

brings out this truth in the following *kafi* in his own inimitable style:

Hail! the rose garden of earth is wondrous!
 The apparel is of earth, the steed is of earth;
 And of earth is the rider.
 The earth makes the earth flee;
 Of earth is all clamor.
 Earth is at war with earth;
 Of earth are all weapons.
 The earth with much earth over it,
 Is the earth full of pride.
 Earth has come to behold earth,
 Of earth is all splendor.
 That which laughed and played is earth again;
 It now sleeps with legs outstretched.
 O Bullah, if you were to solve this mystery,
 You would cast aside your ego and pride.

Some other *kafis* which emphasize the same truth, i.e., the transitory nature of physical existence and reminders to man not to idle away precious time, start with the following opening lines :

1. Dust will mingle with dust!
 How illusive are power and vanity!
2. The night is over! The stars have waned.
 Wake up, O ye dear traveler!

1. We also find similar quotations in the Bible: All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again to dust. (Job 34:15)
 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. (Eccl. 3:20)
 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. (Eccl. 12:7) (see also p. 206)

Quoting verses from the holy *Qura'n*, he stresses that man is "the top of all creation." God's own light shines in him. He should not waste his time in frivolity. He must know himself :

1. You have been made worthy to go back to heaven.¹
You have been given the top status in all creation.
2. O man, look, how high is the position I have given you!

To attain the high position which God has ordained for him, he should concentrate on the meditation of the Lord. For such meditation Bulleh Shah uses the analogy of spinning. In his *kafis* the spinning wheel is the symbol for the human body; and the act of spinning stands for meditation. In the following *kafi* he impresses upon man the extreme privilege that God has showered on him by giving him the human body, and it becomes incumbent on him to make full use of this rare gift :

Put your mind in spinning, O girl!
The spinning wheel you have got free.
You have paid nothing to obtain it.
You do not realize its immense value,
For you have got it so easily!
This wheel has a heavy price!
What would you know, O you rustic girl?
You are haughty and you strut in conceit,
Enveloped in your own self-importance.
Why have you let such a wheel go waste?
Why have you thrown it on a rubbish heap?
Ever since it came into your hands,
You did not ply it for a moment, O girl!
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

1. True home; ultimate destination.

A number of *kafis* have been written by Bulleh Shah on the transitoriness of this world. He compares it to a caravan-serai, where people come and go in an unending stream. Here are a few examples from his writings :

1. This is your camping ground in a caravan-serai,
Where people come and go ceaselessly.
All your fellow travelers are ready to leave,
And still you do not hear the clarion call.
Wake up at least now, O you dear traveler!
2. Some are born, some die;
And this cycle goes on.
3. They all filled their pitchers,
and departed on their respective turns.
More have come to fill, some have filled
and are leaving;
And some are waiting with their arms outstretched.

In Persian mystic literature Rumi and Shams-i-Tabriz make remarkably similar statements:

1. Many a time like grass have I sprung;
Eighty-four (lakhs of) bodies have I seen.

Rumi

2. Hundreds of thousands of times we came into
and we went out of this caravan-serai.
For this is a workshop where people come and
go with great fanfare.

Shams-i-Tabriz

Guru Arjun Dev in the *Adi Granth* brings out the same truth :

1. For several births were you an insect and a moth,
For several births an elephant, a fish, a deer;
For several births were you a bird, a serpent.
For several births yoked as a bull, a horse.
Meet now the Lord, for now is the time.
After ages have you been given the human body.

M. 5., p. 176

2. Eighty-four lakhs of species are there in all;
To man is given the pride of place by God.
Whosoever slips from the top rung of this ladder,
He suffers the pain of ever coming and going.

M. 5., p. 1075

And, this is how Soami Ji¹ puts it :

This body that you have been given is a priceless gift.
You have attained it after going through
millions of births;
Now do not let it go waste without its proper use.
Contemplate on the Lord, and amass spiritual wealth.

Sar Bachan, p. 127

On the impermanence of life there is an interesting dialogue mentioned in the epic, *Mahabharat*. Yaksh asked Yudhister, "What is the most astonishing thing in the world?" Yudhister replied, "The strangest thing of the world is that people daily see others die, but everyone of them suffers from the delusion that he himself is going to live for ever. Death is meant only for others. The only certain thing in life is death, and the

1. Seth Shiv Dyal Singh, founder of the Radha Soami Faith.