

Bhai Vir Singh's
**THE EPIC OF
RANA SURAT SINGH**

(English rendering from the original Punjabi)

by
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**PUBLICATION BUREAU
PANJAB UNIVERSITY
CHANDIGARH**

Published by
R. K. MALHOTRA
Secretary, Publication Bureau
Panjab University, Chandigarh

First Edition : 1986

PRICE : Rs. 65

Printed at
Panjab University Press
Chandigarh

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FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this English version of the great Punjabi Epic *Rana Surat Singh* to the reading public. This work, which occupies a unique place in the world of Punjabi letters, has been sponsored by the Department of Bhai Vir Singh Studies of this University, and has been put into the present mould by Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib, formerly Head of the Department of Guru Nanak Sikh Studies. *Rana Surat Singh* embodies the essence of the ethical teaching of religion and also reflects the cultural milieu of the Punjab in the period following its occupation by the East India Company in 1849. The English rendering is a valuable addition to the literature of interpretation of Indian cultural thought through English. I have every hope that the world of scholarship will welcome this work.

Panjab University
Chandigarh

R. P. BAMBAH
Vice-Chancellor

This English rendering of Rana Surat Singh was sponsored by the Late Dr. V. N. Tewari, Professor and Head of the Department of Bhai Vir Singh Studies in Modern Indian Literature, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

INTRODUCTORY

Rana Surat Singh, a romantic allegory woven round a religio-ethical theme pertaining to Sikhism, is the pre-eminent work not only in Bhai Vir Singh's canon but in the whole range of modern Punjabi letters. This is the solitary Epic in modern Punjabi, and apart from telling an absorbing tale, has interpreted a whole epoch in the history of the Sikh people, and done not a little to emphasize the basic truths of Sikh teaching. Further more, it has provided an answer to the socio-political dilemma of the Sikh people in the post-conquest period after the annexation of the Punjab by the British Government in 1849. Of that a little later. Published in 1905 when the author, who was

to remain the father-figure and an acknowledged savant in Punjabi literary and religio-reformist fields for half a century after, it burst upon the world of Punjabi writing at that time as a great literary event. Punjabis everywhere, and not Sikhs alone, had felt elated that such a great literary work had been produced in the land of their birth. The Sikh world was taken by a kind of storm, and Bhai Vir Singh and this great work were the subject of discussion everywhere. Since then, three quarters of a century ago, the fame of this masterpiece has continued to grow, and despite the radical changes since then in literary fashions, nothing analogous to it in power and appeal has yet been produced. That only indicates some fundamental appeal and vitality in this work, its capacity to fulfil a spiritual need, which even those who have been critical of Bhai Vir Singh's political stance have not been able to combat or to render superfluous.

The fable in this Epic is simple, and is made up of a single strand, the action turning inwards, externalized only to the extent of reflecting on the inner state of mind of the heroine, whose presence is ubiquitous, and who in the course of the narrative takes on a richly symbolic character. The title is said to be suggested by the name of Raja Surat Singh, father of the great Sikh leader in social reform, Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, who died at a comparatively young age. For the rest, the poet

let his imagination play on the inconsolable grief and spiritual development of his widow, who is transmuted in this story as Rani Raj Kaur, ruler of an unspecified state in the Northern hill regions of the Punjab during the middle years of the eighteenth century, the period when the Sikhs had not yet fully emerged from their state of being a persecuted people, but were asserting themselves and were some time later to establish themselves as rulers of the Punjab. This is the period which provided also the background to Bhai Vir Singh's heroic novels *Sundari* and *Bijai Singh* and has been adopted as background to their historical novels with the Sikh themes by lesser writers. The author has made Rana Surat Singh, the departed hero whose figure dominates the tale, a hero to perfection—pious, noble, a crusader for his faith, deeply learned and now abiding with the Supreme Being in *Sach Khand*, the Realm Eternal beyond all contact with *Maya* or matter. Although no longer present physically, his spirit reigns throughout, and from its sphere above, guides his grief-stricken, youthful widow in her deep moments of grief and pessimism, when she is overwhelmed in her state of helplessness. In this background of history in the eighteenth century, Surat Singh, a devout Sikh hero, a commoner born of a saintly Sikh is adopted as son-in-law and heir by a Rajput ruler who bears feelings of reverence towards the Sikhs, fighting the tyrannical Mughals and in the process hunted and persecuted. The author, unlike

writers less conscientious about historical verisimilitude, has kept the background true to history in all particulars. Contemporary Sikh heroes like the martyr Taru Singh are mentioned. The Sikh choristers handle instruments that belong to the period, wire and string instruments, and not later ones. For the rest the locale is not specified, but kept vague and undefined, though suggestive of the hill areas to the North of Punjab. Here the Sikhs pray in a secret cave-dwelling, for fear of persecution not only by the Mughals but also by the hill folk, bearing prejudice against their faith.

Two features of the book stand out remarkably. One is its allegorical meaning in the context of the history of the Sikh people in the nineteenth century, as said earlier, and the other is its superb poetry, which encrusts it like the decorations on an ancient Hindu temple or a medieval church, not functional but purely decorative—a kind of product of superabundant creative energy. Of this poetry the reader will come across numerous examples over long tracts in the original, such as that about rain, moonlight or sleep, which though these distract somewhat from the narrative, give sheer aesthetic delight. The flow of words has a power and spontaneity that should place these portions in the class of some of the best romantic poetry. While in an epic like this such descriptions are in place, they are found interspersed over even

the earlier drama in the form of reflections by the chorus or one of the reflective characters. These reflections and outpourings afford sheer aesthetic delight and may be enjoyed as poetry apart from their contextual significance.

The problem of Rani Raj Kaur, the heroine is grief in her young widowhood. Her grief is the idealized pinnacle of the young Indian woman's sorrow, leading to lamentation, fits of swooning and fantastic illusions of union with the beloved person who has been lost. In this grief her sole companions are her mother, widow of the later Rana and an attendant maid Radha, deeply devoted to her, and as is commented by the poet, accompanying her on all her journeys as did Mardana Guru Nanak. There are various moods of grief. She beholds the objects and spots associated with her husband and this fills her with further grief. Then she tries the solace of faith and devotion. Her mother in her anxiety seeks the help of a necromancer, a Muslim *fakir*, whom Raj Kaur rejects as a fraud. Then later is brought in a Vedantist, sermonizing to her that the whole world and all relationships are false, cutting at the human nature of her grief. Later still is brought in a hatha-yogi, telling her of the occult powers acquired through Yoga. This too leaves her dissatisfied, as she is seeking a higher fulfilment, namely union with her departed husband. The secret of this has already been hinted to her by the benign spirit with

whom she had taken a flight in dream in the celestial regions, something like Dante, ascending heavenward under Beatrice's guidance. She sees the realms of light, and beyond these *Sach Khand*, where abides her husband's spirit, which only the most select can enter.

As it chanced, come to her palace some itinerant *ragis*, Sikh holy choristers, who sing to her the Guru's hymns. This brings to her solace and peace. Thereafter she recalls the secret cave where the Guru's devotees met in *Sati Sang* or holy congregation to sing the hymns from the Granth Sahib and to lead the life of true Sikhs. As to the *Sati-Sang* in Radha's company she repairs, the leader of the congregation, a holy man, a *sant*, instructs her in the principles of devotion and humility and reveals the true path leading to a life of fulfilment. Not empty grief, but the performance of service, of duty befitting her station was the way of such fulfilment. As queen she must dispense justice, bring about general weal—ideals fulfilled by her late husband, and thus would she find union with him. This is the lesson she learns—the way to the higher life is not through useless grief or the fatuous hope of union, but performance of duty. This positive response to life melts her sorrow and opens a new pathway of life to her. This is also the quintessence of Sikh teaching that the poet as an exegetist of Sikh sacred literature was expressing all through.

Allegorically, this was a call to the Sikh people, depressed after defeat and losing self-confidence as a community, to engage in fruitful activity and try thus to recapture greatness and to find fulfilment. This of course, in actual historical fact the Sikhs did around the last part of the nineteenth century and after, by taking vigorously to service in the armed forces, developing agriculture, taking to crafts and colonizing. Here was a way of life something like what Walt Whitman was singing gloriously in the case of the resurgent American nation, eulogized by Puran Singh, Bhai Vir Singh's eminent disciple.

Remarkable for its exposition of the Sikh mystical approach, this work has dilated wonderfully on the themes of love, true greatness, renunciation, bliss (in the Epistles left by Rana Surat Singh) and on the true concept of service in bringing about universal weal, *Sarbat ka bhala* and the other related ideals of Sikhism. These portions contain noble poetry of the meditative cast, flowing with an even cadence. It is altogether a mine of knowledge of the Sikh ideals and contains remarkable poetry of a high order.

Gurbachan Singh Talib

Note—The original story has been condensed in the English version to essential details, but in the mystical portions their spirit has been diligently maintained.

THE EPIC OF RANA SURAT SINGH

1

THE SEPULCHRE

The level valley, small and pleasing to sight,
By snow-peaked lofty Himalayan ranges girded,
Deeply verdant, with tall trees overgrown.
Descending therefrom a crystal stream of ice-cold
water,

Flowing musically by.

Rising along its bank a Sepulchre,
In smooth white stucco finished,

By melon-shaped domes and turrets, with golden
spires surmounted;

Within, with white marble paved, flowery-bordered.

Beneath it a tomb-stone oval-formed,
Of craftsmanship a marvel,
With lovely flowers by loving hands strewn.
Free now the loved life from the cares and burdens
of the world,

Its joys and sorrows, envy and fevered stress.
Carved over its head the holy Nanak's *mantra*,
Ek Oankar, to the Sole, eternal Divine Reality
pointing.

Following it the holy Guru Arjan's sloka
Breathing immortal passion yearning after the loved
departed.

Advancing to the Sepulchre, absorbed,
A female figure, tall, slim, at peak of youthful
loveliness.

Sad, pale her countenance, by suffering consumed;
With lovely, sorrow-filled eyes,
Heaving cold sighs.

Her steps the Sepulchre approaching, the gently
flowing stream she supplicates
Not to disturb the sleep of the dear life within
enshrined.

Sorrow-engulfed, close to the marble slab she fell,
Strength from her limbs ebbing.

A short while after rising, addressing the cold marble,
Vainly she seeks the departed to arouse,
Expostulating with it for leaving yesterday's flower-
offering untouched.

Then sweeping these off, fresh flowers she strews,
With the jeweller's precious care in arranging gems.
As these she strewed, uttered she the holy Guru

Angad's sloka redolent of love:
Noble it is to die before the loved one's departure.
Cursed is breath drawn after the beloved be gone.¹
Then touching with devoted forehead the Sepulchre
slab,

For long she wailed her beloved lord's separation,
Never to end.

Her sense departing, near the Sepulchre lay she as
dead.

Came a damsel following after her beloved mistress'
steps.

Shocked, she found her lying as though dead,
Her breath scarcely moving, the pulse paralysed;
Her frame gone cold.

To the river running, in its water a piece of cloth
she dipped.

Laving her forehead, a metal key between her teeth
inserting,

Her she revived.

Spoke the damsel to the slowly reviving figure :
'Mistress dear, give not way to this grief;
Bravely bear it.

None his destiny can efface.

To the Divine will bow your head.

The world, dear queen, like a swollen river
Is full of eddies, waves and storms of suffering.
Pray let not these engulf you.

Discard this fruitless sorrow,

1. *Guru Granth Sahib* : Var Sri Raga, M. 2.3. Jisu piyāre
siun nehu tisu agai mari challiyai; Dhrigu jivanu sansār
tā kai pāchhai jivana

And to your queenly duties address yourself.
 A day shall come, my loved queen,
 When we too shall depart and leave this world
 As those we love.
 Why wail over the inevitable,
 At these words the lovely recumbent figure
 For a moment was all atremble.
 Then with a deep sigh thus she spoke :
 'Life after the death of those we love is worse than
 death.
 Death afflicts only once; this sorrow is a daily
 torment—
 Sinner that I am, living after the beloved.
 While my lord lived, with his body was I in love,
 Entering into the mystery of his self never.
 A saintly being he was, living ever in the Guru's
 sight.
 The secrets of this world and the next to him were
 clear,
 His soul transparent as crystal.
 Involved in *Maya*,¹ of reality was I unaware,
 Thoughtless.
 Yet in the generosity of his heart was he ever
 gracious,
 Even though his path I did not tread.
 Came a day when his self in all its glory to me he
 revealed
 That into a moth round the lamp, turned me,
 Gyrating in ecstasy.

1. The deceptive phenomenal world, as against the eternal
 Reality

My closed eyes he opened, and were removed heaps
 of concealing straw.
 What saw I? A veritable god, a devotee, a self all
 illumined.
 Like the humming-bee got I intoxicated,
 Like the musk-deer delirious.
 Ever after this was I restless in his love,
 Like a pigeon rolling about.
 Then came a day, when to the eternal realms he
 departed,
 Leaving me behind.
 He is not dead; eternally is he alive, ever in bliss.
 In his joy my joy I feel: yet has separation
 tormented me,
 Put me in agony as fish thrown on sand.
 Day and night for a sight of him I yearn.
 I wail : Thou were light, blind of sight was I.
 Tears my raiment keep wet, like showers of *Savan*.
 Comes then to my mind holy Guru Arjan's prayer :
 "If our true friend Thou be, forsake us not for an
 instant.
 My heart by Thee is charmed : when Thy sight shall
 I have ?"
 With these words, suddenly she rose,
 And towards the stream with measured steps moved,
 Her eyes dripping with tears, like dew-drops,
 Shaken from flowers as blows the breeze.

1. Maru Dakhne : Je Tūn mittar asāḍḍa hikk bhori na
 vechhoḍi
 Jio mahinja Tau mohiya kadi passi jānt tohi

2

THE STATUE

Over the mountain were spread dark, lowing clouds,
Black and massive like elephants reclining.
Amid these dazzled the rising sun's red light.
Arose the resplendent sun, of dazzling hue like
molten gold.

Under its early light was moving along with swan's
step

The cherished figure of Rani Raj.
Came in view a lovely garden along the bank of
a stream,
By a hedge of wild rose surrounded,

All around a trellised wall of white marble.
 Facing her a gate, with lion figures decked,
 A marvel of workmanship.
 Within a garden full of flowers of various hues
 That she picked and in her lap treasured.
 A small tank, made of marble white and sable, filled
 by water of the stream,
 Emptying at the other end, the garden to irrigate
 In small channels.
 In crystalline sheen the water played.
 Along the bank of the tank she sat, bathing the
 flowers,
 Of these lovingly she made single and multiple-
 threaded garlands.
 Then, contemplating the loved life departed,
 Sorrow-struck into the water she stepped,
 Bathing the garlands.
 In piteous wail on the loved departed she called.
 Thus crying, shedding tears in the Garden fragrance-
 like she moved:
 Over a platform of red stone she saw erected a
 chamber.
 On a white pedestal stood a statue,
 A handsome riding figure astride a galloping steed.
 The rider, in mid-youth approaching thirty,
 A handsome heroic figure, of expression saint-like.
 Living ever in sight of the Creator,
 Quaffing elixir of the Name, symbol of the Lord—
 A truly devoted disciple of the Guru,
 From early youth a picture of piety.

Demented with sorrow, Raj this figure viewed,
 Making piteous wail, kissing the figure's feet, the
 stirrups,
 Then with garlands covering it over,
 The statue she circumambulated unsatiated.
 To it vain appeals she addressed to lower its head
 for her to kiss.
 Then, overwhelmed, head awhirl, to the ground she
 fell,
 A stone lying over the stone floor,
 A recumbent statue at foot of the statue equestrian.
 As thus a considerable time she lay,
 Approached her companion damsel.
 Calling the flower girl, with her was she cross
 For not attending the Rani as over the garden she
 wandered.
 Then approaching the unconscious figure
 Gently she rubbed it to revive.
 The flower-girl running to the queen-mother
 Informed that her daughter-queen unconscious lay.
 In motherly anxiety the lady for the garden set
 out,
 In palanquin seated, attended by her maids,
 A physician accompanying them.
 The unconscious figure they picked up and to the
 palace brought;
 With gentle rubbing motions reviving it.
 Then essence of burnt-out gold they administered
 her.
 To joy of all she revived,
 Yet was her heart full of the agony of suffering.

3

THE NECROMANCER

As came the evening, Raj still was sorrow-drenched
 Heaving sighs, eyes copiously flowing.
 Said her mother, in deep agony of heart :
 Beloved daughter, this unavailing sorrow discard.
 Never return the dead to this world of suffering.
 To wish otherwise is pining death to invite.
 Lay not your life waste thus. To your queenly
 duties return.
 To hearts sorrow-stricken work the best healer is.
 Replied Raj : 'Mother dear, time no doubt
 forgetfulness of ordinary pains brings,
 But not of love whose essence timeless be.

How may Time that is mindless, the spirit's yearning
cure?

Think not your child demented.
In the tomb there lies only clay. Not for that wail
I,

But for him who was my heart's lord.

As rises the tide of love, by it am I carried away,
And earth and sky scour for him.

Unavailing is my search.

Pray I that he, made all spirit, search me out'.

With these gushed her tears in ever larger torrent.

The elder Rani, deep in anguish called the Diwan,

A man of sapience and experience,

Beseeching him for the youthful Rani to find a
cure.

The faithful functionary, with folded hands

Made submission : 'Exalted lady, all my life

The salt of your house have I eaten;

Each hair of my body loyalty to it proclaims.

Any service that I am capable of, would I gladly
render.'

Said the queen-mother : 'You know, Diwanji,

Our former lord, when his time did come,

To Surat Singh bequeathed the state.

A worthy successor he proved.

Yet cruel time spared him not and at height of
youth,

To the eternal realms he departed.

The state without an heir was left.

In this state was the burden of rule

On Raj Kaur's tender shoulders placed.

Sikhs you know, favour not a woman to rule,

Yet our neighbours dared not interfere,
Afraid of the might of the Sikhs among whom had
Raj married.

Raj Kaur—such was the name she took—
Is wise as youthful, and ruled the state well.

But the agony of separation in love gripping her,

From her royal duty has she slipped away.

Building a tomb of Surat Singh did she then

Command a statue of him to be sculptured,

Which in that lovely garden was placed.

A strange absorption over her has come.

Each morning from the palace emerging,

Towards that sequestered spot she proceeds,

Alone, like a common country lass.

Reaching the tomb, into wails and cries she breaks,

Piteous, heart-rending,

Often unconscious falling.

For hours lonely she sits, speaking to none.

Only Radha, her loving maid, follows after her
footsteps,

Attending from a distance.

Now, our trusty Diwan, tell me what in this state
we do;

How to save the kingdom?"

Said the Diwan with humility :

"Exalted Mother, the departed Maharaja, may he
abide in *swarga*,

Was to my mind mistaken.

Sadhu Singh, sire to the valiant Surat Singh,

A saintly man, yet was of lowly origin.

In the conflicts with the tyrannical Turks came

many of that tribe to our state,
 In the hill fastnesses seeking asylum.
 Among these was Sadhu Singh.
 The late Maharaja, deeply pious, to Sadhu Singh
 repaired,
 Asking for the boon of a son.
 This Sadhu Singh induced our king to repair to
 their religious assembly,
Sati-Sang, from which noway could he be
 dissuaded.
 With passage of time came more and more to our
 realm
 Of the tribe of Sikhs. This seeing, was I alarmed
 And warned His Highness.
 So much was our royal master with Sadhu Singh
 taken,
 That my words on deaf ears fell.
 Came a day when the royal child Raj, to
 Sadhu Singh's son
 Surat Singh in wedlock was offered.
 I cried out, warned my royal master, still to no avail.
 Said I, 'We are high-caste Rajputs, he a low-caste
 Sikh.
 Think of your noble lineage; patch not his straw
 hut
 With our ivory.'
 All my entreaties went unheard.
 The neighbouring royal houses too disapproved of
 the proposed match,
 Which yet the Maharaja finalized.
 Surat Singh, on ascending the royal *gaddi*,

THE NECROMANCER

Yet forgot not his roots among the Sikhs.
 Their quarrels with the Mughals he made his own,
 Went among them and fell fighting.
 Exalted Mother, all this has come of disregard of
 my advice.
 The young Rani to my mind, is possessed of
 spirits."
 The elder Rani, her face turning wroth, told him
 not to rake up the past,
 Nor run down a saint like Sadhu Singh.
 'He sought not our daughter's hand for his son.
 But nowhere else could we find a noble youth to
 match him.
 Know, of the noble *Khatri* caste he was,
 One who the holy Guru's *amrita* had taken.
 What a noble ruler he made, yet what avails against
 death ?
 On the field of battle hero-like he fell.
 Such death the Sikhs seek, even as the Rajputs.
 In *Dharma-Yuddha* he fell, defending faith.
 So, my trusty Diwan, seek not to undo what is done
 Nor such noble souls to traduce.
 Tell me what now in this predicament we do.'
 Said the Diwan : 'For my words, candid and
 faithful
 Beg I forgiveness. My loyalty spoke, not the
 cavilling mind.
 Now, for the youthful Rani seek we a holy man,
 Whose power of her malady may cure her.'
 Was a Mohammadan *fakir*, practising necromancy
 called,
 1. Holy War

Who in a secluded spot, performed forty days'
 magic rites,
 In their tongue called *chilla*.
 Many were the occult practices he performed
 With meat, vermillion and such other articles.
 As came Radha to know of him, to her mistress
 This she imparted.
 This made Raj anxious over the *Fakir's* incantations.
 A seeker after lucre he might be, one who the state
 secrets might give out,
 And embolden the neighbouring rulers to make
 invasion.
 At once she ordered the prefect of gendarmes
 This *fakir* to throw out of the state,
 With penalties harsh on daring to return.
 As this the Diwan learnt, astutely he realized,
 Raj no mad woman could be, or one spirit-
 possessed,
 But truly love-inspired.
 For know, love makes not one demented
 But the mind illumines,
 And fills the heart with sympathy and compassion.
 Love is like rain from heaven,
 Making all that grows, verdant and full of life.
 Thus ended this episode.

4

THE CHAMBER

Chandar Kaur, loving queen-mother by deep
 anxiety gripped,
 Watched the woe-begone state of Raj,
 Who abjured food, sleep and rest,
 Into yearning for her departed husband fallen.
 Not widow-like blank sorrow was hers,
 But a passion, a yearning for union.
 As day declined, came the dusk of evening
 Followed by night's darkness.
 Came the time for the Guru's evening prayer of
*Sodar Rahiras*¹

1. The Sikh Evening Service

With the message of gathering up the mind's
 faculties,
 By multifarious pursuits during day scattered.
 Came from on high the adjuration :
 With meditation on the Lord begin night's rest,
 Which at the ambrosial hour¹ break.
 This evening's prayer the whole night long your
 thoughts should guide.
 In this hour meet day and night,
 Inspiring man with his Creator to find union.
 As passed the evening, came a maid looking for
 the queen-mother,
 In a chamber absorbed in prayer.
 Respectfully supper she announced.
 Asked the queen : 'Have you informed Raj ?'
 Replied the maid, all respect, 'Nowhere have we
 found her.
 Unavailing are all our efforts'.
 At which the lady expostulating with her for
 laxness in duty,
 The maid Radha made reply :
 'Never, noble queen have I left her alone,
 And been with her as brassiere with frock's fold,
 Or betel-nut with the leaf.
 Yet, today like fragrance has she vanished, unseen.'
 With heart plunged in anxiety and perturbation,
 A search was made.
 Loud wails did the mother raise,
 Lamenting her lonely state, even like a hollow reed's.
Raising her hands in prayer, the Lord she beseeched
 1. Early dawn

To send to her lap her dearest child.
 Arose from afar a sweet sound, plaintive, tear-
 drenched,
 That like sharp arrow-point pierced the heart.
 The Rani, fixed thereby as deer by the hunter's
 horn
 Or the snake by the gourd-pipe,
 All ears, listened for it;
 Then rose and followed it as iron the magnet.
 To a maze of chambers it led, kept usually shut
 After the old Rana's death.
 Surat Singh sometimes here to meditate retired.
 To this secluded spot repaired Raj,
 Like her departed lord also illumination to seek.
 A marvellous sight the old Rani's eyes there
 beheld :
 Near a couch, bedecked as of old,
 Was Raj in prayerful meditation kneeling—
 Eyes closed, hands folded, a very figure of marble.
 From her lips came dulcet sound of holy song,
 At which the queen transfixed stood,
 Forgetful of all around.
 The song that from Raj arose was the holy Guru's
 hymn
 In praise of the Lord, the Divine Charmer, beloved.
 It breathed yearning and passion for union.
 In words of humble import had the holy Guru
 To the Lord's feet dedicated himself,
 As devoted handmaid to her master,

Praying for a sight of him.¹
 Thus singing, came on deep midnight,
 When the world, enwrapped in sleep lies.
 Yet stood Raj in that attitude, loving, devoted.
 Such was her love for her Lord
 That made her a true *sati*,²
 Fixed on deathless love.
 Rose from the mother's throat a prayer,
 Loud and clear, a blessing to her child;
 At which was broken the ecstasy of Raj.
 Deep was her sorrow at causing this pain to her
 mother.
 The mother bewailed her sorrow—
 The suffering of Raj, the neglected kingdom.
 Soon followed a loving embrace that brought
 together
 Mother and child.
 Said the Rani, 'Leave not me in stealth, dear child,
 And add not to my suffering'.

1. In the original is given the text of Bilawal M. V. with the opening line : *Ati pritam manmohana ghat sohana pran-adhara Rama*

2. A faithful wife immolating herself on her lord's pyre

5

THE ASCENT

Said Raj : 'Mother dear, in turning thus to solitude
 am I helpless.
 Behold the sun in the sky, which when it sets,
 Vanishes with it the day that it made.
 The beloved Rana like the sun was
 In whose light shone I like the day.
 With his disappearance am I still alive,
 Cursing myself for living while my beloved sun has
 set.
 As this thought arose, lost I my senses,
 And lay as one dead.
 Felt I then as a spirit disembodied, and skyward
 took flight.

As the spirit flew, the terrestrial earth it beheld
 spread below—
 Palaces, forests, gardens, rivers and the cherished
 tomb,
 Maids and servitors, your own self,
 My inert body lying—all I beheld clear.
 As skyward my flight I took, all around saw I
 spread effulgence,
 With a breeze blowing, each moment
 Vibrating like a musical string.
 As further and further higher I arose,
 Saw I millions of beings like to myself,
 Disporting in the blue of heaven,
 The world beside their beauty a very heap of
 impurity,
 All rippling with joy, like lotuses abloom.
 Amid these forms came rushing to me a form of
 beauty,
 And in tight embrace did hold me,
 In such love as among sisters obtains.
 Such joy her embrace brought me,
 Yet was my heart in suffering in memory of my
 lord.
 To her my query I addressed : 'Where, dear Sister,
 Abides my departed saint ? In what sphere ?'
 She thus made reply : 'In *Sach Khand*, the Realm
 Eternal
 He abides, in the Essence Divine.
 Abides there the Formless Lord, from *Maya* taint
 free.

That spot is verily hub of the universe.
 No spot that, yet embraces it all spots.
 Thy beloved spouse's devotion at the Divine Portal
 is rewarded :
 'His life pure, spotless, of holy dedication full,
 With the spirit of sacrifice imbued,
 Amid the world he abided, loving humanity,
 But like the lotus from its taint kept free.
 Abides he now in the Creator's Essence,
 The centre of eternal bliss'.
 In wonder I asked : 'Where is that realm ? How
 far ?'
 This to silvery laughter moved her. Said she :
 'Sister dear, haven't you read the holy Guru's
Japu,
 Where in thirty-seventh canto he avers
 What that spot is ? Says the holy Guru Nanak :
 In the Realm Eternal abides the Formless Lord,
 Casting His glance of grace.
 Comprehended therein are all the worlds,
 Endless their description. All creation therein
 abides :
 The Lord over it watches in bloom of joy.'
 Saith the holy Guru Nanak, hard as steel is its
 description.
 This hearing, to her with folded hands I made
 appeal :
 'Sister dear, in the holy Guru's Name,
 Of that realm show me a sight, that my beloved
 Lord I may behold'.
 Replied she : 'Sister dear, inaccessible is that spot.

Yet take you I to the farthest point that within my reach may lie.'

Then as we arose, came a spot,
Gleaming as crystal, beauteous, heart-delighting,
With wondrous vegetation overgrown, bearing faery flowers and fruits;

A realm with joy replete; with bliss,
Love and celestial laughter rippling.
This, mother dear, was the land of heart's desire,
Of joy supreme, of holy music, love beyond reckoning.

Thought I, perhaps my love here may I behold.
My thought conjecturing, said she :

'Your love from here is far. This the Realm of Enlightenment' is,

The land up to which may consciousness rise'.
Then seeing me mystified, the Guru's cantos
Those numbered thirty-five and thirty-six
From holy *Japu* she recited, wherein had the Guru recounted

The marvels beheld by those that the world's taint shed off.

'The realm infinite of species beyond reckoning, infinite.

In this realm blazes forth enlightenment
In harmony celestial and miraculous joy.
As to these divine words I listened, was I transformed
To a disembodied self, like what there was manifest.

Gita-Khand, as in Japuji

This a world of beauty with enlightenment penetrated.

Beauty here from all desire was freed,
With joy and enlightenment abiding.
In this realm of beauty indescribable.
The beings were of the world, yet transcending it.
Then above this realm we rose;
My companion subtler, more joyful, more effulgent growing.'

'Nothing here can have access', she said,
'Neither air nor vibrations ethereal.

This the realm above *Indra's Baikunth*
Fashioned here is eternal Beauty, beyond compare.
None it may describe, except in the Guru's holy word in *Japu*.

This is the realm of holy endeavour,' fashioned all in beauty,

Beauty beyond compare; fashioned herein are
Understanding, enlightenment,
The awareness celestial of gods and *siddhas*.
All that is manifest here, said she,
Is Beauty unembodied.

Here, thought I, would my Lord be in residence.
Beholding with divining eyes my thought, said she :
'No, not here, sister dear. Fly we farther off'.
Of this realm beauteous were the denizens
Pure spirits, without grossness and taint of body.

1. Sarm-Khand

2. Siddha is the highest order of Yogis. This excerpt has reference to *Japuji*, 36

'Such the effulgence here' said she, 'as puts all other
effulgence to shade.

Here abide the mighty with the Lord,
Whom He pervades. Here approaches not death.
This the realm beyond attributes,
Below the unattributed essence.
All we behold here, of the Divine Beauty is reflex,
Yet this side the Divine Essence.
This, sister, know thou is Realm of Grace,
Grace limitless raining endlessly here.
Here abide those cherishing love for the Lord
That beyond reckoning is. Their deeds' reckoning
annulled,

Here abide they in joy, beyond *Maya's* guile;
Duality here approaches not.
Like the sun's effulgence shines this realm,
Flashing on to the highest. This realm, said she,
In *Japuji's* holy words,
Is the realm of grace, full of might.
Here abide God's devotees alone with Him,
The God-dedicated heroes, wrapt all in praise,
Beyond death and *Maya's* guile.
Here abide devotees realm on realm,
In holy joy absorbed'.¹

Then further she elucidated this realm, saying :
'Beyond limits of time and space is this realm,
The very limitless Divine Presence'.
Thought I, perhaps my love here may grant me
sight.

1. Based on *Japuji*, 37

Said she, 'Not here; in *Sach Khand*, the Realm
eternal he abides.

This realm and the next are one, united
Yet indescribable is this mystery.
Thy eyes keep open, and the sight of *Sach Khand*
behold'.

6

THE VISION

Raj Kaur then exhorted her mother dear
Reverently to be seated, to listen to what next she
had beheld.

The mother, sitting down in the reverent pose,
Hands folded, was all attention

The account of *Sach Khand* to listen.

'Mother dear', Raj began, 'as with open eyes I
gazed,

An unearthly effulgence lit my eyes,
Limitless, beyond calculable extent.

Millions of lightning flashes, with brilliance
combined

Before that vision appeared dim.

To describe that sight have I neither imagination
nor words.

Around this brilliance was spread a joy,

Beyond power of senses to grasp,

Subtle as fragrance round the rose.

Said my companion : Beyond this point can I not
proceed,

Nor take thee along.

This the country of thy beloved spouse is—

Sach Khand, the Realm Eternal, from *Maya* taint
free.

Here abides thy Surat Singh.

Here such alone reach as by *Maya* are untouched,
Above mind, intelligence, consciousness and egoism
risen;

So also beyond causation and the gross body

Has he become pure soul.

Here come those that the self have realized,

Thereby realizing their Maker, to Him united.

Here in the Divine Essence they abide.

Those that approach this state, the devotees of God,

To Him inalienably are united.

Such up to this spot can rise, not beyond.

Then, mother dear, overcome with love,

To that soul-sister I made a bow,

In gratitude for bringing me to this city of bliss.

In a spate of words into ecstasy of joy I broke,

In this wise : To this city, sheltering my love am

I a sacrifice.

This the Lake, the Beloved on it the swan.

Here in supreme joy he abides, engulfed as by its
waves.

From here came he to earth, to the world to bring
good.

Came he to do good to this world of selfish guile,
Whose denizens in mutual aggression and violence
keep embroiled.

Here to an insignificant creature, myself was he
united,

And ennobled, exalted me.

Much did I utter in praise of him

And denigration of myself.

A swan, he left the world of crows,

Pearls to peck at.

Yet lies it in the holy Guru's power to turn crows
into swans.

To redeem me, a sinner, he came,

And to high heaven drew me.

Absorbed in these cogitations, made I a supplication

For a sight of his effulgent self.

Prayed I in touching tone to reveal himself,

To me, by the agony of separation tormented.

In the name of the holy Guru Nanak, image of
truth

I supplicate you, wailed I.

As thus I supplicated, beheld I the effulgence grown
a million-fold,

In the realm of *Sach Khand* rising like a tempest.

Visible in this blinding light saw I the ten Masters,

The holy Gurus, all in one flash wrapped,

Indistinguishable each as light from light.

This sight left me mute, from head to toe
 With the passion of sacrifice imbued.
 With this vision was lost the feeling of self—
 No self or not-self was there.
 In a tremor of joy lost I all feeling of self,
 Where was all desire annulled.
 All was bliss, fulfilment.'

7

THE DESCENT

Resumed Rani Raj : Mother dear, in an instant,
 Faster than a lightning flash vanished that vision.
 To the Lord eternal, *Akal Purakh* am I grateful,
 Each hair on my body a tongue eloquent with
 gratitude,
 For the sight He granted.
 As from my ecstasy I recovered, the celestial
 Damsel,
 My companion I saw standing by my side.
 In fervour of love to her bosom she clasped me,
 Saying : Sister of my soul, I and you are one.
 Be not under illusion we are different.

Not we only, the whole cosmos in unity and harmony
is bound
In the Creator.

One to the Creator united, is with His creation in
harmony too;

One in egoism bound, from the Creator keeping
alienated.

Those bearing devotion in heart,
Alone to the Lord are united.

Not such as abjure action are to Him united,
But those bearing love in heart.

As says the holy Guru in *Sukhmani*,

In such deed lies true emancipation from desire.

Then to the seeker each blade of grass holds the
vision Divine.

One at this station arrived nothing beholds but the
Lord.

Such a one spontaneously then in good is engaged,
Inspiring others to serve.

These mysteries to such come as bear pure minds
From the world's taint freed.

These esoteric secrets, sister, that to thee have I
imparted,

Are not idly to be told.

Worldlings, with selfishness imbued

That mouth empty phrases, with these

To spirituality make claims false and spurious.

Dear Raj, not separate from each other are we,

As branches on the tree,

Whose leaves, buds and flowers distinct to view,

Yet at root are united—

Even so, in the Lord are we one.

These mysteries, dear Raj,

On your mind shall flash,

From the blessing of one holy, thy spouse in carnal
life.

Then hinted she departure, at which instantly

Downward we glided.

Yet as my way earthward I made, a fragrance
haunted me

Of the vision I had seen.

A delectable taste in my mouth stuck,

As words of thanks giving to the Lord I uttered.

Now as the Realm of Endeavour, this terrestrial
world, we entered,

That effulgence grew dim.

Said my companion : Sister, of thee must now I
take leave.

This second parting to my heart was lacerating.

In words of entreaty I asked her yet to stay.

Said she in words of wisdom : Sister dear,

Shouldst thou seek union to which no end shall be,

Be thou as was thy Surat Singh,

Whereby the Realm Eternal he entered.

The Realm of eternal Love it is,

Where all who enter are for ever united.

As thy spouse, so I from thee never shall be far.

With these words from my sight she vanished.

With her also vanished light, and shades of dusk
appeared.

Passing through dark space, where found I myself ?

Here, in this mansion, amid my sorrow and
suffering.

Gone was that joyous vision, and the dull everyday
world appeared.

Then appeared a serving man,
Who to my lord had rendered service faithful and
true;

Him I asked to furnish this chamber even as in life
My love was wont to use.

Here I repaired, engaged in thoughts of him,
When mother dear, you surprised me.

To you, mother, have I caused pain,
Which forgive me.

His love calls me;

Nothing from there can draw me.

Mother dear, be you indulgent to your erring child.

8

THE ABSORPTION

Now dew-drenched was the night, with stars studded,
That looked like eyes of the universe,
In yearning expectation wide open.
What were these eyes looking for, like tear-stained
eyes glistening?

In these thoughts was Raj absorbed, looking first at
the dew-drops,

Raising eyes from these to the starry heaven above.
The Mother at the daughter looked in a gaze of
wonder,

At the narrative she just had recounted.

Soon the eyes of both closing outward,
 At that vision were fixed that mother and daughter
 shared alike,
 Each into the eddying river of wonder fallen,
 Each wrapped in silence of the night and her vision,
 Raj, love-inspired, on her dear spouse fixed her
 gaze,
 To love transmuted like iron in forge turning fire.
 Around the motionless figure of mother and
 daughter
 Was spread the silence and gloom of night.
 Absorbed in this vision, slipped the night
 And came day with its manifold noises.
 Startled, woke the mother and shook her daughter
 awake.
 'Arise, Raj! by the ocean of night were we engulfed.
 Now arise, day has come and its own tasks
 brought!'
 With that, amid crowd of maids,
 Each relieved to find her mistress back,
 The broad stairs they descended
 Into the mansion.

9

THE GARDEN

A lovely garden, from the hillside descending
 In sloping terraces, amid which a cool, pellucid
 stream flowed.
 Its water from the hill descending in winding
 streams
 From below huge boulders issued
 Sometimes in short, musical falls filling the streams,
 Then eagerly over the garden plots flowing.
 To the sensitive eye its movement looked so joyous,
 So full of love, expending its own life the garden
 plants to nourish —

Like a noble soul to bring life to others at sacrifice.
 Within the garden was a small marble tank,
 By a marble canopy surmounted,
 With its twelve doors, a lovely pleasure spot.
 Here as Raj sat, her heart filled with memories of
 her lord

Who of evenings sat here, enjoying the garden scene.
 Came mornings and into evenings melted,
 Yet to Raj came not her lord's tidings.
 Alone she sat, as hour after hour passed,
 In that sorrowful mood enveloped.

As absorbed thus she sat,
 Flashed on her eyes a vision from the high,
 Of a uniquely beauteous throne, over which sat
 her love.

Like the sun it flashed, brightening the whole
 earth,

That in wonder put her.

Absorbed in this vision, her lord she supplicated,
 Never from her sight to depart.

Sudden, as thus she sat,

Appeared her mother,

And viewed her child, with eyes wide open, taut
 with ecstatic love.

Said the elder Rani: 'Wake up, dear child,
 Welcome news I bring to thee'.

10

THE MISSIVE

As Raj from her vision was shaken,
 That all her sorrow had effaced,
 Sudden her eyes she opened, and beheld
 Instead of her love on the resplendent throne.
 Her mother by her side standing.
 Full of wailing sorrow with her mother she thus
 expostulated:
 'Today mother, have you plucked me away from
 my love,

To whom you gave me in holy wedlock.
 This contrary is to parents' way, who seek

To make their offspring's conjugal life blessed and happy'.

The distraught mother, all ignorant, thus reproached,

Harsh judgement on herself made.

'My child, ignorant as I am, my eyes by *Maya* are sealed;

I know not of the spiritual realms to which you have ascended.

Forgive me, came, I to bring to you a welcome gift,
A letter written by your love to you from field of battle,

In his own blood. This a maid from the Kahlur Raja has brought.

Take this. Solace to your heart it may bring'.

As eagerly with trembling hands Raj caught it,

Her eyes tearful, the writing she could not see.

To her forehead and eyes in reverence she pressed it.

Trying to read it, again were her eyes tear-filled
And blurred lay the script.

The mother, beholding her state, took the letter,
And offered to read it out.

Thus read out the Rani:

This is Surat Singh writing from the battle field,
To the princess Raj.

May the holy Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh bless you.

Here am I engaged in *Dharma-Yudh*.'

Himself did the holy Guru adjure his followers
In holy battle to engage.

As I write, an arrow my chest has pierced,
With blood flowing that no way can be stopped.
My strength ebbing, the last moment staring at me hard,

This letter to you with my blood I write.
The Kahlur Rana by me has stood, rendering a true friend's service.

Dear Raj, when I am gone, take you him to be in my place.

For ever from you am I parting.

You a lone female in this harsh world,
A protector shall need. To his care give yourself.

To you bid I the last farewell

In words of the holy Guru's *fateh*.'

Thus ended the letter with Surat Singh's name subscribed.

On hearing this message, a revulsion arose in Raj's mind.

'This is some fraud', to her mother she said.

'My lord such a message would not send,
At the very sight of this blood on the paper

My own blood revolts.

His blood, should it be his, should call forth
From my blood a new response.

Were it his message, would he bear regret
At death's approach?

The holy Guru Gobind's image he kept before his eyes,

Who begged of the Lord noble death on battlefield.
In life he used to say: 'All believing Sikhs in *Sach*

Khand abide,

In the Realm of Bliss, where eternally they live.
 That parting is eternal, never would he aver.
 To the *Dharma*—inspired death no terror holds,
 Who accept it as Divine will.
 God is the keeper of all, he told me.
 How then to another man would he entrust my
 weal?

So, mother dear, some strategem here is involved.
 This Raja of Kahlur to Sikhs is not friendly.
 Never has he lifted arms against the Turk.
 He who never left his pleasure-palace,
 Now through this faked letter seeks my body
 And our state.

This princeling knows not, a Rajput's daughter
 am I,

Into the Guru's *amrita* initiated.
 Ignorant of this, this man seeks on me to play
 his guile.

Know, my *dharma*, my faith with my lord
 To my last breath shall I cherish.
 Never shall I be false to fidelity's oath.
 In the world's eyes though a widow,
 Know, in my lord's memory am I still of wedded
 bliss.

He lives, and his memory I cherish
 As collyrium in my eye.
 Then turned the youthful Rani to the maid,
 Who Kahlur's message had brought.
 'Go tell your master, my lord to me is living,
 no way dead.

Your sister am I; cherish me ever with sisterly
 love.

Know, when facing the holy Granth in wedlock
 we were tied,
 Said my lord to me, for ever shall I be thy
 guardian.

This vow before the holy Granth he made.
 Were I, a Rajput born, my chastity to barter,
 To your race shall it bring shame.
 Your sister's chastity have you tested.
 Let this test satisfy you.

Know, I am twice-tempered steel
 That holy *amrita* has made me.
 Never shall it bend.

So, brother dear, no fear have I.
 My protectors moreover, are Punjab's Sikh
 heroes.

Brother, as your sister I adjure you the Sikh fold
 to enter.
 Why should my brother be deprived of the bliss
 that the sister has?

With this was the maid dismissed, with honours
 To a courier due.

The mother all this while sat silent, contemplative.
 Filled with pride, thus she prayed :
 'Holy Guru, with thy protecting arm
 Succour my child in her tribulation.
 To assume her royal duties inspire her.'

In the Realm of Bliss, where eternally they live.
 That parting is eternal, never would he aver.
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 Succour my child in her tribulation.
 To assume her royal duties inspire her.'

11

ASCENT TO FAIRY PALACE

Atop a steep mountain was the reputed Fairy
Palace,

Where lived, it was reported, a being mysterious
That descended not ever. Asked the Rani of
Radha:

'Dear Radha! tell me what you know of the Fairy
Palace.'

Radha made reply, 'On the steep mountain atop
a dangerous ledge

Hangs this palace, where lives the Fairy, reported
by some to be a witch,

Dangerous to mortals. None her touch has
withstood,

But our departed lord Surat Singh.

At whose feet this Fairy made submission.

Dangerous, fatal it is to have sight of her.

None but our departed Rana returned therefrom.'

On hearing which Raj made exhortation :

'Radha dear, there must we go.

If a witch, she no more is a witch.

The sight of my lord into a saint must have
turned her.

Go there I must, you with me shall come.'

Saying this, the path towards she took,

Radha, the faithful maid accompanying her.

Some flowers they took with them from a
garden nearby.

Some distance away was a waterfall, pellucid,
Foaming on top, making music loud and clear.

Passing this, a steep, narrow path they took,

Radha after the Rani following.

Further on, even this path got obliterated.

The way was all scattered boulders, where
footrest was hard.

The mountain side rose steep, defying ascent.

Getting out of breath, Radha sat down,

Some rest to take.

Said the Rani : 'Radha dear, hard is the path
of love,

To have sight of the beloved.

Lose not heart.

This is the path by my loved lord sanctified.

This we take, defying exhaustion !

So, bound by the tie of love, Radha arose,

And the upward path they resumed.

As further they went, the air became cool, agreeable

Driving out the body's fevers.

This drowsed them, bringing blessed sleep

That favours the poorest; and the rich,

Tossing on soft beds of down eludes,

That neither hoarded wealth nor medicine can force.

In the cool mountain air, by cloud-clusters
covered,

The ascent they resumed.

After arduous labour within sight of the palace
they reached,

That out of a tall rock, with roots stuck deep in
earth

Was carved.

Within a courtyard they saw,

By a few chambers surrounded.

In the courtyard was a tank, with water filled,

By a few steps approached.

Around were growing mountain trees, walnut
and others,

Bearing delicious fruit of the hills.

From this steep height their own abode like ant-
heaps looked.

The stream, the valleys and paths like those

A map's picture made.

Below were sailing clouds.

After resting a while, secret of the Fairy Palace

They resolved to penetrate.

12

INSIDE THE FAIRY PALACE

Inside the Fairy Palace, of massive workmanship,
A granite staircase they had now to ascend,
Which Raj with courage faced,
Eager to view the female who on her lord had set
eyes.

Radha the maid, fear-gripped in this eerie place
Thought death was near.
As up the staircase they went came into view a
wide courtyard,
Amid which was a tank full of crystal clear water —

A spot that to them brought pictures of *Baikunth*,¹
Sequestered, quiet, joy-cooled.

Grew around it fruit-bearing trees
That without labour came to hand.

Said Raj : Any day would I give up the state
and authority

Here to come and in peace spend my days.

Within was a courtyard smaller, by chambers
girded,

Where on a throne of Bhoj leaves sat the Fairy
deep in absorption,

Her forehead red with ecstasy of meditation,
Though advanced in years.

In *Padamasan*² in *samadhi* she sat,

Motionless like a statue chiselled of marble.

Behind her, where she sat, was fixed a slab,

On it superscribed the holy *Ek Oankar*.³

Carved also was holy Guru Arjan's vision

Of a life devoted and happy, that ran this wise:

'Were anyone to live in a tattered hut, clothes
torn,

Without caste or status, wandering in the wild;

Devoid of helper, friend, substance, figure and
relations—

King of the world should he yet be reckoned,

Should his heart with love of the Lord be drenched.

By the dust of, feet of such a one, by Divine grace

Comes liberation."⁴

1. Paradise

2. The 'lotus pose', suited for sitting for long periods in meditation

3. The holiest name of God, the Sole Supreme Being

4. From *Jaisrari-ki-Var, Basta Tuti jhonpari chir sabh chhinna*

Beneath inscribed the name, 'Surat Singh
The holy congregation's slave'.

At sight of the words was Raj transported to her
lord,

Whose figure at her constantly glanced through
these.

By the side of the fairy in *samadhi* fell Raj into
samadhi too,

That struck Radha with wonder,

Who too into deep thought fell, making with the
wrapt, absorbed the third.

At this spot, hallowed by the Guru's holy Word,
Sat these three, into absorption fallen,

Their selves in meditation upwards ascended,
As air from a vessel that with water is filled.

All grossness shed, was here the state of holy poise.
For long in this state they kept, disturbed neither
by heat

Nor noxious insect; nor by importunate callers,
Nagging anxiety or sleep that inevitably is shaken.

In the meantime came a female pigeon there,
That messages from Surat Singh used to bring,
And after fluttering, in the absorbed Fairy's lap
descended.

At this was the Fairy shaken awake,
And behold, by her side were two figures, into
attitudes of *samadhi* fallen.

The pigeon's cooing shook awake Raj and Radha.
Opening their eyes, the Fairy they beheld,

As holy Guru Arjan's *Bawan Akkhari*¹ she recited

1. A text from the holy *Granth Sahib*

From the measure Gauri.

On hearing the tone enchanting of her utterance
Fell Raj at her feet, and said :

'Blessed is thy birth,

Who into dark *Kali-Yuga*¹ *Sati-Yuga*² hast brought,

No fairy thou, but the very image of devoted love.'

At this sweet speech, the other made reply :

'A thoughtless, noxious worm was I,

Whom a true disciple of the holy Guru Nanak
exalted.'

Raj, in fair words becoming, first begged forgive-
ness

For intrusion into her secluded spot.

Then begged to be told the name of him

Who her transformation had brought about.

With a smile replied the Fairy :

'Know, thou who art the Guru's humble devotee,

No secret shall I make of his name.

He was one in the very image of the Lord,

A devotee, of aspect pleasing,

Surat Singh his name.'

This avowal to the Rani's eyes brought tears of joy-
ful memories,

And blessed herself for sight of one

Who by her lord had so been exalted.

The fairy at this in tight embrace enclosing Raj,

Was in joyous ecstasy at sight of one

Who the noble Surat Singh's helpmate was.

1. The Dark Age

2. The Primal Age of Dharma

'Blessed am I', said she, 'at thy sight

That to me his very image hast brought,'

With feelings of love into each other they melted,

Like two arrows at one target meeting

Or eyes twain at one vision directed.

Thus absorbed they remained,

Till Raj made query, 'How came you here, sister ?

How in this sequestered spot your lodging took ?'

13

STORY OF THE FAIRY PALACE

To the Rani's query the lady secluded replied :
'This spot, sister, that you see, in ancient days
was a Buddhist monastery.

Here came a disciple of the Buddha,
And finding the spot ideal for meditation, settled
here.

This temple he persuaded a king to make,
That from solid rock is hewn.

This tank with rain-water is filled, that seldom
gets exhausted.

Above is also a spring.

Planted in this place are fruit trees.

There behold a recumbent Buddha statue

In meditation, hand in benediction raised.

Thus passed long ages, till Jainism in this area
spread.

The Jains took over the place, and beside the
Buddha

Placed Vardhman's statue.

Years passed, and the cult of Vardhman

By Saktas was supplanted.

There see you the figure of Shakti.

Then came Gorakh, and Yogis held this spot.

There see you the Gorakh figure,

In padamasan seated, begging-bowl in hand,

A reed mat by its side.

The Yogis, for fear of Rajputs,

A Krishna-figure made, along with the Devi's.

Thus was here an amalgam of faiths, Shaiva,
Vaishnavite and others.

At this inaccessible spot arrived rare practitioners
of Yoga,

Who through Yoga-praxis subduing the physical
self,

Came here to enter *samadhi*, seeking immortality.

My father turning yogi, got ears slit, errings
wore

And in dissonance with the world, renunciation
practised.

Yoga now having declined, my father for the
Yogis revulsion felt.

Consuming liquor, the occult they practised,
inspiring fear.

At last, guided by Bhangarnath, the Yogi abbot

This sequestered spot he sought,

And to articles of Yoga-practice gave himself up.

Here practised he Hatha yoga in all its rigorous
praxis,

With *neoli*, *vasti*, *dhoti*, *neti*

And the rigours of *pranayam*.¹

Thus spent my father a considerable time,

Forgetful of the world and family.

My mother, in deep distress,

Sorrowed for him, when I still was a babe.

At last in search after him our home she left

And to Bhangarnath made approach.

Through devoted service his approval she earned

And learnt of this spot.

My mother, bearing rigours of hunger and my
father's indifference

Yet persisted.

Came winter with snow and freezing blasts.

This took my mother's life,

And by her body I alone was left wailing.

Hearing my cries came out father,

And seeing my state in freezing cold,

Took me within.

Pity moving his heart me he nurtured.

As I grew up, Yoga to me he imparted,

1. These articles of praxis are *ad seriatim*: bowel-churning,
evacuation by water, cleansing the intestines by cloth strip
and breath-control

All the *asanas*¹ and articles of praxis,
Till an adept I became.
Came old age, enfeebling father's limbs.

Yoga no longer could he practise and his body
all was pain.

At this he cried, in regret for choosing the Yoga-path.
As you today, Surat Singh here once chanced
to come.

Him my father with cordiality received.
Both on the supreme objective held converse.

My father from him learnt *Bhakti*,
The synthesis of *Jnan* and *Vairag*
And the secret of *Raj-Yoga*.²

To me too he graciously expounded the secrets
of *Bhakti*,

Resignation to the will Divine, *Nām* and joy
in God.

Often after this would he come, our spiritual
life to nourish,

Till the holy Granth he installed here.

Amrit³ to us he administered.

Now the noble stage of *Sahaj*, spiritual poise
we entered

And turned we Gurumukhs,⁴ from age and decline
exempt.

1. Poses

2. *Jnan* (gyan) is enlightenment, gnosis; *Vairagya*, dispassion
towards the world's pleasures, and *Raj-Yoga* is Yoga of
the spiritual endeavour, in contradistinction to hatha

3. The *Khalsa* initiation

4. One facing towards God—the term expressive of the Sikh
ideal of spirituality

Came a day when my father, rich in years,
To *Sach Khand* departed, saved from the dark
yoga-praxis.

Surat Singh himself his pyre lit.

He too alas, this mortal life departed.

To my great regret, no service could I to this great
benefactor render,

Who showed us the light by the holy Gurus
revealed.⁵

With this the Fairy, wrapped in thought, into
silence fell.

14

A DREAM

The Rani by her side sitting, both into deep
meditation fell,

The Fairy recalling the beneficence from Surat
Singh received

And the love of his wife, now by her side sitting.

In the dewy depth of night Raj to her related

The story of the Kahlur Raja's letter.

Then narrated she a dream

That on the previous night she had.

As on the Palace's terrace she sat,

Viewing above the sky, star-studded,

Resplendent with countless suns,
Fell she into wonderment,
Recalling the holy Guru Nanak's hymn of *Arati*,¹
Wherein the sky has he likened to a salver
And the stars to ritual lamps, before the deity
lit—

Thus, says the holy Guru, the Universe to the
Creator *Arati*^a performs.

Wrapt in this contemplation, by the cool air lulled,
Into sleep she fell, and a wonder beheld.

What saw she? Earth and sky topsy turvy
appeared.

Earth appeared blue as the sky, with gem-like
stats overspread.

The earth a veritable salver appeared, with ritual
lamps burning row on row

As in a holy temple.

Thus dreaming, beheld I the farthest stars
To which had I ascended.

As the top of it I reached, a rock I beheld
Rounded smooth, white, of moonlike sheen.

A sign like a door in it appeared.

As this door I touched, within was revealed a
temple,—

Illumined, cool, pure milk-white;

Its walls and floor and ceiling mercury-like
glistening,

As though with lightning plastered.

1. *Arati* in *Dhanasari* M. 1 (*Gagan mai thal*) *Arati* is
worship-offering

Within it at worship were men and women,
As though moulded of light.
Illumination fell there as from a spring, a waterfall.
Worshippers saw I there in congregation, in holy
Divan,¹

Where were rising strains of holy music,
With the Guru's *shabda*, lauding the infinity
Divine.²

As with eyes wide open in wonder I beheld,
Was seated in that company my lord-spouse,
Looking as though to the congregation discoursing.
This sight with unquenchable thirst I drank.

At a distance I stood, yearning tears of love to shed,
With these his loved feet to wash.

Oh, that him I could touch, to my bosom clasp.

As thus I stood, my lord all compassion, grace

From his seat arose,

And to where I stood, came.

As at his feet I fell, me he raised

Uttering words of blessing,

That in wonder wrapt I construed not.

But a little while after thus could I make out :

This a sphere of infinite beauty

Where the devotees of God, infinitely laud Him.

Their love draws me now and then from *Sach*

Khand.

1. A Sikh congregation

2. Here is reproduced Bhairon M. V. '*Pritpal Prabhu kirpal
kavan guna gani*

Here should you learn the secret of laudation,
 As says the holy Guru, to whomsoever laudation
 has He granted
 Is king of kings.¹
 With these into silence he fell.
 Sudden, as my eyes opened,
 Earth and sky to their former stations returned.
 With this felt I the gross body's weight
 Like ox to heavy wagon yoked.
 From afar I heard the holy Guru's hymn in Asa
 Measure,
 Breathing humility before the Divine Spouse,
 In manner of devoted, dedicated female.²

1. *Japuji*, 25

2. Asa, M. V. 7, Opening with *Guna awaguna mera kacchu na bicharo*

15

A NIGHT AT THE FAIRY PALACE

In converse profound the two engaged, deep in
 reverence,
 From each other eager to learn.
 As wore on day and dusk descended,
 Radha, to her mistress ever faithful, importuned :
 'Mistress mine, leave we now for home.
 Comes the night full of dangers from animals
 of the wild.
 Down this steep mountain, arduous is the path,
 There behold, shepherds, herdsmen and all
 others

Homewards are returning.'

But this importunity moved not Raj,
Who to the place attached, to leave it was loth.
Now the Fairy, the saint of the place, in wisdom
profound

To Raj turned, saying :

'Dear Raj, great devotee that you are,
And to your dear lord's memory attached,
I reckon it befits not your state
Here your time to while away.

You are no mere female like thousands others,
But a queen, on whom the weal of the populace
depends.

On your shoulders lies this burden;
From it behoves you not to flee.
With love and devotion the call of duty answer—
There lies wisdom's path.
To discard that is like the whirlwind to roll about.
Love, know sister dear, is not madness.
Love on ideals keeps us fixed.
Should you turn recluse, dear Raj,
And suppressing faculties, in a corner sit,
At the portal Divine no acceptance shall you
meet.

The holy Guru's teaching is liberation through
duty.

Quaff you of the joy of love,
But the duty laid on your shoulders perform.
Thus shall you nobly cherish your love's memory;
Thus shall come to you great repute.'

To this Raj made reply : 'Sister, in love is my
life centred,

To his memory am I wedded.
His am I while living; his when this body
To ashes shall turn.

To guide me on this path
To him supplication I make.
Tell me no more.'

At this avowal the Fairy, overwhelmed,
In fit of ecstasy at her feet fell.
Radha too at this scene lost in feeling,

Yet of home was mindful,
And reminded her mistress of her mother's wailing,
At their absence distressed.
At last to Radha's entreaties yielding
Raj made resolve the downward journey to make,
Saying, the world each moment beholds meeting
and parting.
Part we must.

THE FAIRY PALACE—A SECRET

The Fairy loving farewell bade them,
Enjoining upon Raj her mother to cherish,
Distracted now in her absence.
Then, as parting gift a packet she handed her,
A keepsake cherished, from Surat Singh.
In it was a scroll, Surat Singh's writing—
His answers to spiritual queries—
That seekers after light to him had addressed.
This, adjured the Fairy, at leisure shall you read.
Many knotty questions thereby of the world
Shall you find resolved.

This packet in red cloth tied
 Raj with the utmost reverence grasped,
 Eyes downcast, hands folded, kneeling humbly.
 Then on her head she placed it,
 As object sacred and most precious.
 Then, while time fled and dusk fell,
 The Fairy, anxious that before dark home they
 return,

Revealed to Raj yet another secret,
 Exclusive, to the initiated alone revealed.

There, on the dark forest's edge
 Southward, by the hillside,

Where flowery trees in forest rise
 Rightward are huge boulders.

Amid these gushes a spring,
 By terrifying rocks flanked.

There, a sole rock, milk-white rises
 Where grow glowing spicy plants.

There, leftward of the water is a slab,
 Which when moved, a doorway shall reveal.

As you enter, a dark spot shall you behold,
 Beyond which, a dozen steps across is another door.

An echo shall rise, to which answer you,
 Akul Niranjan.¹

As thrice this you repeat,
 Shall the door open, which you cross
 Repeating 'Saibhang', 'Saibhang'.

As forward you go, a Sikh of the Guru shall guide
 you,

Where *Sati-sang*, the holy congregation is held,

1. The mystical name of God, 'from *Maya*-taint free'

2. Self-existent—an attributive name of God

That the devotion-intoxicated join.
 This tradition by Surat Singh was begun,
 As the Guru's message in the hill areas spread.
 These all are householders, workers;
 And after congregation is over,
 To their day's tasks return.

Thus Surat Singh, holy himself, perfect in devotion
 The cult of holiness spread.

Then parted Raj, in profoundest gratitude
 From the Fairy, whom Surat Singh's touch
 From love of the world to higher objectives turned,
 And stilling her heart's turmoil,

Brought peace and poise;

That discarding worldly props

God's sole prop she sought—

A saint, a *sannyasini* turning.

Hers the solitude of the poised self, as by holy Guru

Arjan

In Measure Basant affirmed.¹

1. Line : So *ikanti jis rida thāen*

THE LEVEE

The mother in Raj's absence, mysterious, clueless
Wept and wailed, and to the holy Guru prayed
In deep submission, for safe return of her child.
At long last, when after absence of a long day
Did Raj return, was the mother's joy boundless.
Much charity she dispensed, feeding the poor.
Happy was each soul.
Then asked she the Rani what befell her
During her absence;
Which she in every particular told her,
Barring the secret cave, as to the Fairy promised.

Thereafter both into deep, sound sleep fell,
 In each other's arms.
 Came morning, wherein was Raj put in mind
 Of the holy Guru's yearning in Maru
 For the Divine Beloved's sight
 At early dawn.¹
 Beholding her own state bereft, much she wailed.
 With rise of day, in daylight were her thoughts
 absorbed.

Radha, rising likewise, ordered the bath-tank
 For her mistress to be filled.
 First took she bath herself, for service to her royal
 mistress.

The Rani then bathed, dressed and to her limbs
 applied fragrance.

Thereafter to pay homage to the statue and the
 sepulchre she repaired.

Adjured her mother : Hold today the levee
 As befits a ruler. On your head wear the crown
 and aigrette.

Said Raj : 'The Lord of the Aigrette and Plume is
 one only,

The holy Guru Govind.

Befits it not another these emblems to assume.

My wedded lord too their assumption eschewed.

How befits it me ?

Admonished her mother : 'Wear you then the
 pearl-string,

And the *Durbar* robes.

The hour approaches—herein delay not'.

I. Maru Dakhane : *Uthi jhālū kantare hawn passi Tau didāru*

Radha then on her mistress put the equipment,
 Splendid, golden, dazzling to the eye,
 Decked as statue in fane.

The senior Rani then to the throne-room conducted
 her,

Where were gathered the nobles.

All with folded hands received her and benedictions
 showered.

Raj, splendid in jewellery, by her maids surrounded
 The *Durbar* room approached.

As her late lord's throne she beheld

Felt she tremors of grief.

As the senior Rani admonished her

Herself to compose, *durbar*-offerings she received
 From the assembled nobles.

The royal routine did she perform

As in her predecessor's days.

As was dismissed the *Durbar*, to their apartments
 Mother and daughter repaired, the Rani full of
 grief,

At remembrance of her lord who once had reigned
 Where now she sat.

At last came sleep that her limbs oppressed.

KEEPSAKES—THE RANA'S EPISTLES

As came morning, the Rani thus instructed Radha :
'Come you by a ruse to the chamber that you know'.
This was where was kept reverently the holy *Granth*,
Which entering, the Rani herself swept the floor
In reverent devotion. Then spread she the carpet,
Arranged the robes the holy Book to cover.
Thereafter flower-vases she filled,
And the Book installed as reverent custom required.
Then, into the kitchenette going, the sweet offering,
Karah Prashad herself she cooked, reciting over it
the *Japu*.

Thereafter, in reverent attitude standing by the
 Book,
 Prayed she : 'Holy Divine Master, immaculate art
 Thou,
 In all beings pervasive; beyond evil, impurity and
 duality;
 I a thoughtless sinner, *Maya*-gripped,
 Pride-filled, unworthy with my foul hands
 Even to touch the Scripture that Thy light enshrines,
 The person manifest of the Gurus.
 I, a female of little understanding and of actions
 unworthy
 For Thy sight yearn, that pray grant me.
 My faults manifold forgive, I that am Thine.
 Thy erring handmaid am I—yet Thine own.
 In Thy grace, grant me sight of the holy Word,
 The Guru's embodiment.
 To me, writhing like a fish, grant me the blessing
 Thy service to perform.
 As come the rain-clouds sent by heavenly grace
 The dust-laden air to wash clean,
 To make it cool, pure—
 Even so, make me pure, joy-cooled.'
 With this the holy Book she opened, and for an hour
 out of it read.
 Then with due ceremony closing it, the *Ardas*¹ she
 recited.
 Then sought she leave of the Scripture to behold
 The cherished treasure of her husband's letters.

1. The Sikh prayer offered in congregation or alone

As the bundle she untied, several epistles drew her
 sight,
 That brought tears of recognition and grief to her
 eyes.
 The first to a sorrowing mother was sent, Karam
 Kaur
 Whose heroic son, called Sher Singh¹ by the Turks
 In battle was captured, and done to death.
 To her was conveyed deep sympathy in her loss,
 Yet in her grief consoling her
 With the thought of God's grace, for one whose
 child His approval had won,
 Dying a martyr for the fatherland and for faith.
 You are the mother, said the epistle, not of him
 alone who is gone,
 But of the whole *Panth*.²
 Evanescent, malady-bringing are the world's
 pleasures.
 This bitter grief bear that the Lord to you has sent.
 Take me mother, as thy son too,
 Serving the *Panth*'s cause that to your departed son
 was dear.
 Near to thee I cannot come, thrown close to the
 mountains,
 Away from our homeland.
 Such humility from one who was crowned monarch
 And ever of service and sacrifice thought,
 Deeply the Rani's heart moved.

1. *Sher* and *Singh* both mean 'Lion'

2. This term stands for the corporate body of all believing
 Sikhs

The next epistle that came to the Rani's hand
To the sister of Taru Singh, the Martyr was
addressed,

Condoling her brother's demise.

Calling her his sister,

Sympathizing deeply in her grief,

Called blessing on the mother that bore

Such a brother and such sister.

Your brother, said the letter, after heroic deeds
Nobly performed, the Realm Eternal of God has
entered.

Your mother, in Sikhism truly moulded,

Was the Tenth Master's dedicated daughter,¹

Who exhorted her brave son unflinchingly the Guru
to serve.

To her teaching true, in the Turk's bondage he fell,
Then to the last lived a devoted Sikh.

His life he gave up, but flinched not from the faith.

You his brave sister, and your heroic mother,

His sacrifice without a groan have borne.

Sister ! as ever, to the Lord's will resign yourself.

For such as we, are not the pleasures and concerns
of the world,

But sacrifice and crusading in God's way.

In the holy Guru's words, was your brother the
Lord's own champion,²

Wrestling ever to win His fights.

1. Said symbolically

2. Sri Raga M. V. Opening line: *Hau gosain da
pahilwanara*

May the Guru grant you to tread your brother's
noble path.

This from your other brother, Surat Singh,

Whose greetings to all our brethren in the *Panth*,

To all the mothers who shoulder to shoulder

With their brothers the Guru's cause are serving.

At this Raj prayed that by blessing

Of her brothers and sisters in the *Panth*

Waging holy fight, may the light of faith

On her own unworthy self fall,

And as stone with the boat,

May she be saved.

To the next epistle then she turned, the third
Whose theme was death.

Addressed to her and to mankind generally,

It averred, no fright in death lies.

After each death is a new birth.

Afflicted, must man not his own life take —

This to no fulfilment leads.

Best is the fruit ripened on the branch.

After such death is life impurity-laden,

Made to sink like wood made heavy with lead.

Life from impurity freed light shall remain

And rise to heights above.

Raj, as its contents she read, at her lord's noble
wisdom marvelled.

In the next epistle was contained answer to a hard
query :

What like is the pathway to ascent —

Hard or easy ? This, friend, to me expound.

Know, said the answer:

On this path nowhere shall you meet descent;
Hard, steep is this path.

Lies on this way a resting-place? Was the next
query.

On this path nowhere is a resting-place;
All is movement, ascent.

Next stood the query; what in case of exhaustion?
Would such a one inevitably be ruined?

No resting-place, no respite from movement is
there.

To escape exhaustion, keep viewing straight the
objective,

Taking off the eye never.

This the exhaustion shall take off, and the courage
revive.

Full of admiration for its lofty wisdom,

This epistle she placed back,

And the fifth took up.

This one true greatness defined:

Greatness lies not in pride,

in raising in arrogance the head high,

But in bearing humility.

To be great is to be like the lofty mountain that on
its head

Bears frost, snow and rain,

And after sends it down the plains to irrigate,

The earth to make fruitful.

From the water that remains, rears it lofty trees

That mankind's purposes serve.

Furthermore on the mountains grow herbs

Medicinal, restorative.

Grow on the mountain's breast manifold fruits
delicious,

All to serve others, sans charge or tax.

Yet ends not the mountain's beneficence here.

Splitting itself, pebbles, stones and sand it becomes,
That manifold blessings bring.

Stones burnt become lime,

Man's edifices to bedeck.

Mines the mountain in its bosom cherishes,

Yielding gold, silver, iron, copper, tin

And numerous metals more.

Stones precious, of beauty wondrous it yields—

Diamond, ruby, sapphire, emerald and others
of their ilk.

As the mountain, source of bounty,

Such should the lofty be, conferring benefits,

Sacrificing self.

Friend, be thou bountiful too,

Seek not anything of the world.

Of your giving be not proud.

Give and seek not the recompense.

Rise not like the kite to fall,

Or like the vulture that on carcases descends.

Be lofty as the beauteous moon, the effulgent sun,

The Pole Star that unshakeable is,

Like the cloud that life-giving water brings.

Of such says the holy Guru in *Sukhmani*:

'Benefactors of all, annullers of suffering,

Saviours of the world are such.¹
 Those heeding not such teaching
 The world shall leave as better not than grass or
 thistles.

Deeply enlightened, Raj then picked up
 Another paper, richly done in colour.
 This of philosophical import was,
 Dilating on merit and its garnering.
 Garner merit, it exhorted, keeping it to thyself
 As fragrance in the flower.
 To the highest point shall merit thus cherished carry,
 Entry granting you in the Court Divine.
 Should merit be sedulously cultivated with end in
 view,

Repute to obtain oneself to blow about,
 Alien will be its pleasure, insatiable its pursuit.
 Much envy will it excite, calumniators provoking.
 With repute thus garnered forbidden is entry into
Sach Khand, the Realm Eternal—

This coin there no currency has.
 Hard it is pursuit of repute to discard,
 Yet with merit genuine
 Of itself it comes, to the bearer's face lending
 radiance.

Merit like the musk-gland fragrance ever imparts.
 Poor it is to sell merit for lucre,
 That the pursuer demeans, forfeiting joy.

1. *Ve dāte dukh karon-hār;
 Jo kūt sangi tarai pāsār*

Invaluable is merit,¹ the holy Guru thus affirmed.
 Thus to expend merit is like the pack-ox to be,
 To one's self bringing decline.
 Merit kept within the self is like attar in a phial,
 Fragrant; or like a lamp lit indoors,
 Whose light scattered shall be, should the doors
 be opened.

To seek merit to sell is *Maya*-pursuit,
 Impurity bringing.
 True merit consists in oneself to expend
 As lamp lighting lamp, incurring not loss.

Thus with wisdom instructed, to the next,
 The seventh she turned.
 This still profounder issues raised,
 Of *Nām*—devotion to the Name Divine
 And the doctrine of *Jnan*, gnossos.
 Know, by renunciation alone comes not realization
 Or fulfilment in the Lord;
 One borne upon gnossos is still in egoism's sphere.
 The pursuit of *Nām* beyond mere knowledge lies—
 It is to be devoted, above disputations clever.
 These disputatious ones never to the Lord have felt
 drawn,

Never non-attachment practised.
Jnan takes not man outside of *Maya*'s sphere,
 Within the world of discriminations still keeping him.
 Know, where egoism abides, *Nām* there may not be.
 As *Nām* in the self takes abode, to the Bearer of
Nām,

1. *Amull guna—Japuji*

The Lord, it lifts the seeker.

Whoever discarding the holy Word, Nām

Takes himself to be image of the Supreme

Knows not the Guru's teaching.

While egoism in the self abides, should be Nām the
praxis;

As is discarded egoism, attainment it becomes —

Indispensable either way.

Know, Nām to its Divine Bearer joins the seeker.

On renunciation, the recluse's life, the next
missive turned.

Know, of two kinds is renunciation;

The first is from the human world to make retreat,

To seek a mountain cave or waste,

Away from human company to abide;

To be one's own companion, alone, sequestered.

Such retreat is wild, joyless.

The other is retreat amid concerns, endeavour of
the world,

Yet not by it to be overwhelmed,

To seek joy in nature —

This also is to be a recluse,

But hard is this way —

The way of the seeker of spiritual joy

And not the stubborn-willed ascetic's.

Some turning recluses, yet stray not far

From human habitations; their daily food from the
nearby village deriving.

Such from life's struggle flee,

Claiming to be recluses, yet on the ordinary house-
holders depend.

Such true recluses may not be called.

Higher than these is the damsel wedded,

To her consort faithful, in household chores engaged,
To all sincere and faithful.

Such also the man, whose mind wanders not,

But to the Lord is attuned—

His worldly concerns alienating him not from Him.

Such the true recluses,

As affirms the holy *Granth* :

The true recluse is he whose mind in poise is
resting.¹

Such as comes night, sleep not while the world
sleeps,

But in meditation on the Lord engage—

These amid concerns of family and tribe yet are
recluses.

Rarest of the rare are such.

Their physical body to them is the soil,

Wherein the seed of prayer and meditation they sow,

That in the Lord's demesne does flourish.

In the world are such to well-doing given—

The world's pleasures they lay by,

Joy of devotion to feel.

Such the true secret of retirement from the world is.

In the next epistle was adumbrated the philosophy
of pleasure.

In pleasure lies the dynamic of man's life; for pleasure
in action he engages.

1. Basant M. V. *So ikanti jisū rida thāen*

Sharp, attractive are the pleasures of passion,
 Sweet to taste.
 But sad is the end of such pleasures —
 Turning the mind impure and feeble,
 Or as says the holy Guru Nanak :
 'Into maladies falls the seeker of pleasures.'¹
 Glamorous like *Kasumbha* is the colour of pleasure,
 Appetite and langour inducing.
 Pleasure from outside is not derived,
 But from within ourselves arises,
 As said long back the sage Bharthari :
 Not do we experience pleasures; pleasures ex-
 perience us.
 Higher than pleasures of the body is the joy of holy
 congregation,
 Of chanting hymns of Divine praise.
 This joy from bodily joy the mind turns away.
 Even in pursuit of holiness lie certain temptations,
 That man must transcend.
 When the mind in pure joy in God is absorbed,
 On the path of truth persisting,
 Ultimately the destination it attains.
 Then pleasures all their attraction lose.
 Then is lost the lure of life and fear of death,
 As also of pleasures of Paradise.
 Then is the self God-intoxicated, yet enlightened,
 The lamp of illumination aglitter.
 Dear listener, discard therefore, joys of flesh,
 Into love for the Timeless Lord enter.
 Discarding all other pleasures,

This tasteless rock you lick.¹
 One tasting this pleasure is the true hedonist;
 One caught in worldly pleasures is like the fly in
 molasses caught.
 The next two missives, short and brief
 On other philosophical issues turned.
 To enter the awareness of God must man his
 ownself lose,
 His egoism. This an esoteric secret.
 Anyone discovering the self, on it taking stand,
 The whole universe round him may resolve.
 How did the cosmos originate ? cogitated the next.
 Love at its innermost centre lies.
 The Lord, attributeless, above desire, Love is His
 essence
 In love His effulgence spreads.
 Nothing He seeks; yet love even on Him may cast
 its spell.
 This paradox seek to resolve.
 Beings He creates, beyond need remaining,
 Yet in their sight feels joy.
 Love is His essence, that He receives and gives.
 In *Jāp* the holy Guru Govind thus has phrased it :
 'In all directions as harmony is He pervasive'.¹
 The last of the missives, longest of all,
 Exposition of concept of love contained.
 Love is the cause of creation, love its prop and
 sustenance.
 The immortal Lord Himself is love —

1. Echoes Bhai Gurudas's phrase *sil aluni*
2. *Jatra tatra disha visha hoe phailiyo anurāg*

Real, various and Beloved.
 Its light on all objects, subtle and gross shows.
 Subtle itself, the essence of love in palpable forms is
 manifested.

The first form of Love is the Creator,
 Who is preserver and destroyer both.
 Loving His creation, is He immaculate, Supreme
 Joy.

Of His creation such to Him bear love,
 As of impurity of egoism are relieved.
 Such in Him are merged —
 The perfection of such love is in the holy Guru
 Nanak manifested.

In various other teachers of mankind too it shows.
 Threefold its function : to unite the seeker to the
 Lord,

To impart joy and love and beneficence towards
 others to inspire.

In the heart free from *Maya* as compassion it sits,
 With reverence imbuing it.

Such Love spiritual strength imparts,
 Inspiring devotion, first towards Guru Nanak
 And ultimately the Lord.

The bearer thereof *Gurumukh* is called —one
 Godward-facing.

Of such love one form is love for the self,
 Noway a selfish act, but the urge to purity,
 For dyeing oneself in God.
 Another form still of love is, love of charity.

In the triad *Nām, Dān, Ishnān*,¹ is *Dān* a sovereign
 quality.

Noble is charity, should it selfless be.
 Such charity in spiritual realization is aidant.
 The passion to do good is another form of love,
 That all creation views as particles of the Essence
 Divine.

Love lower down the human relationships
 encourages,
 Such as parents' love for offspring, of brother
 and sister,

Man and wife, as also of lovers romantic.
 Attachment for objectives selfish is gross,
 A perversion of love, that suffering and bitterness
 brings on.

Love declining, a pursuit of pleasure becomes.
 Becoming passion, to visible objects is it attached.
 When crossing limits, into evil courses it leads,
 Bringing on forgetfulness of self.
 Another form of love is that among the brute
 creation subsisting,

Each to its species confined, mute, subconscious.
 Almost such in grossness is the love
 That gross minds for each other feel.
 Next is the form that 'vegetation love' may be
 called.

Plants, growing apart, yet to each other are drawn.
 Uprooted, from the garden when taken away,
 The pangs of separation they bear,

1. Serially, Devotion to the Name, Charity and holy
 Bathing

Sometimes even withering.

The sun, light and heat these love

And to water are drawn.

Lifeless objects too a kind of love feel,

The attraction of matter, that the universe sustains.

Such the attraction of iron for the magnet.

Each particle such attraction has and exercises.

Averred be sage Kashinath, 'The earth without a
prop moves,

Without palpable support.'

Thus also move the constellations and the moon,

Thus is the entire cosmos sustained.

Love is the force that so at the Universal base lies.

In lifeless objects, in vegetation and the animal world

Is love the informing force.

The human world too by it is inspired;

Various forms it assumes.

The holy devotees of God too it inspires.

As by the holy Guru affirmed in *Jāp* :

'In all directions as harmony is He pervasive.'

As came she to the end of the Epistles,

Into deep reverence she fell, and to the Creator,

Akal Purusha rendered thanks for guiding her
aright.

Then from the holy *Guru Granth* reading a text,

The Book she folded up,

And *prasād*, food-offering she made.

This to Radha she made over

For distribution to inmates of the palace.

In ecstasy of devotion thus passed her days.

In this was the pang of grief drowned.

20

THE CONFLICT RESOLVED—HOLY MUSIC

The Epistles over, Raj into deep thought fell again,
And grief overcame her.

Death that her love had snatched by hard names
she called,

Defying it her love's memory to efface.

Like one addicted to wine, missing it now,

Was she restless, yearning overcoming her.

Her mother in the meantime, thought to bring her
relief,

Her mind from grief to distract.

First was called in a scholar, a *Pandit*,

Who philosophically argued,
This world is false, unreal; unreal he whom you
mourn,

Unreal yourself, false your love; forget it all.
To the formation of relationships is there no end,
That form and bubble-like snap.

The wise to all this are indifferent.
Such logic to Raj's mind, love-imbued, sounded
hollow.

Her beloved unreal ? as this logic-chopper averred.
A saint he was, in midst of the evanescent world
As the holy Guru affirmed, immutable, eternal.¹
Real her love for him, be the world as false as this
man affirmed.

His exhortation she rejected.
Next her mother a *Yogi* called in,
One in *Hatha-Yoga* an adept,
Her daughter the path to show.
His theme, sense-control, inner concentration.
A slit-eared *Yogi*, his message renunciation,
To Raj unacceptable sounded.

Renunciation of what ? how ?
To turn mendicant as did Gopi Chand and
Bharthari,

Kings turned *Yogis* ?
This prospect instantly she spurned,
Love too he declared is false. Forget, efface it.
Rejecting him too, to her departed love she made
supplication

The true light to show her.

1. *Nihchalu sachu Khudāe eku Khudāe-banda abinashi.*
(*Maru Dakhne M. V*)

As deep in thought she sat, came running to her
The loyal maid Radha, sister of her soul,
And announced, 'Madam, three Sikhs of our late
lord's land of Punjab
Here have arrived.

Music their skill, the Guru's hymns they sing.
Itinerant preachers, here a night they stay,
Departing tomorrow.

Seeing an instant light, the Rani implored Radha
These holy choristers to call to her,
Who the solace and joy of the Guru's Word would
bring.

Soon the three came, and bowing reverently
To the Rani, a true Sikh's spouse, greetings they
offered

In style that among the Sikhs prevailed,
With *Fateh*, hands folded.

Then, at the Rani's entreaty, *kirtan*¹ they performed,
Chanting the Guru's Word. Their instruments
they tuned,

And resounding with holy melody, from Guru
Arjan's Vār

In Ramkali they sang, expressive of deep devotion
And self-surrender solely to the Lord.²

Absorbed in ecstasy of the theme, with reiteration
of line and syllable,

Transmuted to music itself, singing they continued.

1. Holy singing

2. Based on *Ustati ninda Nanakji main habh vanjai chhoriya
habh kith tiyagi. Sabhe sāk kurawe dithe tau pallai taindai
lāgi*

With this music was the Rani transported,
Her spirit heavenward ascending.
The image resplendent of holy Guru Govind, lord
of the plume

Before her mind's eye was formed,
As sang on the choristers, into *samadhi* they fell,
The instruments from their hands dropping.
Around the Rani's mind an illumination spread,
An atmosphere all of beauty compact.
The universe the Divine harmony appeared to chant.
Thus passed some time, till all from ecstasy emerged.
Now came the evening, time the Guru's *Rahiras*¹
to chant.

Fairy songsters from heaven appeared the holy
chant to utter

Earth, fire, air, Indra with the deities
Pandits, Rishis, denizens of *swarga*, earth and the
nether world,

Heroes mighty, the universe entire, all, all
In a universal chorus seemed engaged.²

Then chanted the choristers from the holy *Granth*
Another hymn, *Charan saran dayal Thakur ān
nahin jae*,

Breathing fervour of devotion, surrender of self to
the Lord.³

At close of *Rahiras* saw the Rani all holy denizens of
the sky.

1. The evening service

2. This is the theme of the hymn 'Sodar', forming part of
Japuji and standing at the opening of *Rahiras*

3. Kanara M. V. 41

Hands folded, to the Guru's hymn making obeisance,
Till flashed on her the theme that to her revealed
the secret

Of the holy Guru's message :
In holy congregation comes fulfilment and liberation.¹
The night coming on, in the Palace the choristers
stayed.

As came dawn, the *Vār in Aśa* measure they chanted,
Heralding the morning's service.
This to the Rani further solace brought with joy in
fulfilment.

Holy music to her spouse united her,
Her thirsting yearning assuaged,
And to her the true secret revealed
Of the spiritual life.

1. *Mere Madhoji sati sangati milei so tariya*

21

TO THE HOLY CONGREGATION

In aching memory of her Lord passed the Rani's
days,
Lamenting that in this world of suffering leaving
her, had he departed.
In this state an artist from Kashmir to the palace
came,
Who earlier was commissioned her lord to paint.
The painting now finished, a superb piece of art
he brought,
That Surat Singh on houseback showed,

The picture of splendid heroism befitting Guru
Govind's soldier.

As the palace warden the painter approached,
Radha he met.
To her his work he showed, imploring entry to the
Rani.

Radha the portrait to the Rani carried,
With account of the artist and his delay in finishing
it.

The grief-stricken Rani, as her lord she beheld on
canvas,

Splendid as in life, into a coma fell
From grief renewed.

Long in this state she stayed, till by Radha revived
With aromatic herbs.

From her sleep waking, the Rani, as the portrait
she beheld,

A prompting, an inspiration felt; to *Sati-sang*,
The holy congregation guiding her.

Evening was now falling, yet resolved she the
Sati-sang to join,

In the cave by the Fairy indicated.

In the dark with Radha to the cave she set off,
Fearless, by inspiration guided.

As some way they proceeded, came rain, wind and
thunder

With fury unprecedented that shelterless found
them.

Undeterred they proceeded, but the elements' fury
exhausted them

And senseless they fell.

The rain abated, yet continued their state of
exhaustion.

Early dawn now it was, the ambrosial hour,
Wherein the Guru's devotees to the holy assembly
repair

The Lord's praises to chant.

As one of the congregation, a disciple of the Guru,
Angelic in nature, chanting holy hymns

To the cave was repairing, two figures lying he
saw.

Stopping, their pulses he felt, and in them found
life,

Faint but not extinct.

Help from within the cave he called,

And inside lifted them.

Beyond the rock was a noble temple of the Guru
With the holy *Granth* therein installed,

Where daily was held the *Divan*.¹

This was a secret spot, in times when Sikhs

By their foes were hunted and pursued,

And in secret for their prayers forgathered.

Here were the Rani and Radha carried,

Where with help of female members of the
congregation

Were they revived.

The inmates recalled her lord's words

Who her visit had foretold, a saint's prophecy
fulfilled.

As in deep sleep she lay, a vision of her Lord she saw

1. Sikh congregational gathering

Who to her offered with tender hands medicine
restorative

And to joy of union called her.

In this state long she lay, slowly her dream melted.

Her vision faded, and sorrowful was she left,

Even as the holy Guru Nanak, in *Wadhans*,

As the vision Divine faded from dreaming eyes :

'In dream he came and departed,

Leaving my eyes tear-filled'.

As arising from her dream her eyes the Rani lifted,

The *Divan* she beheld, but vanished had her lord.

To the *Var* in Asa' she lay listening.

Fearful, to the prayerful hymns she listened,

Till was *Ardās*' performed.

Then followed the holy *Hukam* from the Book,

Whereafter a venerable figure the discourse
delivered

From the text of the *Granth*.

The venerable elder thereafter to her came, and said,

With eyes compassionate and a voice deep in
sympathy :

'This the holy centre by your lord founded

The Guru's *Sati-sang* to perform.

All your doubts discard; this the holy Guru's *darbar*;

All contentions here are resolved'.

1. *Wadhans M. 1.3 Supne alya bhi gaya main jal bhariya*
rae

2. A part of the Sikh morning service

3. Supplication to the Lord

Raj then, head bent with folded hands the benedic-
tion uttered :

'Blessed is this spot where my lord the tree of *Sati-*
sang planted.

Blessed am I today, a new life have I found.

Reverend father, bless that I humble, meritless

With my lord find union here.'

Replied the elder : 'Noble lady, queen of this realm,

In deep love immersed, not easy is this to achieve.

But almighty is *Sati-sang*

That frequently you must join,

And pray for your distress to be relieved.

For long from home are you absent;

Pray return to your noble mother, deep in anguish.

For a few days rest, then daily the *Sati-sang* join,

When shall be revealed the mystery

Where your beloved lord is;

How the distance between you twain to remove'.

Replied the Rani, 'Reverend father,

A boon to beg of you am I come,

Not as queen of this realm, but a humble beggar.

In the Fairy palace got I the message from the saintly
lady,

The *Sati-sang* to visit.

Play, grant union that I yearn for'.

As arose the Asa chant, the Rani felt blessed.

Radha in devotion immersed, in a higher sphere
disported,

Till day came and both towards home departed.

THE SUPPLICATION

Came the night, star-studded, beauteous in extreme.
 The Rani in her mother's lap lay, in love wrapped,
 Radha gently her feet massaging.
 As the early night wore on, the Rani in deep
 musings fell,
 Her thoughts on *Sati-sang* fixed, whose joy her spirit
 had inundated.
 Her self in joyful ecstasy fallen, to the body too
 this joy did permeate.
 As she lay, yet the thought of love oppressed her,
 And her empty life.

Sati-sang yet fulfilment had not brought,
As thought of bread fulfilment to the hungry brings
not.

Between the urge for self-surrender to devotion and
love

Lay the Rani.

Then flashed lightning in the dark night,
Which the Rani supplicated to carry her to the realms
above

With her love to have union.

Muttering in piercing plaintive tones
Thus long she continued.

This to her mother's lips brought wailing, to Radha's
eyes tears,

Her suffering overwhelming both.

Wailed she : 'Mother dear, in your lap hide me,
A sinful one. Lament I raise to him,
Who knows all. Better than I is the moth
That on the flame falls and dies.

Pray, pray for me for Divine forgiveness.

Wail and writhe I, while the holy Guru
Poise and patience has commended.

Prayer, supplication for forgiveness me can alone
absolve'.

Her mother, at her suffering in deep distress,
In supplication stood, hands folded —

Supplication that all contentions resolves

And to those alienated brings union.

Supplication the bodily self to the Formless Absolute
unites,

Under Divine protection placing it.

By supplication are burnt away heaps of sins;
It purifies the heart as fire the impurity in
sugar cauldron.

Between the self and the Lord the gap by supplica-
tion is removed,

To the Divine Court raising it.

Maya veils supplication lifts, duality removing,
And the self to the Divine lotus feet guiding.

What is supplication ?

First the guidance of the holy Gurus to seek,
Then the dedicated devotees to recall to mind.

The heart melted in prayer then face to face with the
Lord stands.

Then seek we resignation to the Divine will,
And weal of all creation.

Supplication the swarms of sins expels,
Fulfilment conferring.

Let man raise supplication as infant to parent,
So the Divine parental love caress it.

The Lord ever, like loving father and mother is
gracious,

Yet for self-purification should we lift hands in
prayer.

So stood the mother in prayer :

'Holy Lord ! I a thoughtless woman

For my child lift prayer to you.

Our sins disregarding, show grace,

Her heart's desire grant'.

Thus uttering her prayer both to sleep repaired.

23

TO SATI-SANG

As came dawn's amrbosial time, the watchman cried
the hour.

Radha rising, her mistress shook awake, that to
Sati-sang they go,

As already resolved.

Then taking bath

The Rani by a secret door from the Palace emerged,
And in Radha's company for the cave set out,

Where the devout in *Sati-sang* assembled.

To seek the Divine mystery did she go,

Even as a salt-doll to the ocean its secrets to explore.

The Rani in spiritual thoughts was immersed.
Radha the devoted maid through service sincere
That pinnacle sought to reach that from devotion
comes,

Never goes sincere service in vain, as the holy have
averred.

As in *Sati-sang's* holy company they sat,
The chief of the devout there thus accosted her :
'Blessed, noble lady is your devotion.

As after devotion are your doubts lifted,
Shall perfection dawn on you'.

Replied Raj : 'Our noble guide,
A female full of blemishes am I.

My sole supplication to you is,
With my departed lord grant me union'.
With this her eyes tear-filled became
And in touching tone she spake :
'Holy devotee, father! in the name of the Lord
of the Plume'

I beseech you again, for an instant his sight show
me,

At which would I sacrifice myself.

Her pathos the hearts of the congregation pierced
With deepened sympathy, who in her saw
The very embodiment of devoted love.

Resumed the Rani in plaintive tone:

'In your grace the sight of my lord grant me.

For his sake my sins forgive.

Impure is my sight, like rain on trees wash it pure,
And to my gross sight reveal him.

I. Attributive reference to Guru Gobind Singh

To you makes this supplication his wife
Whom all here in such reverence hold.
This she begs of you all, holy members of the
congregation

To grant.

A female bereft of her lord like the *Koonj*¹ wails
In tears and sighs. Pray show her grace;
His sight grant'.

With this into a fit she fell,
At which the congregation filled with awed reverence
At her devotion, thought how solace to bring her.
As a few moments after she revived,
Her entreaty she repeated.

The congregation's head, a devoted Sikh of the Guru,
The very image of poise and peace,
Thus counselled her :
'Respected Rani Raj, put not your heart in shaking
pain.

In *Sati-sang* are you, where ended is all suffering;
All alienations to union turned'.

At which words was her heart hope-filled,
With cautious hope, subdued—
Hope, human life's sustainer,
Which when shattered, leaves the body as dead.
Into bitter medicine honey it dissolves;
To those under the surgeon's knife,
Joy it brings.

To life is it strength, to the mind's kite the sustaining
string;

To lovers alienated the message of life.

1. The Indian crane, reputed in folklore to wail piteously

Addressed her the holy head thus :

'Your love, noble lady, to leadership of *Sati-sang*
Entitles you.

Take what your noble lord left, the keys of *Sati-sang*,

The rubies and jewels to it pertaining'.

The Rani in deepest humility replied :

'Unworthy am I of such honour.

To me even a blade of grass by his feet touched
Is a jewel.

Seek I not the jewels by him left.

To me serving at his feet is all the wealth I seek.
More valued to me is his sight,

That you graciously promised to show'.

The saint in deep contemplation falling,

The holy Guru's Word recalling

Of wife-like devotion of the self to the Lord,

Thus spoke : 'One that bounty seeks,

Of the Donor forgetful grows.

Noble it is the Divine Donor of blisses to con-
template

And not alone His bounty.

What for you lies here, to your lord shall lead you.

How the way to him to find? This by His bounty
is found.

Your love till now, sincere, devoted

Your heart has purified.

In *Sati-sang* lies the way to him, that to you shall
be revealed'.

Blessing him, said the Rani,

'Pray reveal the path; speak not to me in tones of
mystery,

A simple female of little understanding,
Strayed from the path.

Reveal the path and my suffering annul.

To the land I seek, the land of my lord, point the way.

To the loving wife all is alien land

Other than her lord's.

As sunshine with the sun,

Moonlight with the moon,

The flow with the breeze—

Even so does the wife with the husband abide.

The wife like the stream is

That forsaking the mountain top, passing through
plains

Her spouse, the ocean seeks.

Thus beseech you I,

To my lord's lappet attach me.'

The holy man in soft tone then spake :

'Think noble lady, of the holy Guru's Word

Wherein our true abode he indicates

Not here, but in the hereafter.'

Of that must we ever think.

Not this evanescent home is ours,

But that where your lord is gone.

How to meet him, as you yearn?

Know my daughter, this secret :

Be you as he was, his achievement fulfil—

Thereby to him shall you make approach,

Be united'.

Hearing this, the Rani, her mind awakened,

Deeply thanked him and beseeched,
 'Show me the path, reveal the way
 That his land I reach.

Ignorant I am, in your grace the way to me point.
 Said the holy man : 'The path is the path of devotion.
 Gone to the next world is your lord.

Not by this physical frame can he be met,
 But by dying to the world, to be as dead, like him
 to be.

From such death arises life.

By dying thus shall you find the way'.

The lady, all attention in love, thus beseeched him.
 'Holy saint of God! confer on me such death and the
 life after;

Such power to you is vouchsafed.'

Replied the holy man : 'The power with the holy
 Guru alone lies,

Whose vision to you I repeat.

Know, your lord Surat Singh was the Guru's perfect
 disciple.

While living, in *Sach-Khand* he abided through doing
 good;

From one *Sach-Khand* into the other *Sach-Khand* he
 travelled.

Know, noble lady, *Sach-Khand* in this world itself
 may be attained,

In the body's life itself.

While living with the Guru, in *Sach-Khand* we live.

This *Sach-Khand* in which we live, of matter is not
 made.

The Lord in all realms abides, that by *Sach-Khand*
 are surrounded.

This, as said the holy Guru Nanak, is a hard concept—
 Hard as steel its narrative.

As the holy Word in your self is lodged,
 Shall *Sach-Khand* your abode become.

In this abides also Surat Singh.

Noble Rani ! in this you too seek abode.

There is a union that ends never.

The union of bodies is evanescent, to separation
 subject.

This visible world an illusion,

The union in spirit alone is real.

Approach to this mystery our understanding cannot
 make,

By intuition is this realized.

Through intuition is the veil lifted and separation
 annulled.

All creation, know, is of the Divine Essence,
 Spirit, not dead matter.

In all creation is He pervasive,

All in Him united as flowers on the string.

Invisible is this universal harmony,

By illusion's veil concealed.

Of this illusion's malady the medicine in contem-
 plation lies.

As is contemplation confirmed, love it becomes,
 Inviting Divine grace.

So, noble lady, the first step is

Ever the Lord's laudation to sing.

The Lord, by His attributes surrounded,

With us, His creation is in love,

Love His essence;
 Love the distance removes,
 Merging all in Him.
 Laudation of the Lord, as says the holy Guru Nanak,
 Makes one a king of kings.¹
 With contemplation, meditation and singing of
 laudation is error by grace removed,
 And union comes about.
 This, noble Raj, is the path by the Guru revealed'.

24

DUTY—THE PATH TO UNION

Still unconsolated, the holy man she beseeched
 To grant her union, to which he answered :
 'Noble lady, between self and self the bond is
 love,
 That comes not by praxis, but is a force within the
 self.
 Service performed to the congregation, is an emblem
 of service to humanity.
 Service your departed lord performed; service you
 too must perform,
 Whereby shall the path of union be opened.

Seva¹ is beginning of the Sikh's discipline;
 But must it be disinterested, without thought of gain,
 No bargain in *seva* is involved.
 Said the holy Guru Nanak :
 By service in this world
 May one obtain a seat at the Portal Divine'.²
Seva another noble aspect takes,
 Which is according to one's station service to perform,
 With mind poised.
 What, noble lady is the service due from you ?
 God in His grace on you royal authority has
 conferred,

That certain duties involves,
 Contemplate its duties, and justice maintain
 As accurate as in weighing balance.
 Know the public to be God's children
 And cherish it.
 Justice with love dispense.
 Lady, in this lies true service to God.
 Take not the people to be your servitors,
 But a flock to be tended.
 Wealth that in the state lies,
 Take as a sacred trust.
 For the public weal must it be spent,
 For bringing good to the mass.
 Such, lady is the holy Guru's teaching.
 The taxes by the rulers gathered, must like the rain-
 clouds be spent
 To keep all alive.

1. Service
 2. Siri Raga 33

Must the ruler build roads, lay gardens, dig wells
 and cisterns;
 For the sick build hospitals;
 For widows and the disabled shelters.
 Then must he guard the people
 Against marauders, cut-throats, burglars.
 To dispense justice must he appoint just judges,
 Men of noble character.
 The ruler above sectarian rancour must stand,
 Protect traders.
 After necessary comfort must he also engage in
 devotion.
 To protect the people must he chastize wrong-doers.
 The worthy must he reward, the skilled encourage.
 Justice fair and impartial must his watchword be.
 What said the holy Guru Nanak on royal duty ?
 'The king's vow is justice, that with truth must he
 contemplate.'
 Thus must the king maintain his rule;
 Else is he a recusant, of the Guru unapproved.
 Now, noble lady, your lord contemplate.
 The rule of justice he maintained, *dharma* he per-
 formed.
 The true king ever of the Lord should be mindful.
 In the heart of such is lodged the Lord.
 You too lady, take to his path,
 Spontaneously do good.
 Your lord to the *Panth*¹ and God did service render.
 In service to the *Panth* his life he sacrificed,

1. Var Majh 7
 2. Stands for the Sikh commonwealth

Fighting against tyranny.

In midst of battle God he kept before his mind,
Without a tremor departed.

Know, noble queen, the true path of Sikhism.
In it none a recluse may turn, leaving home
Nor torment the body as do anchorites.

In the householder's life, fixed amid duty
Must a Sikh to God be attached.

This amid polluting *Maya* is to live unpolluted,
The Divine will to obey, thus gladly to live.

By immersion in the Name is the self ascendant.
To overcome desire, egoism to cast off

Is essence of the Sikh's praxis.

Let the deeper mind to the holy Word be attuned;
Under shelter of the Lord live your life.

Let such your life be : 'All action to tend towards
good,

All utterance truthful,

All thinking pure.

In the heart of such a one abides *Sach-Khand*.

As this body he discards, to *Sach-Khand* proceeds.
Thereto has your noble spouse gone.

You too his path must follow, there to enter'.

By this teaching of the holy man was the Rani struck
with wonder.

Hard appeared the path,

Yet was it the path to her Lord to lead.

Thinking of her weakness wailed she :

'Lord! a poor swimmer am I,

How this ocean may I swim ?

Neither can I row, nor have raft or pilot to my ship.

Were I a fish, would I swim to you.

You, pray I, buoy me up, to yourself draw me.

Without flying wings am I, how ever this distance
to fly?

Were that someone wings were to me to grant
Thus to fly.¹

Grace, grace I beg that you pray show me —
Grace is your noble nature's law.'

Seeing her piteous state, the holy man thus consoled
her :

'Noble lady, be not assailed by doubt,
But in faith be firm.

As you enter endeavour's field,

The *Sangat*, holy congregation radiant shall be.

Know lady, the Sikh's conduct, the ideal in you
abides.

No heart you break, nor falsehood utter.

Charity you dispense, and your wealth on the public
weal expend.

Justice you maintain without guile,
Nor into fits of temper fly.

Sweet humility you have and noble content.

Your senses under the mind's discipline lie;

Your mind, to noble thinking subjected.

Your love no inordinate excess knows,

But is of the essence of wisdom.

Your absorption in it the result of sudden grief,

So also your worship of the statue and the sepulchre,

Which now discarding, the path of duty you take.

Now with mind poised, your duty you perform

1. Reference to the Guru's yearning in the Holy *Granth*,
Sloka 21, (*Slokas* M. V)

As Sikh and queen.
 The congregation hereby blesses you.
 The Lord to you is gracious,
 With noble qualities endowing you.
 Shake not, but be steady—
 Fulfilment to you shall come.

25

THE GURUMUKH' STATE THROUGH SATI-SANG ATTAINED

On hearing such exhortation was Raj into absorption
 fallen,

Wherein her Lord's figure she saw, sweetly smiling,
 And beckoning her to follow
 The path by the holy man indicated.
 As from her absorption she emerged,
 Thus spake to her the holy mentor :
 'Noble lady, to attain to the *Gurumukh's* state,
 highest of all

1. One turned Godward, the complete devotee

For you is not hard.
 The holy Guru Nanak this has delineated,
 Marking a three-fold duty.
 In *Siddha-Goshti* thus has he revealed it.¹
 The first is *Ishnān*, holy bath.
 This is to keep the body and its vestures clean;
 To keep the mind pure
 As pellucid spring water;
 To be humble and not arrogant like the mound
 Nothing on which grows.
 The *bath* of the mind thus is delineated:
 To keep the mind from foul thoughts free,
 By submission to Divine guidance.
 To keep the mind free from idle play,
 To fix faith in one's self.
 That the essence of the *Divine* is, and not matter
 merely :
 This all is 'bath of the self' that the *Gurumukh*
 performs.
 Next, lady, is *Dān*—giving away, charity.
 To give to the needy food, curative herbs, water,
 clothing;
 To succour widows, orphans, the destitute.
 The mind's charity it is to seek good to do;
 The soul's, to do good and not proclaim it,
 To do it in the spirit *nishkāṁ*.²
 To impart wisdom, enlightenment, devotion.
 Rising higher, nothing does the *Gurumukh* reckon
 his own —

1. In Stanza 36; *Gurumukhi Nāmu Dānu Ishnān*

2. In a disinterested spirit

Neither substance nor progeny,
 But good spontaneously imparts as fragrance the
 flower.
 As is the self purified, giving donation on it grows
 as habit.
 One *Maya*-bound seeks ever to take, to grasp,
 Or bargains to make even of charity.
 Those risen higher recompense never seek.
 In fine as the noble saint Kabir, in a *Sloka*¹ has
 affirmed,
 Nothing is ours, all is the Lord's.
 As ascends the self higher, the habit to give grows.
 The highest charity forgiveness is.
 The holy give away even out of poverty,
 Impart spiritual light.
 Such charity with the immortal Lord confers union.
 Such giving spontaneous is, from *Sahaj*² arising.
 Last, lady comes *Nām*, the pinnacle of these three.
Nām is the Lord's manifestation, His epiphany,
 As sunlight is of the Sun.
 To have sunlight is the Sun to attain :
 Thus to attain *Nām* is the Bearer of the Name to
 attain.
 The Lord without form or feature is,
 Above the Three Qualities, Reality Pure,
 That views but is not visible.
 What is visible may loved be —
 How with the invisible to form love ?
 Know lady, to remember is to love.

1. Slokas of Kabir, 203

2. The state of spiritual poise

As the object beloved before our eyes is,
 We wish it ever there to remain.
 But then from our view it moves,
 With love is it recalled.
 Such is the love the creature to the Creator bears.
 This remembrance¹ that is love, is *Nām*.
 The saintly give it another Name, *Simran*,
 That is, lovingly to remember.
 This remembrance in utterance of the Name lies,
 As also in lovingly over it to ruminate.
Nām thus remembered, the self richly irrigates,
 Whereby is understanding purified,
 And wisdom attained above the mind's reach.
 Poise, joy, bliss then is attained,
 Divine truth then in the mind is reflected,
 As moonlight in pond still and calm.
 Then is cast off egoism.
 As says the holy Guru:
 'Egoism to *Nām* is opposed; both in one spot abide
 not.'

Nām abiding in the self, with the Lord,
 Bearer of the Name union provides.

Nām lodging in the self four functions performs:
 The self it purifies; concentration gives,
 Brings joy and bliss, and last
 With the Bearer of the Name union provides.
 By meditation on the Name is attained the Supreme
 And *Nirvāṇa* achieved.

1. Skt. Smaran—*Simran* is a term well-known in Sikh philosophy
2. Wadhans M. III. 9. *Haṁsai Navain, nāl virodh hai dui na*
wasahin ik thāien

Know Rani, in the Guru's teaching the interval
 Between utterance of the Name and union
 As *Nām* is designated.
 By attainment of these three boons of *Nām*, *Dān*
 and *Ishnān*,
 Is the *Gurumukh's* self purified,
 And from the palpable world of *Maya* himself
 he knows
 To be emancipated.
 Lust for possessions from his mind cast off,
 Egoism gone, and the self purified to the Lord
 united'.
 Hearing this, deeply meditative, the Rani a query
 made :
 'When ego is surrendered, does self the state of
 nescience enter ?
 Are its actions then all unconscious'.
 The holy man thus replied : 'This a subtle query
 That only those with realization can answer.
 Nonetheless know, as the top fast-revolving looks
 still
 And intense light the vision obstructs,
 Even so in union does the self act as Divinely-willed,
 Not unconsciously.
 Like a spark of fire in ashes lying buried,
 Burning a heap of fuel,
 Or a drop of water purified,
 Not lost, but only dormant lies.
 Those merged in the Lord in a wondrous world abide,
 To which apply not everyday's categories.
 Another analogy take this marvel to realize.

As comes day, starlight into sunlight is merged, not lost.

So with union is the self merged, not lost.

So also a lamp in daylight—its light merged, not extinct.

As is an instrument played, and notes from the strings arise,

United a harmony they create, different from each one,

But die not.

Or iron touching the magnet,

Dies not but to it is united.

Other ways may this be illustrated:

As is the individual essence into the Supreme Essence merged,

Is it not lost, but a higher life finds.

Analogies lady, explain not the truth in perfection.

These by space and time are limited,

And so illustrate not the limitless, the timeless.

Another truth, lady is: the Lord is compassion incarnate,

So also are His devotees in compassion suffused.

Merged in Him, never are they parted,

Even though to save the burning world

Oftentimes incarnation they assume.

As their destined good is performed, departure they take,

And ever in Him abide.

As the Rani to these spiritual marvels listened,

An unearthly wonder gripped her soul,

And in ecstasy before the holy *Granth* prostrate she fell.

Rising, the holy man humbly she beseeched to guide her

Along the path that to the Light leads

In which abides her lord.

SEEKING UNIVERSAL WEAL

Touched with her humility said the holy man :
 Listen Raj, exalted ruler of this realm:
 Our holy teachers two kinds of enjoyment have
 revealed :

The first is the enjoyment of senses,
 That is sharp but evanescent,
 Leaving mind and body exhausted.
 The joy in God of another kind is —
 Its base is pure loving devotion.
 This by attuning the mind to the Lord comes.
 This joy comes when our senses inward turn.

With this the self in wondrous joy is suffused.
 When comes this joy, bodily joys pall.
 With this becomes the body light,
 The self uplifted, from egoism's odour freed.
 From the mind this joy to the limbs does permeate,
 The heart for more and more of it yearning.
 Those enjoying it perpetuity of it seek,
 But different is the Lord's will,
 Which is that the holy in the world abide,
 Yet to Him keep united.
 The Divine will is that to the world they bring good,
 While in holy joy remaining immersed;
 That like the rose in the garden their fragrance they
 scatter,
 Spontaneously while in joy wrapped.
 Thus the holy while in devotion wrapped,
 Their minds in ascendance maintain.
 This perpetual vigilance necessitates;
 This to the self strength imparts.
 In this state is the self risen higher above phenomena,
 Yet not in egoistic pride :
 By phenomena untouched, as duck's wings in water.
 One in this state ever should be prayerful,
 Seeking devotion to *Nām* and ascendancy of spirit,
 By holy Nanak's blessings.¹
 In life lady, comes sorrow no less than joy;
 Then is the mind shaken, upset, its joy fleeing.
 One to Divine joy attuned
 Unshaken these bears as the mountain the storm.

1. In *Arāṭī*, the Sikh prayer occurs the phrase : *Nanak Nām chardāī kālā*

Another prop to such would be the Master's shield,
 resignation.
 Thus is this joy perpetuated,
 All impediments notwithstanding.
 Submission to the will Divine helps Divine joys'
 perpetuation.
 Then are the world's sorrows besides our own.
 This of universal manifestation is.
 The world of strife, evil, wrath is full.
 At sight of it the holy with compassion are filled,
 And such suffering seek to annul.
 Immersed in joy yet for universal weal they pray.¹
 Such by thought, word and deed seek good to
 perform.
 Submission to the will Divine from shaking saves
 them,
 And to doing good inspires them, the very rain-
 clouds of good.
 In *Sukhmani* as says the holy Guru :
 'The God-enlightened to altruism are inspired!'
 Hence noble lady, the *Gurumukh* while in the
 world abiding,
 To do universal good seeks.
 Suffering from egoism comes, that spreads the veil
 'Tween self and the Creator.
 The holy Guru to a wall has likened it.
 To fulfil body's needs must man make endeavour;
 But of these to have excess is greed,

1. Conclusion of the Sikh prayer, *Tere bhane sarbat ka bhala*
 (By Thy grace may universal weal prevail)
 2. *Brahm-gyant par-upkār umāhā*

That to evil-doing leads.
 Man his separate being has from others,
 Which to selfishness gives increase.
 Thereby is good on the decrease.
 Such live sequestered, sequestered they die
 In torment great and terror.
 While living, such from the Lord by egoism
 alienated keep—
 By operation of *Karma's* law, suffering to them
 comes,
 Around them the wall of falsehood.¹
 The devout their body's needs in ways of loving
 fulfil,
 In spirit of brotherhood.
 Some the doers of good with evil visit,
 But these, though suffering,
 Forgive and understand them as poor beings ego-
 gripped,
 In mind's vision disease-stricken.
 By the abuses of such are not the good tormented,
 And in equanimity their calumny bear,
 Returning not evil for evil,
 But for universal weal praying.
 As the self in *Nām* is immersed,
 All it feels is the Lord's doing, itself an agent only,
 The self Divine shelter seeking.
 As arises such feeling, is the self to spreading good
 given;
 As rain-cloud, spiritual life dispensing.
 Error, noble lady, two separate forms takes:

Forgetfulness of God and egoism.
 Devotion alone to these the antidote,
 That with the Lord brings union.
 Love its principle of action, the *yoga* of love;
 Not the slit-eared *yoga* of *hatha*,
 But *Raj-yoga* that from absorption in the Name
 comes.
Yoga lady, is union, union with the Lord-Creator.
 Such a one in *yoga* Divine succour gets,
 His mind uplifted—
 Unattached though a householder,
 Depressed never, with mind ever in poise.
 Such a one the true *Jivan-mukta*.¹
 The Lord he views as love,
 In each being pervasive.
 From such an enlightened one rains grace,
 Goodness like rose's fragrance.
 In union with the Lord lies our perfection,
 And abode in *Sach-Khand*—
 The actions of such *Dharma*-inspired,
 From egoism freed, in the Lord's will abiding.
 In the spirit ascendant such a one abides,
 To life in this world and the next true.
 This bliss, lady by absorption in the Name comes.
 How with the holy to find union?
 This noble lady, by emulating their merits comes,
 By lodging faith in mind,
 And cherishing in heart love for the Lord.
 Cherish in mind firm faith
 In the Lord, our cherisher and provider.

ACTION ENJOINED UPON THE GURUMUKH

This teaching into a transport of wonder sent the
 Rani,
 Who for long pondering it, her head before the holy
Granth bowed,
 And to members of the congregation her bene-
 diction addressed.

'Grace infinite on me, one unworthy has descended',
 Whereafter the holy Guru's hymn of thanksgiving
 at close of the Book she sang.¹
 Thereafter the holy man his exhortation resumed :

1. *Tera kita jāto nāhin mainūn jog kitoi*

'Let not the mind under the Master's shelter shake.
Thoughtless are we creatures, the Lord-Creator
alone infallible,

Who to the erring the right path indicates.
Lady, to the way of combating demoniac forces
have you listened.

This is not the end—hard it is to live up to it.

This holy teaching lady, may I now reiterate:

The true congregation is Guru-oriented;

The holy *Granth* the true Guru.

Listening to the holy Word the mind's impurity
removes,

And in joy the mind suffuses.

Enlightenment it brings, and with the holy Creator
Communion of the self establishes.

Next is the stage of action.

By the Word is man to the godly condition raised.

As says the holy Guru in *Japuji*,

One inspired to sing God's praise

Is verily king over kings.'

Twofold is the duty enjoined:

Divine laudation to sing, and by the Master's
guidance

Enlightenment to achieve, whereby comes absorp-
tion in Truth.

Bringer of bliss is holy congregation,

For which supplication in *Ardās* is made.

Ardās to the Lord uplifts the self.

Beg, beg of the Lord noble gifts,

And to no mortal your supplication address.

What is it best to beg ? Devotion to the Name.
To the Lord for His gifts thanksgiving ever render.
Nām, devotion to it is the true wealth.

Nām is *amrita*, conferrer of immortality.

Let your tongue ever taste it, your heart ever in it be
immersed.

When *Nām* the self permeates, transcending under-
standing,

With the Lord comes union.

Never, May I reiterate, from the holy congregation
be alienated,

That is citadel of the believer.

The world lady, to evil draws us,

From which *Sati-sang* is the saviour,

Our life's prop providing.

Says the saintly Farid in the holy Book,

As cross the heroes the stream, the faint-hearted
female

Picks up courage.

This symbol language is, the female herein the
seeker.

Terrifying impediments by the holy are made-easy,
And the mind's maladies lifted.

Let man not have excess of sleep or food:

Thus is the body free from maladies kept.

Let the seeker others' calumny discard,

And all in love cherish.

Thus will the self spontaneously in good be fixed.

THE THANKSGIVING

The Rani, now with enlightenment filled,
To the loftier regions her gaze lifted,
And to the spirit of her departed lord supplication
sent,

Seeking succour ever.

For the enlightenment on her conferred
Infinite thanks she rendered.

The holy man, mind ever wakeful, thus instructed
her :

‘To fix remembrance in the departed, lady, is
forbidden.

But to remember the holy who the world's
attractions transcended
Is blessed.

Harmful for the self is mourning,
That ever in the ascendant spirit should be kept.
To what is evanescent attach not your heart,
Adjured the holy Guru..

Your love lady, was for a saint's self,
That uplifting is.'

The lady, all humility, thus beseeched him:

'Sire ! should the heart, love-sick,

For his sight yearn, forgive me.

This like the *Koel's* cry would be

When rain-clouds gather'.

The holy man compassionate, his hand over her
head placing,

Blessed her :

'The true path have you now found.

Holy love with the Lord union brings about.

This the love that the true disciple must bear.

The love by Him inspired in His greatness shares,

Ever on the increase.

This by grace comes, and by Him is perfected.

In His grace the holy Nanak into the world He sent

And the ten Gurus, for our emancipation.

For this thanked be God'.

To the *Sati-sang* then thanksgiving the holy man
rendered

That blessing on him had conferred.

The lady, in an ecstasy of devotion fallen,

By the holy congregation was revived,

Which in spirit of utter humility she addressed,
saying :

'The dust of your feet, holy congregation

On my forehead may lie,

I that am unworthy in extreme'.

With this tears welled from her eyes

As holy Book's cot she reverently grasped.

An aged lady, member of *Sati-sang*

In her lap seated her, and to her sweetly spoke :

'The *Gurumukh* from egoism is ever free;

Humility to the Lord's feet uplifts.

The *Gurumukh* saves himself, saves others too;

United himself, others to union inspires.

The *Gurumukh* is like the ocean unfathomable,

Ever above desire arisen.

To ships of seekers the pilot'.

The Rani now was a changed self,

And laying by grief, to her duties as ruler turned.

Duty she deemed as worship, no break intervening.

Each hair on her body in the Name suffused.

In her departed lord's image herself she shaped,

And through devotion and duty with him found
union.

Her state now *Sahaj-Yoga*

And thus immersed, perfection on her settled.

APPENDIX

(The author at the end of his work, *Rana Surat Singh* has appended two charts outlining the course of spiritual ascent according to the teachings of Sikhism. These are reproduced here in a condensed form.)

Chart I

First Stage : *Banis*¹ to be recited daily:

Japuji, Rahiras, Kirtan Sohila (These are intended to give the mind concentration and poise and to still its wandering.)

1. Compositions taken out of the *Granth Sahib*

Second Stage: *Banis* for seeking fulfilment in earthly or other-worldly objectives :

1. For enhanced enlightenment :
Asa-ki-Var
2. For inducing dispassion towards the world (*Vairag*) : *Slokas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur.
3. For inspiring devotion :
Chhakke from the *Bani* of Sri Guru Ram Das in the Measure *Asa*. To these other hymns with similar themes may be added.
4. For enjoyment of spiritual bliss :
Anand, Sukhmani.

Third Stage: *Banis* to be recited out of pure feeling of devotion at any unspecified time or place, by spontaneous inspiration. *Sukhmani, Anand, Gauri Bawan-Akhhari, Chhakke in Asa* and any others that the mind may feel drawn towards.

Chart II

On Mantras

1. *Bij Mantra* is the seed-formula; from which the larger, expanded formula of God-adoration grows. This in *Gurubani* is *Ek Oankar* (The Sole Supreme Being, known as *Oankar*)
2. Its expanded form, *Māl Mantra* or the Root Formula stands at the head of *Japuji* and is

enuniciated as '*Ek Oankar, Sati Nām Karta Purakhu, Nirbhau, Nirvairu, Akal Murati, Ajāni, Saibhang, Guru-Prasadi*,' translated as :

'The Sole Supreme Being, Reality Eternal, Creator-Immanent Presence, Without Fear, Without Rancour, Form Eternal, Unincarnated, Self-Existent, Realized by the holy Preceptor's Grace.'

(This stands at the head of the *Guru Granth Sahib* and its blessing is invoked on all solemn and sacred occasions.)

3. The third category of *mantras* or words, phrases to be recited are the names of the Supreme Being as these occur in *Guru Granth Sahib* (These are Unattributive and Attributive in character.)
4. *Guru-Mantra*, the Supreme Name of God ; *Wah-Guru* (The wonderful Lord). This the new initiate to Sikhism is made to utter repeatedly.
5. *Nām* (God's holy Name), especially in the ambrosial hour of dawn is contemplated or repeated or silently uttered. This process to be continued in all states even while working.
6. While contemplating or repeating *Nām*, the mind should be in a state of perfect concentration.
7. The conduct of one devoted to *Nām* should be characterized by human sympathy, forgiveness, justice, dispassion towards the world (*Vairag*) and the awakened mind (*Vivek*).
8. *Nām* should induce remembrance of God and His attributes. The devotee thereby should

- seek to find lodgement in the Divine Essence.
9. The seeker should seek shelter with God, the Bearer of the Name, and in life and death live in *Sach-Khand*, which is the Realm Eternal of the Divine Presence, wherefrom are all effects of *maya* or worldliness banished. Ultimately this should lead to the seeker's union with the Divine Essence.