

Annihilation and Permanence

Sufi saints have often used the expressions *fana-fil-Sheikh* and *fana-fil-Allah*. Literally the word *fana* means annihilation or passing away. In the present context we can understand by it “merging into”. Thus the term *fana-fil-Sheikh* would mean merging into the Master and ‘*fana-fil-Allah*’ will connote “merging into God.” Identical ideas are found in the *Adi Granth*:

1. If one merges into the true Master,
the unutterable Word is realised.

M.I., p. 62

1. Mystic trance.

2. Nanak loses his self and merges into the Master.

M.3.,p. 509

These expressions are not used metaphorically or as ideals, but have a special mystic significance. They indicate a certain spiritual state in mystic trance. Much of Bulleh Shah's poetry points to such a state. For instance, his *kafi* beginning with the line, "Repeating the name of Ranjha I have become Ranjha myself," is symptomatic of this condition. Through concentration and contemplation when the soul leaves the senses, body and mind, it first merges into the form of the Master, and then into that of the Lord. Every true practitioner of the spiritual path aims at attaining such a stage. In his *kafi*, beginning with the line, "O friends, it is now that I learn how love and law are related," Bulleh Shah says:

Within us abides our *Murshid*.
When I fell in love, I learnt this.

Likewise, in his *kafi* "Will You ever call me Your own?" he points out in the last stanza that so long as the disciple does not merge into his Master, he cannot have the vision of God:

O Bullah, when you go to see the Lord,
You have to transform these eyes of yours.
Then alone will you be able to behold Him,
When you come back home as King Inayat.

In the same *kafi* he points out in an earlier stanza, that with the elimination of the ego from within, God alone remains behind, although in the process one might have to go through experience akin to that of Mansur:

If I, the perishable, eliminate my ego from within,
 I shall manifest You who are everlasting.
 If I were to reveal You in the manner of Mansur,
 I would be caught and put on the gallows.
 Will You ever call me your own?

In his *kafi* "O friends, I am lost to myself," Bulleh Shah hints that with the disappearance of the self or the ego from within, the individual merges into the Universal and becomes one with Him :

O friends, I am lost to myself,
 Unveiling my face I dance in the open.
 Wherever I look, Him alone I see.
 By Him I swear, none else exists.
 "He is with you" went round the world,
 When the Master read from the scroll.
 O friends, no name or trace of mine is left !
 Whatever I say, you keep silent about it.
 Do not give a hint of it to any one,
 That Bullah has fully realized Reality.

The same thought is found in the *Bible*, when Jesus Christ says :

I will come again and receive you unto myself;
 That where I am, there ye may be also. ¹