cometh into the world. He was in the world
and the world was made by Him, and the world
knew Him not.⁵⁰

ST. JOHN

St. Augustine tells us of the manifestation in him of the Light in this way:

I entered even into my inward self. Thou being my Guide and able as I was: for Thou were become my helper. And I entered and beheld with the eye of my soul (such as it was), above the same eye of my soul above my mind, the Light Unchangeable. Not this ordinary light which all flesh may look upon, nor as it were a greater of the same kind, as though the brightness of this should be manifold brighter, and with its greatness take up all space. Not such was the light but other, yea, far other from all these. . . . He that knows the Truth, knows what that Light is and he that knows It, knows Eternity.

Sant Kabir tells us that the soul without Shabd is blind and does not know the Path:

Without the Word one is blind and knows not the
Way,
With no way out, one endlessly wanders in the gyres.

Thousands of years ago, Zoroaster taught the worship of

the cult of Vital Fire and even today we see its traces in the symbolic fire that the Parsis keep burning in their homesteads. Gautama, when he became Buddha or the Enlightened One, taught the Path of Life to his followers.

All the Prophets of the East or the West, who practiced the process of inversion and recession or withdrawal of the Soul Current at will, speak of both the experiences of Light and Sound. As soul proceeds on the spiritual path, the gazing faculty precedes that of the hearing, for light is faster than sound.

Soul, though imprisoned by mind and matter, is yet endowed with the gift of subtle faculties of seeing and hearing independent of the sense organs; and when one develops them both, one can withdraw the life-current from the body and then can move freely on to higher spiritual realms, thereby escaping forever from the bondage of the world.

With the guidance of the gazing faculty, I shall reach
Sat Lok.

SWAMI SHIVDAYAL SINGH

In the beginning Light appears first and Sound comes afterwards. In practice, we do Simran and Dhyān in the beginning, the reason being that these prepare the ground for further development. Though each has Its own individual purpose, yet both of them are practiced for the advent of Sound or Shabd, from where the real help comes. Shabd then is the control keystone in the archway of Simran and Dhyān, the two sides of the arch. Again, in the spiritual journey, there come stages where the soul gets bewildered in the blinding Light that descends around it from all sides, and there nothing but the Sound helps to pull it through.

And thine ears shall hear a Word behind thee,
Saying this is the Way, walk ye in it.⁵⁷

ISAIAH

Again, there are stages on the Way where utter darkness prevails and there are regions of deep silence and solemnity where one is struck with awe and dismay, and there too, the glorious Voice of God comes to the rescue as an unerring guide and a never failing friend, saying,

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

EVERYMAN

The importance of sound as a guiding factor is recognized on all hands. A traveler on a desolate plain in a dark night with no habitation in sight, anxiously and wistfully tries to catch some sound, maybe the bark of some distant dog, wherewith to guide his weary footsteps in the right direction; for the bark announces to him the proximity of some wayside hutments and encourages him on till he reaches them. So do benighted stragglers try to catch the claptrap of a horse's hoof or the tinkling of a bell round an animal's neck. This is the power of sound; unfailing and deadly sure as it is, it acquires even more significance in the inner journey of the soul.

Shabd and Truth are Synonymous

Shabd is nothing but Absolute and Abstract Truth in Its concrete form. It is an eternal and unchanging principle of God's Power, working out His divine Will in all directions. Like Truth Itself, It was in the beginning where there was nothing else, It was the beginning of each cycle of creation and It shall exist forever and forever.

Guru Nanak tells of It as follows:

The Word is the only symbol of Truth,
And can be known and experienced through a perfect
Master.⁵⁸

Guru Amar Das and Guru Arjan say of It:

Bani or *Shabd* is Truth personified,
O love this Truth with all your heart and soul.⁵⁹

GURU AMAR DAS

Listen, O friend, to the all-pervading Voice of God,
The Master has given you all True Word of God.⁶⁰

GURU ARJAN

Shabd is the Water of Life

Again, Shabd is the Water of Life, that gives us immortality and blesses us with life everlasting.

I tell you most solemnly, whoever keeps my Word
will never see death.⁶¹

If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.
He that believeth in me . . . out of his belly shall flow
rivers of Living Water.⁶²

CHRIST

Once Jesus when passing through Samaria came to Jacob's Well and sat there awhile when a Samaritan woman came to draw water and Jesus asked for a drink. But Samaritan as she was, she hesitated to deal with a Jew, and thereupon Jesus said to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that sayeth to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee Living Water. . . ."

Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him
shall never thirst but the water that I shall give him
shall be in him a well of water springing up into
everlasting life.⁶³

CHRIST

In the Book of Jeremiah we have:

For my people . . . have forsaken me, the fountain of
Living Waters.⁶⁴

In the Sikh scriptures we have:

The Word of the Master is an elixir that does away
with all desires,
The mind gets dyed in Truth and is forever absorbed
in Him.⁶⁵

GURU AMAR DAS

Without Shabd the whole world is in stark ignorance and
life goes in vain. It is only a devotee of the Master who
gets access to the Water of Life.

The world is in ignorance of Shabd and life is value-
less indeed,
O Nanak! Shabd alone is the true elixir, and a devotee
of the Master gets It.⁶⁶

GURU RAM DAS

The well of the Water of Life lies within us, but attached
as we are to the mind, we do not know of It nor partake
of It. Like a deer with musk hidden in its navel, we search
for It outside all our life and die in the attempt.

Within the body the Water of Life is surging in full-
ness, but the mind-ridden do not taste It;
With musk in its navel, the deer kills himself in end-
less search for it without.⁶⁷

GURU RAM DAS

The stream of life is gushing within, and by means of
Shabd one can approach It and partake of It.

The fount of the Water of Life is bubbling to the
brim,
One who is really athirst can get to It by following
the Sound.⁶⁸

GURU AMAR DAS

Shabd is the essence of all worship

All our endeavors, practices and rituals are to achieve Shabd. The devotion to Shabd is acceptable to God, and He grants us Salvation thereby.

The devotion is that of the Shabd.⁶⁹

GURU AMAR DAS

The practice of the Master's Word is the essence of all worship.⁷⁰

GURU NANAK

Nothing but the practice of the Shabd leads to the Reality. One cannot, by any means, get out of the world of attachments. In this context Guru Nanak says:

In this world true devotion is that of Shabd,
Without Shabd, one remains an egoistic fool.⁷¹

GURU NANAK

In the present age—Kali Yuga—the worship that is acceptable to God is that of Shabd.

In *Kali Yuga*, communion with the Word is the true *Kirtan*.

It is the true devotion by which ye shall escape all I-ness.⁷²

GURU AMAR DAS

It is with Shabd that a Jiva is transformed from clay into gold and from filth into a pure crystal.

By listening to the Word of the Master, one turns from brittle glass into solid gold,

By tasting the Word of the Master one is transformed from poison into Nectar.⁷³

GURU RAM DAS

In this way one reaps the full benefit of his human birth.

By contact with the True Word, a devotee earns his merit.

The light of the soul dawns within and he lives in perpetual ecstasy.⁷⁴

GURU AMAR DAS

Shabd is identical with Hukam and Naam. In fact, all these words mean the Expression or Power of God.

He who accepts His Will, is acceptable to Him,
With the help of the Master's Shabd, know ye the Naam.⁷⁵

GURU AMAR DAS

Shabd is Soma Ras, very sweet and delicious:

Sweet is the Word of the Master,
Such an elixir one finds within.⁷⁶

GURU NANAK

Shabd is an inexhaustible treasure and ever remains full.

So long as His mercy lasts, the stream of life can never run dry,
O Nanak! Shabd is inexhaustible, distribute It as thou wilt.⁷⁷

GURU ARJAN

Shabd is Limitless and All-pervading. The angel of death cannot come near It.

Thou art the Omniscient friend and Thou alone can contact us,
All praise to the Word of the Guru, It is boundless indeed,
Even the Angel of Death cannot reach where the limitless Word prevails.⁷⁸

GURU NANAK

Shabd is All-pervading and Immanent:

The Sun of Shabd illumined all the Four Ages,
A devotee alone meditates on the *Bani*.⁷⁹

GURU NANAK

Shabd spreads in Its fullness everywhere:

Consider not that *Hari* is far off,
He is the nearest of the near,
He is ever in attention with eyes and ears,
And spreads everywhere in fullness.⁸⁰

GURU AMAR DAS

Shabd or Hukam is the Controlling Power of God:

Thy Command (*Hukam*) holds Its sway on all sides,
Thy Word (*Naam*) reverberates everywhere,
Shabd is immanent in all,
The true God meets us if Thou so ordaineth.⁸¹

GURU NANAK

Shabd abides in the holy temple of the body and as such
may be found therein:

Search for Shabd in the temple of the body,
And get to the precious *Naam* therein.⁸²

GURU AMAR DAS

Shabd can be contacted in the body by a process of inver-
sion and self-analysis:

Discipline the body to cross over the ocean of life,
And meditate on the Essence of the Soul,
The devotion to the Master grants perpetual ecstasy,
The Shabd of all virtues dwells within, in abundance.⁸³

GURU NANAK

Guru Nanak tells us of the abode of Shabd:

Cross over the *Sukhmana*, leaving *Ida* and *Pingla*
aside, to comprehend the Incomprehensible,
Far above these three the True Master manifests the
Shabd.⁸⁴

GURU NANAK

How to contact Shabd

- (1) By the Grace of God. God may, in His mercy, manifest Shabd in whomever He likes.

By His glance of Grace, Shabd becomes manifest within, dispelling all skepticism,
The body and the mind both get purified and the pure Sound of *Bani* (the Naam) is implanted in the heart.⁸⁵

GURU NANAK

None can understand Thee unless Thou doeth it for one,
None can meet Thee unless Thou so decreeth,
Then one sings of the *Bani* through Shabd all the time,
And remains absorbed in the True One.⁸⁶

GURU AMAR DAS

Those who come within the ambit of His favor, for them Shabd is minted in His true mint and they alone engage in the practice of Naam.

Only in such a mint, can man be cast into the Word,
But they alone who are favored by Him, can take unto this Path.

O Nanak, on whom He looks with grace, He fills with everlasting peace.⁸⁷

GURU NANAK

- (2) By the grace of Sant Satguru and Sat Sangat. God may, in His inimitable mercy, lead one to His accredited representative on earth who links the soul with Shabd by making Shabd manifest within.

In the fullness of time, He leads one to a *Satguru*,
Then one takes to the Path of Surat Shabd Yoga.⁸⁸

The Perfect Master makes the Shabd manifest,
Rising above the three *Gunas* one rests in *Turiya*.⁸⁹

Satguru, the greatest Donor, manifests the Shabd,
And then all restlessness ceases and one gets eternal
rest.⁹⁰

GURU AMAR DAS

Guru is Word personified, Word made flesh, and he alone
can make it manifest. It is, in fact, the gift of the Guru
and no one else can help in the matter.

Why hold back what one holds in trust?
There can be no peace until the trust is discharged,
The Word of the Master can be implanted only by the
Master,
No one else can make the Word manifest.⁹¹

GURU RAM DAS

Shabd is an unspoken language emanating of Itself from
God, and like Him, the Master imparts the Power of God
in an unspoken language. In this context Maulana Rumi
says:

The Master, like God, acts without any outer aids,
And imparts knowledge to disciples in an unspoken
language.

The Master, at the time of initiation, explains the won-
drous and formless Word, and then, with the lever of His
own life-impulse, raises the spirit up and contacts the initi-
ate with the Naam.

- (3) By complete self-surrender at the feet of the Master
in all humility after casting away the pride of birth
and caste, riches and possessions, knowledge and
wisdom.

At once rid thyself of the pride of knowledge and
penances,
Take a single draught of the intoxicating wine.

HAFIZ

So long as the soil is not ready and the seeds are not sown in season, they do not bear any fruit. Similarly, until the thorns and thistles of life are weeded out of the mind, it cannot be stilled. However, It grows gradually domesticated by the practice of the Shabd, and in course of time gets rarefied or etherealized and comes to acquire single-mindedness with the result that the Light of Heaven comes to be reflected therein.

So long the mind is swayed by passions,
It is full of all kinds of pride and prejudices,
It can neither relish Shabd nor love Naam.⁹²

GURU AMAR DAS

So inner cleanliness is far more important than outer cleanliness, for without it one can hardly make any progress on the Path.

Devotion to Shabd: What it is

To attend and listen with a single mind to the Dhun Atmak Shabd within is devotion of the right type. Shabd is highly subtle, and until we rise to the same level of subtlety we cannot possibly grasp or take hold of it. Shabd or the Power of God is all-pervading in all-consciousness, and if our spirit, which is of the same essence as God, gets contact with Shabd, it is a contact with God; for God is not different from His Power (Shabd).

A contact with Shabd is contact with God,
It is the crowning fruition of all endeavors.⁹³

GURU AMAR DAS

In order to establish a contact with Shabd, it is necessary that the soul must first free itself from the prison house of finite existence. It is only a perfect Master who can enable it to break through the bondage of mind and matter, raise

it above body-consciousness and then link it with the Over-soul—the life of all life—the Naam.

Shabd is the heritage of a rare devotee of the Master

Everyone wishes to see God face to face but only a rare soul gets the holy communion through the Shabd.

How many are pining to meet Thee?

A rare soul realizes Thee with the Word of the Master.⁹⁴

GURU NANAK

This body is the holy temple of God, with God's Power working in and out of it. All persons, rich and poor, lettered and unlettered, young and aged, man and woman, anywhere and everywhere, irrespective of color, caste and creed, are qualified to have a free access to that Power within through the grace of some competent Master and thus practice Shabd quite easily and naturally and reap the fruit thereof.

Holy temple of the body is His Emporium with the Shabd beautifully set within,

A devotee of the Master may find the precious Naam therein.⁹⁵

Without contact with the Shabd, the world remains in delusion and the human life goes in vain.

O Nanak, Shabd is the Water of Life and a rare devotee of the Master gets to It.⁹⁶

GURU AMAR DAS

A mind-ridden person, because of the oscillation of the mind, does not recognize the Shabd and remains a total stranger to this elixir.

The restless mind knows not the Way,

The filthy mind cannot recognize the Word.⁹⁷

GURU NANAK

A slave of the senses knows not the Word and loses
 his self-respect,
 And he finds no delight in the Shabd as he remains
 engaged in the sensual pursuits.⁹⁸

GURU AMAR DAS

Shabd: What It does

Shabd is All-consciousness. It is just a wave in the sea of consciousness. Man is a drop of the Ocean of God, and both are of the same spirit. While one is the Ocean, the other is the wave and the third is a drop of All-conscious God. The wave of conscious Shabd cannot but, like a powerful magnet, attract and draw to Itself the conscious drop of the spirit. The spirit finds no rest until, riding upon the Sound Current, it reaches the heavenly home of the Father and attains salvation. The sound is surging in Its fullness and the spirit needs but to contact It to rise above all limitations into the limitless eternity.

Surat and Shabd are naturally related to each other. Shabd is characterized by Light and Sound principles, wherewith the mind gets stilled and the spirit, freed from the clutches of the mind, is irresistibly drawn by the Shabd and is taken to her native home from where the Sound Current is emanating. On the other hand, those who take up practices involving Pranas cannot go beyond the frontiers of Prana which extend to the mental or astral heaven (Chidakash). But a Shabd-yogin can go freely, openly and honorably to wherever he likes, because Shabd pervades everywhere without any limitations, and reach the true home of his Father.

My God is everywhere and at all times,
 And becomes manifest by practice of Shabd.⁹⁹

GURU AMAR DAS

Shabd is the means of finding God. A contact with the Shabd means contact with God.

A communion with the Word is union with God,
And all endeavors then get crowned with success.¹⁰⁰

GURU AMAR DAS

Shabd is the only way that leads to the True King.

In the living soul is the Life of life (Shabd)
Which becomes an usher to the great King.¹⁰¹

GURU RAM DAS

Shabd is the Way that leads to Reality. It is a barque that can take the Jiva safely across the sea of matter to the mansion of the Lord.

The Absolute God and the spirit along with Shabd, the connecting link between the two, constitute the holy trinity, for the same Power of God is working simultaneously in all the three. The spirit in man has no separate existence independent of God.

O Kabir! the spirit is of the essence of God.¹⁰²

KABIR

Though all spirits are of One Reality, yet each one of the spirits feels that it has a separate existence.

Sach Khand or the Kingdom of God is within us but none can enter therein without proper guidance. For admittance thereto, we must invert and become a little child in innocence and purity, for then we can catch the saving lifeline of Shabd which leads Godward. By communion with Shabd, we are freed from pleasure and pain, mind and matter, and rise above the pairs of opposites, and attain liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.

Shabd is the live and conscious Life-current of God which has both created the world and sustains it. It is the

involved seed that has evolved into a mighty tree laden with many colored flowers and fruits. Whatever now exists, exists in Eternity and whatever goes out of existence also goes into Eternity. Everything is in the great Deep, rising momentarily to the surface in the form of tides, waves, ripples, bubbles and the like, appearing and disappearing before our eyes—the Unmanifested manifesting Himself into so many forms and patterns.

Shabd is the root-cause of the creation and the creation is the resultant effect thereof. All that sprouts from and comes out of the roots is already in the roots in a condensed form and in fullness of time grows and fructifies. When a ray of the sun falls on a polished reflector, it begins to reflect the sun itself. In the same way, when the mind is purified and there is left not a trace of I-ness in it, it begins to reflect God's Light from within. Just as the ray of the sun is not different from the sun itself, so also a spirit, which is nothing but a ray of God, is not different from God and begins to manifest the hidden Power of God, with proper training and guidance in the Science of Shabd or Word.

Shabd (Dhun-Atmak) is the true primordial Word as taught by St. John in his Gospel. It is responsible for creating the various grand divisions, divisions and sub-divisions of the universe right from the highest spiritual region down to the physical world in which we live. Emanating from God, the spirit current worked out the miracle of creation and is sustaining it and controlling it in all details. The practice of the Sound Current, as taught by the Masters in all ages and in all countries, is the highest religion and confers the highest boon—to wit, liberation from the bondage of mind and matter while still

living. But contact with Shabd can be established only through the grace of a Master of the Sound Current and not otherwise.

Shamas Tabrez, a Muslim divine, speaks of Shabd as follows:

There comes a Sound (*Nida*), from neither within
nor without,
From neither right nor left, from neither behind nor
in front,
From neither below nor above, from neither East nor
West,
Nor is It of the elements: water, air, fire, earth and
the like;
From where then? It is from that place thou art in
search of;
Turn ye toward the place wherefrom the Lord makes
His appearance.
From where a restless fish out of water gets water to
live in,
From the place where the prophet Moses saw the
divine Light,
From the place where the fruits get their ripening
influence,
From the place where the stones get transmuted to
gems,
From the place to which even an infidel turns in
distress,
From the place to which all men turn when they find
this world a vale of tears.
It is not given to us to describe such a blessed place;
It is a place where even the heretics would leave off
their heresies.

Truly, the Shabd is coming from the direction in which the soul has to go. Without Shabd, the soul remains in darkness and feels helpless.

Without the aid of Shabd, the soul wanders blindfold
in ignorance and knows not the Way out.

KABIR

All sages and seers have counted upon Shabd as the only means of salvation. But one cannot take hold of the life-line of the Sound Current without initiation into the esoteric teachings of the Masters from a competent living Master-soul and practicing the process of soul-withdrawal at the still point in the body between and behind the two eyebrows. This is moving from the circumference of life to the center of life and from here the soul, following the lead of the Sound Principle, proceeds to her native home, the Mansion of God, the source and fountainhead of the divine Melody Itself.

Shabd thus leads us to an altogether new life—life of the spirit as distinguished from the life of the flesh. Christ too taught of this new life which our Christian brethren have forgotten with the lapse of time. St. John, in his Gospel, tells us,

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.

The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the spirit.¹⁰⁸

CHRIST

In the Book of Ezekiel we have:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh.¹⁰⁴

This new life of the spirit begins from the day of initiation into the mysteries of the spirit, call it what you like: "Deeksha" as the Hindus do, "Baet" as the Muslims say, "Baptism" as it is known among the Christians, or "Pahul" as among the Sikhs. The Vedic seers gave it the name of "Duey Janama" which literally means second birth. The life of the spirit begins not with the theoretical exposition of the spiritual science but by a practical demonstration on the spiritual plane of the spirit-current made manifest. Here the invisible and inaudible life-stream is made both visible and audible to the spirit within, converting the atheist into a theist in the true sense of the term. It is imparting the life-impulse and making It throb in every pore of the body. This coming back of the soul to the realization of her true nature and rising into Universal or Cosmic awareness beyond the walls of finitude is true resurrection or coming to a new birth and a new life. To die in the body while living, is to live in the spirit.

St. Paul describes it thus:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.¹⁰⁵

The life of the flesh and the life of the spirit are two distinct and separate things, exclusive of each other. This is why it is said,

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.¹⁰⁶

CHRIST

Guru Nanak speaks of it:

The birth in the Master releases one from the cycle
of transmigrations.¹⁰⁷

Among the Muslims it is called "Fana-fil-Sheikh" or Death in the Master which is just the same thing as Birth in the Master for this death is but the beginning of a new life.

Shabd thus takes us out of the ignorance which characterizes both mind and matter, purifies us through and through and gives us a new lease on life—the life of the spirit, which is unchanging and eternal—as one breaks away once and for all from the body and bodily attachments, and sees the new world without the help of the outer eyes.

Communion with the All-pervading Word of the
Master is the highest virtue,
And takes one to his native land to drink the elixir
of life and to see the new world without the help
of the outer eyes.¹⁰⁸

GURU RAM DAS

The early morning hours are best suited for practice of the Sound Principle, for the mind is yet fresh out of sleep and has not yet wandered into the daily routine of the physical life.

In the early morning hours, commune with the Word
leaving aside all attachments,
Nanak would like to be the slave of His slave who
engaged in the Word and won what is lost to the
world.¹⁰⁹

At the ambrosial hour of the early dawn,
Be ye in communion with the divine Word,
And meditate on His glory.¹¹⁰

GURU NANAK

Shabd: Its blessings

Shabd brings in untold blessings. It is the powerhouse of all energy or force in any form, from Pranas down to electricity and magnetism. Every form of life is the manifestation of Shabd. All that is, is of Shabd and nothing is that is not of Shabd—life-current pulsating in and out of space. Those who commune with Shabd and live in and by Shabd are verily the children of the Supreme One, the life of life and the light of light. Shabd is the very Bread of Life which comes down from Heaven for all those who hunger after righteousness and the very Water of Life for those who thirst after Self-knowledge and God-knowledge. True love, wisdom and power are the greatest gifts that one gets by basking in the sunshine of Heaven's Light.

1. Mind grows docile and is purified of the lusts of the flesh. There is no remedy to control the oscillations of the ever-restless mind. One may resort to all the known methods—to wit, penances and austerities, rites and rituals, fasts and vigils, pilgrimages and circumambulations, purificatory baths in the holy rivers, charitable and philanthropic acts—but cannot thereby achieve inner peace. On the contrary, all these help in developing the egotistic instinct which is the root cause of all evil. Sage Vashisht, while teaching Rama, told him that he could for a moment believe that one had lifted the mighty Himalayas, or had drunk the oceanic waters to the lees, but the sage would never believe it if anyone were to say that he had subdued the mind. But by listening to the Sound Current one is rid of all Karmic impressions of the past. The contact with the Shabd acts as a spark of fire that burns down all impurities of the mind as a heap of hay is burnt down to ashes in an

instant. The storehouse of unfructified Karmas is blown off like a powder-magazine, and once released of this gigantic load, the mind and soul get attuned with the Heavenly Music, lost to the world around like a moth before a candle.

Mind runs after pleasurable sensations, most of which fall into two groups: forms and patterns on the one hand and sweet symphonies of sound on the other. The Shabd too has both these characteristics—the heavenly Melody and the divine Light—and once that Sound or Light principle becomes manifest, mind is paralyzed, losing all faith in the transitory charms of the world that gradually lose their glamour and grow dull, insipid and lifeless.

With a draught of the Water of Life the mind grows still, for there is no other remedy to still it but that of communing with the Sound Current.

Without the Word of the Master, the mind remains restless.¹¹¹

Our restless mind becomes steady when engrossed in the Shabd,
And this is the highest worship and the greatest virtue.¹¹²

GURU NANAK

By practice of the Shabd, ripples cease to float on the lake of the mind.

All the oscillations of the mind cease with the practice of the Shabd and it gets pacified of itself.¹¹³

GURU AMAR DAS

Mind keeps running in space—high and low—so long as it does not come in contact with the Shabd.¹¹⁴

GURU NANAK

Shabd is sharper than a two-edged razor and cuts asunder

all attachments of the world, conquers the five passions and frees one of bondage from all that one holds dear; and the spirit when freed, flies unfettered toward her native Home in Heaven.

Being rid of the five deadly sins, one remains engrossed in the Lord.¹¹⁵

KABIR

2. Shabd is the remedy for egotism from which all the world suffers.

Egotism is the greatest ill oppressing all,
Without Shabd, one cannot get rid of this malady.¹¹⁶

GURU AMAR DAS

Egotism is an age-old disease but it can be remedied by practice of the Master's Word.

Egotism is an age-old disease and its remedy too lies within,
Should the Lord so favor, one takes to the practice of the Master's Word.¹¹⁷

GURU NANAK

The poison of egotism is rendered ineffective by the Shabd of the Master.¹¹⁸

GURU AMAR DAS

O Nanak! Shabd burns away egotism.¹¹⁹

GURU NANAK

Shamas Tabrez also prescribes medicine of Shabd to cure one of his egotism:

When thou shalt hear the trumpet-blast,
Thou shalt be rid of all pride and passions,
When the harmonious sound shall fall on thy ears,
Thou shalt be freed from the life of the senses.

3. Shabd brings in inner peace and satiety. Everyone is

in a desperate search for peaceful rest and repose but does not get it. All the comforts of the flesh are but pleasures of an evanescent nature, floating like the clouds in the sky. The sensations which seem pleasurable for awhile are the result of our own fixity of attention and apart from that have no real and independent existence. Our case is like that of a dog who while munching a dry bone hurts his mouth, and his own blood trickles down his palate to his tongue giving him relish and he is deluded into the belief that all this is from the dry bone.

Spirit or soul is a conscious entity. It cannot possibly derive or get any happiness from inert, material and lifeless things—that is, things in which the life-principle is in a dormant or a latent state. It is only from the fount of higher consciousness that the spirit can get her food and sustenance. The Sound Current which the Master makes audible is an active life-principle (stream of life), and contact and communion with It gives the soul real happiness and bliss.

The practice of the Master's Word grants immunity
from all ailments,
And the devotee of the Master is freed from all
sufferings.¹²⁰

GURU AMAR DAS

Shabd has an exhilarating and exulting influence which charms the body and mind, both of which acquire ineffable serenity:

The fires of lusts play havoc within but the Master
lets in a stream of refreshing Music,
Hearing which the body and the mind feel blessed
and are saved from all maladies.¹²¹

GURU RAM DAS

The Master's Word is an ocean of serenity,
It is the Path of salvation and destroys all egotism.¹²²

GURU NANAK

When a soul contacts Shabd, it gets saturated in the Power
of God and feels truly blessed.

The contact of Shabd with soul produces joy supreme,
A dip in the Power of God gives true happiness.¹²³

GURU NANAK

Day and night, an unceasing bliss descends,
When one remains devoted to the great Word.¹²⁴

GURU RAM DAS

The Word of the Master is a source of great hap-
piness,
Blessed indeed is the bride (soul) that lives saturated
with love of the Beloved.¹²⁵

GURU ARJAN

4. In the Sikh scriptures, one reads of innumerable
benefits that accrue from Shabd.

Shabd kills, root and branch, all longings and desires,
mental vibrations and subtle attachments.

Shabd extinguishes the fires of desires,
And quietly drives away all delusions.¹²⁶

Shabd sings all aspirations and cravings,
And one remains attuned with the Lord.¹²⁷

GURU NANAK

Shabd burns down all material longings and attach-
ments,
The body and the mind live in eternal peace in love
of the Master.¹²⁸

GURU AMAR DAS

When once the life-stream becomes audible, one never
feels lonely; for he hears its reverberations wherever he

may be, at home or abroad. The Voice of God keeps reminding him of the true home of his Father. The practice of the Sound Principle rids one of all troubles and afflictions, the five deadly passions, the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, leaving the soul in pristine transparency, detached from all that is of the world and worldly. Shabd is the supporting staff both in the journey of this life and of the life hereafter. With the experience of transcendence beyond the confines of the body, one becomes fearless of death; and when the allotted span of worldly existence comes to an end, he throws off, once and for all, the mortal coils of the flesh, as easily and happily as one does his old and worn out garments, and is freed from the cycle of births and deaths and goes openly and honorably to his home in heaven.

The practice of and communion with the Word brings in heaven's light and one feels divinely blessed. It gives intuitive knowledge of the Self and God and one experiences within himself the integral realization of the soul as one common life-principle extending everywhere, in and around him, without any barriers and limitations of time and space, for all life is one, from eternity to eternity, irrespective of the many forms and patterns through which it may manifest. The moment one rises into the Timeless, he himself becomes timeless. This in fact is true meditation and true devotion leading to the true love of God and His creation, his own self expanding and coinciding with that of his Creator. This is Jivan-mukti or salvation while living in the world, like a lotus flower, above and aloft in the muddy pool in which it stands, unaffected by the dirt or squalor of the water below. Woe betide those who do not get contact with Shabd, for they ever remain between

the millstones of God's negative Power and endlessly go up and down in the giant Wheel of creation, according to the merit and demerit of their Karmas whatever they be. Born in the gyres, they come and go in the gyres, with no way to escape until they contact some Master of the Word who may lead them to the Path of the Word, the Way out, and bring about their salvation.

The waters of life (Hauz-i-Kausar or Prag Raj) lie hidden in the deepest depths of the soul and the way thereto lies in utter silence through the Word. Living in the hustle and bustle of life, if we try for It at all, we seek It, like other things, outside us, and miserably fail in the endeavor. But those who search for It the right way and are put on the Path by some competent Word incarnate may drink of this elixir and taste of this manna and gain immortality.

I am the *bread of life*: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. . . .

I am the *living bread* which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever . . .¹²⁹

Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.¹³⁰

CHRIST

Word is the panacea for all ills.¹³¹

GURU ARJAN

Shabd: Anhad (Limitless) or Anahat (Self-Existing)

Shabd is of two kinds: Ahat and Anahat. Ahat is that sound which is produced when two or more things contact

each other. All the outer sounds, all the world over, fall in this category. Anahat is that Sound which does not depend on "hat" or contact of two or more things; It does not depend on anything whatever. The Muslim divines call it Anhad, meaning unceasing, eternal or limitless as the term literally means. Shah Niaz speaks of It thus:

Hear thou one continuous and unending Music,
A music that is eternal and beyond the confines of
death.

Again,

When It has no beginning and no end,
It is therefore called *Anhad* or endless.

The Absolute Truth is both imageless and soundless, for all images and sounds lie dormant in that state of complete fullness within the eternal seed.

He is the Ruling Power over all that exists,
The unstruck Music too is His manifestation.¹³²

GURU ARJAN

With no form and no lineaments, His Music doth flow
ceaselessly,
Shabd or the Sound Current is the creative life-
principle of the Immaculate One.¹³³

GURU NANAK

In the Shabd there is light giving rise to music:

Sit steadily in the cave of the mind and then shalt
thou witness the sounding fire within.¹³⁴

GURU ARJAN

There the unending melodies float,
And the mind drinks the nectar thereof.¹³⁵

GURU NANAK

This Anahat Dhun (self-existing Music) is going on all the time and is eternally endless:

The self-existing Music is eternal and continuous,
Be ye saturated in the ineffable sweetness of the
Sound Current.¹³⁶

Night and day the ceaseless strains float down.¹³⁷

GURU NANAK

The melodious strains of the unceasing music are ineffably sweet and charming:

Countless are the notes in the unending Melody,
The charming sweetness whereof is ineffable indeed.¹³⁸

GURU ARJAN

Innumerable are the melodies that are going on before the Court of God:

The sorrows and afflictions of the ages are blown
away,
The endless Music plays continuously at His Court.¹³⁹

GURU ARJAN

What is there to indicate the abode of God?
There plays the heavenly Music all the time.¹⁴⁰

GURU NANAK

The All-pervading Music is going on everywhere,
In the heart of all, the Divine Music flows.¹⁴¹

GURU ARJAN

Its reverberations are heard in the *Gagan*,
And charmingly sweet is the eternal Music.¹⁴²

GURU NANAK

One can contact the Heavenly Music only when he transcends body-consciousness:

When the soul currents withdraw from the sensory
plane in the nine outlets and get concentrated at the

still point in the body in the tenth door at the back
of the eyes,
It is only then that one, with the guidance of the
Master, is able to contact the heavenly Music that
plays interminably.¹⁴³

GURU AMAR DAS

Close thy outgoing faculties,
And hear the eternal Melody.¹⁴⁴

KABIR

Bhai Gurdas Ji says thus:

When the soul is absorbed in the Word,
It gets lost in the sublime Music.
When the soul is engrossed in the Word,
The unending Music floats down.¹⁴⁵

The communion with the Anhad Shabd is the only source
of perfect knowledge, true devotion and the endless Song
that glorifies God and man.

For perfect knowledge and devotion and the story of
the great God,
Listen ye ever to the *Anhad* which is the food of the
devotees and destroys all their fear.¹⁴⁶

GURU ARJAN

Anhad Shabd can be contacted beyond the plane of the
senses; none can reach It by his own unaided efforts, with-
out the grace and guidance of the true Master. Its mani-
festation comes as a pure gift from the Master (Gur
Parsad).

Anhad Shabd is very exhilarating,
But one gets to It by the Master's grace.¹⁴⁷

GURU NANAK

O Nanak! one who has access to a perfect Master,

He alone is enabled to contact the eternal Music.¹⁴⁸

GURU ARJAN

The Anhad Shabd is the only way that leads to God and one begins to relish and enjoy God-intoxication only after the eternal Song is manifested within.

The eternal Song becoming manifest within, one is united with the Beloved,

The lowly Nanak is now in perfect bliss, for he has found the merciful Lord.¹⁴⁹

GURU ARJAN

It is only a devotee of the Master in whom the divine eternal Melody may become manifest.

The worldly wise cannot reach It.

The Creator has ordained it as a fundamental law,

The eternal Song can be heard through communion with the Word,

It is made manifest in the devotee of the Master and in no one else,

In the mighty swirl of the mind one forgets It and the Godman reminds of It,

This Law has been in operation throughout the ages.¹⁵⁰

GURU AMAR DAS

With the practice of the eternal Sound Current, one is purified of all sins and lusts and is washed clean of the karmic impressions of all previous births, and with the light of Self-knowledge and God-knowledge he rises into Brahm and Par Brahm and reaches far beyond into the Kingdom of God, his eternal heritage. The "Lost Word" comes back to light and life only through the grace of a competent Master, as a free gift to whomever He may choose to grant it.

Panch Shabd or The Five Melodies

The unending strains of Music are of a variety of types, and become manifest through a competent Master:

Various are the unending dulcet Melodies,
One cannot describe their delicious strains.¹⁵¹

GURU NANAK

Bhai Gurdas Ji tells us in this context:

By listening to the countless strains of the limitless
Song, one is struck with ineffable wonder.¹⁵²

Out of these, only five melodies are considered of immense value, and the scriptures speak highly of them:

The five-sounded Melody keeps reverberating and my
soul is ever attracted by It as a *Sarang* is ever after
water.

O the Formless One beyond all knowledge! I worship
thee with all my heart.¹⁵³

KABIR

The five sublime melodies become manifest through
the grace of the Master,
And a rare soul gets attached to them.¹⁵⁴

GURU RAM DAS

The five sublime strains become distinguishable,
The drum, the conch, and the thunder.¹⁵⁵

BENI JI

As these five melodies proceed from God's throne, God is described in the scriptures as "Panch Shabdi" (i.e., Lord of the five-sounded Melody).

The glorious consummation takes place,
When the Lord of the five Melodies comes.¹⁵⁶

GURU NANAK

The five Melodies constituting the Word come from Him

and become the means of reuniting us with Him. The saints also adore the Word; in the Jap Ji we have:

The saint lives by and meditates on the One Word.¹⁵⁷
GURU NANAK

Bhai Gurdas Ji tells us that it is only after one transcends body-consciousness that one gets contact with the five-sounded Song.

When the spirit crosses over the world of matter,
The five-sounded Melody comes to greet her.¹⁵⁸

It is only a rare devotee of the Master that practices the five Melodies and thereby reaches the Kingdom of God.

The soul of a true devotee can listen to the five-sounded Music,
The Song of the Master is characterized by five distinct strains.¹⁵⁹

God Himself dwells in the five Sounds,
And the five Sounds give a clue of Him.¹⁶⁰

BHAI GURDAS

All saints and sages have taught the five Sounds. Hafiz, a great mystic poet, speaks of the five Naubats:

Be attentive and listen to the five drum-beats, coming
down from the high heaven;
The heaven that lies beyond the six ganglionic centers
and is far above the seven skies.

The teachings of Shamas Tabrez, as well, centered round the five-sounded Melody:

Every day the five drums play at His door to announce His greatness,
If their Music were to fall on thine ears, thou wouldst
be rid of all thine I-ness.

Again, the saint tells us that one can hear the five melodious tunes only when one puts up his tabernacle in the

seventh region (i.e., rises above the six chakras of the Pind and comes up to the first astral plane, behind and between the two eyebrows).

Thou shalt meet the five *Naubats* in the seventh region;
As soon as you take your bivouac far above the six planes.

SHAMAS TABREZ

The audible Sound Current is in fact only one continuous creative life-principle which, emanating from the Immaculately Pure One, steps down from plane to plane for the purpose of creating five regions below: pure conscious, great causal, causal, subtle and physical, and as It passes through varying degrees of density, peculiar at each place, It acquires a distinctive sound and hence has come to be known as Music of the five melodies or Sounds. There are two distinct sounds up to Trikuti and two more are added up to Sach Khand and the fifth sound is that of Sat Lok. In Sat Lok, all the five melodies are completed in their fullness and richness. The mystery of the Sound Principle is revealed by some Sound-incarnate Master and it is by practice of and communion with the five melodies that the soul is gradually led to the Lord of the five-tuned Music.

It is by the Grace of the Master that one devotes himself wholeheartedly to this practice,
And meets the All-Merciful, by listening to the five Shabds.¹⁶¹

GURU AMAR DAS

All the five Sounds are characterized by a delectable harmony; and whoever concentrating his spirit current, recedes back and rises above body-consciousness is sure to meet them.

In the temple of the body whoever sings, and sings of
the Lord,
He, while singing, hears the five Melodies in the body
and gets the highest glory.¹⁶²

GURU RAM DAS

In the scriptures it is said that the reverberation of these
tunes becomes manifest in the forehead:

For ages past I have been Thy devotee; how can I
now be separated?
The harmony playing at Thy door, becomes manifest
in my forehead.

KABIR

Where then is this harmony to be located? In which part
of the forehead? This harmony can be traced between and
behind the two eyes in the Sukhmana and one can hear It
only there.

Listen ye to the divine Music in the *Sukhman*,
Attend ye to It with all attention.¹⁶⁴

The Muslim divines and darveshes have spoken of it as
Shah-rag and the Mehrab, meaning thereby the life-chord
in the great archway of heaven (i.e, forehead).

When in meditation I see Thy beloved form, O
Master!
A great Harmony (Sound) springs up in the central
archstone of my forehead.

HAFIZ

Bulleh Shah says,

God is much nearer than even the life-chord.

In the Koran it is said,

I am nearer to thee than thy life-line.

Those who practice the Surat Shabd Yoga under the guid-
ance of a competent Master, begin to unravel the mystery

of Self and of God and begin to see the All-pervading Truth both within and without. Secondly, from the varying sounds he learns at what region he is in his spiritual journey, for they serve as milestones on the Path and thus save him from wandering astray.

And thine ears shall hear a Word behind thee saying,
this is the Way, walk ye in It, when ye turn to the
right hand, and when ye turn to the left.¹⁶⁵

ISAIAH

One can find his way to the five Melodies from a competent Master, by practicing his Word.

The five Sounds become audible by following the instruction of the Master,
A person with a great good fortune can hear the
Limitless Sound Principle.¹⁶⁶

GURU RAM DAS

A detailed description of the five Sounds relevant to the five regions is given by the Sant Satguru at the time of initiation, and the disciple, as he advances in practice, verifies the truth of the Master's words as he moves forward from plane to plane.

Blessed indeed is the temple of the body in which the five Sounds become audible and the Way to God opens up.

Fortunate is the house, the body, where the five
Sounded Word becomes manifest,
Blessed indeed is the sacred house which stands by
It.¹⁶⁷

GURU AMAR DAS

The wondrous Music of the five melodies,
God Himself may make audible if He so wisheth.¹⁶⁸

GURU NANAK

The five Shabds peal continuously and overflow in
their fullness,

Peerless are the five Sounds and unceasingly do they
sport about.¹⁶⁹

BHAI GURDAS

Five Sounds make the perfect Harmony,
And the limitless Song brings in wondrous intoxi-
cation.¹⁷⁰

GURU ARJAN

The unending Melody is ever rich in Its fullness.¹⁷¹

KABIR

The five symphonies combine together to make the subtle
Word perfect which lulls the mind to sleep forever and
frees the soul from the trigunatmac bondage, never to
return to the cycle of births and deaths.

Learn from the saints to live in harmony with the
sublime Word,
The Word made perfect by the five symphonies con-
stituting it.¹⁷²

BHAI GURDAS

Now that One Word abides in me,
There can be no more coming into the world.¹⁷³

GURU NANAK

My Beloved has taken me beyond the three *Gunas*
And I remain ever absorbed in the sublime Word.¹⁷⁴

GURU AMAR DAS

Day and night I live in perfect bliss,
Attuned as I am with the Word.¹⁷⁵

GURU RAM DAS

Those who live in tune with the one Word are worthy of
our highest esteem and adoration:

O Nanak! they deserve the greatest homage,
Who live in harmony with the Word.¹⁷⁶

GURU NANAK

Musical melodies within

The Primordial Form of the Lord is the Sound Principle, and myriads of tunes are playing at His Door all the time:

Fortunate I am to have the Lord as my friend and
companion,
For endless Symphonies keep playing at His Door.¹⁷⁷

GURU ARJAN

It is through Shabd that the creation came into being, with its various divisions and sub-divisions. Each division has its own peculiar musical notes which one hears as one rises from one higher plane to another. All the saints have given detailed account of these Sounds and in Gurbani particularly we have an elaborate exposition on the subject.

It is a matter of common knowledge that the Hindus as they visit a temple strike the big bells hanging over the doorway. The Christian churches are invariably provided with a belfry and the bell is pulled by the bell ringer before the commencement of the church service. In the earlier Sikh temples either a conch was blown or a gong was struck, though this has now been replaced by playing a big drum (Naqara). A careful research on the subject reveals that all these outer things, viz., bells, gongs, conches, etc., are but symbolic representations without of the inner Sound Principle. Again, a careful study of the structure of all these places of worship also helps us to understand a significant religious element involved therein. Hindu temples have a dome-like shape with a big saucer-shaped bell hanging from the center of the dome, and whoever goes in for worship first clangs the bell. In the temple of the human body also, in the dome-like structure

of the head, the pilgrim soul, as it enters the astral region, hears a sound that resembles that of a gong or a conch. Similarly the Christian cathedrals are either in the formation of a big dome resembling the human head or are steeple-shaped, reminiscent of the ascending human nose, over which, as the soul concentrates at the still-point behind and between the two eyebrows, a bell-like sound is heard. Khawaja Hafiz, a mystic poet of great repute, speaks of It thus:

None knows where my Beloved abides,
But sure enough comes the sound of a bell therefrom.

In Sikh scriptures it is stated:

The Sound of the gong is heard everywhere.¹⁷⁸

GURU ARJAN

The Buddhist monasteries are also dome-shaped and are always embellished with two drums: one on the right and the other on the left. The scriptures of all religions contain references to the ringing sound of bells or the blowing of horns and conches: the reason being that this is the first experience of the soul as it rises above body consciousness and enters the temple of the Most High, the way to which begins from the root of the nose behind the two eyebrows. In the same way countless melodies greet the soul as it proceeds onward on the Path; but five of them are generally considered and accepted as of immense value in leading and guiding one on the journey Godward. These melodious tunes interchangeably lead from plane to plane until one catching the native Melody reaches the Home of his Father, with the proper help and guidance of some Master-saint.

In the Wars of Bhai Gurdas, one comes across many references in this context:

The soul hears the playing of *Singhi* (Zither).¹⁷⁹

The unending Music plays and the Light of *Toor* appears.¹⁸⁰

In the silence of the soul there is effulgent Light,
Be ye absorbed in the sweet exhilarating Music.¹⁸¹

Hafiz says:

Listen ye to the heavenly orchestra,
With notes of dulcimer, flute, zither and guitar.

These inner musical notes, which can be contacted through a Master, help in liberating the soul from the walls of finitude and take her up to the high home of the Father—the Kingdom of God; for that is the only Highway.

Musical melodies without

We see in our everyday experience that music, instrumental or vocal, plays an important role in religious congregations, whatever the nature, whether of the Yogins, the Hindus, the Christians or the Sikhs. We see the practice of Qawwali among the Muslims, the rich music in the quatrains of Omar Khayyam, and the poetical compositions of Shah Niaz, Khawaja Hafiz, Shamas Tabrez and Maulana Rumi. All the teachings of the Sikh Masters in the voluminous Granth Sahib are arranged on Rag forms—musical compositions. The fact is that effusions from the depths of one's soul flow in unpremeditated numbers. Poetry is, in fact, the language of the soul, as much as prose is of the intellect. All these outer musical aids have, however, an inebriating effect that lull a person to a state of intoxication but cannot rouse in him Super-consciousness gradually expanding into the efflorescence of Universal Awakening and Cosmic Awareness.

All the wild ecstatic dances in accompaniment with the outer music are of no avail to the mind that is both blind and deaf.¹⁸²

GURU AMAR DAS

There are several reasons for this ineffectiveness. In the first place the music that one very often hears is not an out-pouring of the soul. It is a cheap commodity and merely a means of livelihood.

A musician makes use of his tunes for the sake of earning a living
 And makes all sorts of gesticulations, waving himself
 from side to side.
 With rattling ripplets at the ankles, one calls himself
 a devotee of Ramdas and thereby earns a living,
 Another shows himself off with the observance of
 fasts, vigils and performance of set rituals,
 And still another sings out hymns and verses with a
 mind an utter stranger thereto.¹⁸³

GURU ARJAN

With the dog of hunger gnawing at the very vital chords within, one cannot possibly get over his sense of doubt and skepticism, with the result that he remains in darkness, far removed from Reality.

Secondly, most of the musicians spend all their time and energy in setting right the tunes and strains of their instruments, vocal or otherwise. A searching investigation of some of the Ragis (professional singers) revealed that they live in constant fear of losing their gift of popular tunes and thus always try to show off what they may or may not actually possess. With the attention riveted all the time on the tunes alone they simply sing off the Bani regardless of its true import and thereby not only lose sight of the inner meaning it conveys but more often than

not make such phonetical blunders that the true significance itself is distorted and lost.

The Yogin plays the part with his hands,
But the tunes do not ring in true.¹⁸⁴

GURU RAM DAS

The hearers too cannot understand the verses properly; unless they are well acquainted with it beforehand, they lose it in the strains and tunes of the accompanying music. The saints have, therefore, not attached any special importance to outer music for it fails to develop true concentration and consequently one cannot contact the Reality within, lose the sense of I-ness and get above body consciousness, nor achieve inner peace and ecstasy.

O Yogin, with the music of the zither you cannot
develop concentration nor reach the Truth,
O Yogin, your zither shall not give you inner peace
nor shall it rid you of your egotism.¹⁸⁵

GURU AMAR DAS

The time spent in preparing tunes and strains is a dead loss without any yield whatever. If this time were spent in attuning the soul with the inner Word, according to the instructions of the Master, one could gather many untold treasures of Divinity.

How long will you adjust to play the ripples and the
guitar?
Why not spend the time in the Word instead of in
preparing the tunes?
How long will you dance and extend your hands? ¹⁸⁶

GURU RAM DAS

It is no good to emotionalize, sing and dance wildly to the accompaniment of music, tire oneself out of breath and then faint away, sinking into oblivion that leads the spirit

nowhere. The outer musical aids no doubt do help temporarily in gathering in the scattered outgoing faculties and wandering wits, but cannot lead one to higher Consciousness. On the other hand, they take one to a state of forgetfulness both of one's self and of God. Beethoven tells us that music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life. We seem to enter into a new mental world of our own which, of course, is superimposed on us by the musicians. But it fails to wean the mind from the inner cravings for the world and all that is worldly. In brief, the teachings of the Masters are crystal-clear on this subject. We may be attracted by and get absorbed in the outer music and all of us fully enjoy it, yet with all that we cannot break loose from the three *Gunas* and transcend into the beyond. Without the aid of the True Music of the Soul that is going on everywhere and all the time, one remains a constant prey to sorrow and affliction in the realm of mind and matter.

Engaged in useless pursuits, the musician keeps the
 people spell-bound in *Ragas*,
 He remains within the snares of the three *Gunas* and
 goes round in transmigration,
 As without contact with the All-pervading Word one
 remains in suffering and sin.¹⁸⁷

GURU NANAK

It is only the Word that can take one out of the
 delusive matter.¹⁸⁸

GURU AMAR DAS

The saints have, therefore, never recommended any course of discipline, neither of music, nor yogic practices nor anything else. They have always laid stress on the love of Naam or Word, the primal Sound Principle of Godhead.

Some engage in the music of the bells,
 Some in fasts, vigils, beads and the like,
 Some smear their bodies with sandal paste.
 But I have only the Lord for my devotion.¹⁸⁹

GURU ARJAN

The Muslim devouts also preferred the practice of Kalam-i-qadim, the most ancient inner Call of God, to all kinds of outer musical melodies.

Take the stop-cock of doubt and distrust from your
 ears,
 And listen to the Melody that is floating down from
 above.
 O brave soul, rise above the sensory plane,
 And hear thou Heaven's Music.
 What a pity to remain in the prison-house of the
 body,
 And not to listen to the Voice of the All-Merciful.

Bhai Gurdas, in his Kabit Sawais, tells us that by Nad-Bad (outer ragas and raginis—tunes and melodies), one cannot have access to the True and unending Melodies.

So long as one enjoys *ragas* and *raginis*,
 He remains far removed from Anhad.¹⁹⁰

The ragas and raginis (musical notes) have just a sensual appeal and one engaged in them remains entangled all his life, trapped unawares like a swift-footed stag or a mighty elephant, both of whom, in their ignorance, fall an easy prey to the wiles of the hunter.

Just as a stag by listening to the music of the drum
 gets drenched in ignorance,
 So man without Shabd remains without peace and
 happiness.¹⁹¹

Far beyond Nad-Bad (outer music) lies the Anahat or the unstruck self-supporting Music.

One has to go far beyond the musical tunes for union
with the Anhad.¹⁹²

It is only by communion with Anhad that one can rise above the physical plane of the three Gunas. This Godly Music helps us in breaking through the bondage of the world, and while remaining in the world we cease to be of the world. Henceforth, like a lotus flower we keep above the muddy water which is our natural habitat, and like a sea-fowl always keep high and dry, unaffected by the natural element in which we live.

In the Sikh scriptures the Nad-Bad has often been described as Bikh-bani or Bikh-Nad, meaning Bani or Nad with a mortal sting in it, for it injects one with a deadly poison from which one can find no escape.

Through palate and eyes we are all entangled,
And we get deadly poison through the ears,
Without the Shabd we are lost all the time.¹⁹³

GURU NANAK

The ears get so attuned with the false music,
That the Music of God does not appeal to us.¹⁹⁴

GURU ARJAN

It is only by substituting the Nad-Bad with the Divine Melody that we can have any honor in His presence:

Leave off *Ragas* (outer music) and commune with
the Word,
Then shalt thou be honored in His Court,
O Nanak! by meditating on Him according to the
instructions of the Master, one rids himself of all
vanities.¹⁹⁵

GURU RAM DAS

The worldly-wise keep busy all the time in Nad-Bad which is nothing but sound arising from matter:

O Man! how shall I describe all this?
It is all but a false rattle from matter.¹⁹⁶

GURU ARJAN

The Path of the Masters starts where all these ragas and raginis (musical notes and tunes) come to an end and one transcends the plane of the senses, beyond which the unstruck Music ceaselessly plays of Itself. One who is in tune with this Dhun-atmak Shabd (Song of the Soul) may sing as much as he likes and it benefits him to do so.

He who has seen the Reality,
His songs are acceptable, and
He is honored in His Court.¹⁹⁷

GURU RAM DAS

It is only by contact with the Word that one can escape from the sea of delusive matter; outer musical notes of whatever description are of no avail.

The mind keeps oscillating when sitting in devotion,
But by listening to the Master's Word it gets stilled,
The True Sound drives away all worldly attachments,
The Shabd opens the eye to Reality.¹⁹⁸

GURU AMAR DAS

While engaged in sinful pursuits one sings *Ragas* (songs) and bears testimony to the truth of what they say, little knowing that without the Word all is a farce.¹⁹⁹

GURU NANAK

The inner Music of the soul is the real song. Its tunes are self-existing and self-supporting and need no outer aids of hands, feet or tongue and lead to the source from whence they come, the Minstrel divine.

The sweet symphonies of the Music float without the aid of hands and feet,

Whoever communes with this Music, he beholds the Truth.²⁰⁰

GURU NANAK

The strains of the Heavenly Music become manifest only to one who is a true devotee of the Master; through a Master-soul many get benefited:

A devotee of the Lord sees and sings of His glory,
He hears the playing of cymbals, bells, zither, guitar
and flute,
He surrenders his all to Him and gets to the Truth,
Whoever believes in Him gets on the Path and ends
his round of births,
He doth escape the fires of hell, O Nanak! and truly
comes to his own.²⁰¹

GURU ARJAN

The Yogins and Derveshes, however, make use of the outer music as an aid in developing the transcendental hearing.

The *Sufis*, in particular, call music a divine or celestial art, not only because of its use in religion and devotion, and because it is in itself a universal religion, but because of its fineness in comparison with all other arts and sciences. Every sacred scripture, holy picture or spoken words produces the impression of its identity and leaves its own image upon the mirror of the soul, but music stands before the soul without producing any impression whatever of either name or form of the objective world, thus preparing the soul to realize the infinite . . .

The Sufi, recognizing its importance, calls music *Ghiza-i-Ruh*, the food of the soul and uses it as a source of spiritual perfection; for music fans the fire of the heart and the flame arising from it illumines the soul. The *Yogins* and ascetics blow *Narsinghas* (big-horned instruments) or *Shankha* (a conch or a

big shell), to awaken in them the inner tone. *Derveshes* play *Nai* or *Algoza* (a double flute) for the same purpose. The bells and gongs in the churches and temples are meant to suggest to the thinker the same sacred Sound, and thus lead him towards the inner life.²⁰²

HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN

Music used as the art of arts and the science of sciences, containing the fountain of all knowledge, is helpful in developing the finer sense of hearing; but if practiced for exhibition and show or as a means of earning a living it loses its inherent charm and real utility.

The saints at times press music into their service as a handy aid in collecting an audience, for people are generally attracted more by music than by anything else.

Again, it is out of the abundance of heart that a man speaketh. As the true saints are imbued with the intoxication of the inner unstruck divine Music (*Anahat*), the spontaneous songs welling out of the depths of their soul bring about a tremendous impact on the listeners and at times transform their very being, instantaneously leading them to full spiritual efflorescence.

From a study of ancient tradition we see that the first divine messages were given in songs; the Song of Solomon, the Psalms of David and the Gathas of Zoroaster. The Vedas, the Puranas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Zend Avesta, the Kabala and the Sikh Scriptures are all in verse. Kabir, Nanak, Baba Farid, Hazrat Bahu, Surdas, Dharamdas, Sadna and other saints used mostly verse for disseminating their ideas. The very atmosphere in the gatherings of the saints is charged with spiritual vibrations and often some of the devout listeners get into *Wajd* or a state of intoxication at their very sight. The two

simple words "Hari Bole" addressed to a washerman by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the sage of Bengal, turned the very washing ghat into a veritable ring of dancers with the chant of "Hari Bole" on their lips. This then is the power of real music coming from within the secret chambers of the heart.