

KALMA OR THE WORD

As stated earlier, the soul, after vacating the body comes in contact with the Word at the eye center. The Word manifests itself in the form of unstruck melody, which wraps the soul within it, and proceeds on its

1. John 14:3

spiritual journey through various stages to the abode of the Supreme Lord.

Sufi saints and mystics have given various names to the unstruck melody: They have called it *Kalma* (The Word), *Kun* (Decree or Command), *Bang-i-Asmani* (the Celestial Sound), *Nida-i-Sultani* (the Royal Call), *Bang* (the Voice), *Saut* (the Call), *Ism-i-Azam* (the Great Name), *Kalam-i-Ilahi* (the Word of God), *Sultan-ul-Azkar* (the King of Remembrances), etc. Bulleh Shah, denouncing worldly knowledge and praising the *Kalma*, writes in a *kafi*:

We are powerless in the fortress of learning;
 This learning has made us prisoners of the pen.
 We are all worthless without the Word,
 And without the Word we cannot cross.

Two kinds of Kalma

Kalma is of two kinds, *Sifati* (attributive) and *Zati* (Essential or Substantive). All the names given to God, which are based on attributes or qualities, are attributive. They can be written, read or spoken, and are descriptive in nature. There are hundreds of names of God in different languages, and they are all attributive. The Essential Name, on the other hand, is the True Name, which is the unspoken, unwritten, cosmic Law. It is the Creative Power of the Lord, which in the form of divine sound and divine light abides not only within man, but also in the whole world outside. The entire existence comes into being through the operation of this Word. That is why it is also described as the Decree or the Command of God (*Kun*). And it is through the experience of this *Kalma* that liberation from the never-ending cycle of birth and death can be achieved. The *Kalma* is the personal property of every human being,

but it is hidden from his physical eyes. It is primordial, all-pervading, all-powerful and all-knowing.

It is clear from the above account that although the attributive names of God are different in various religions and languages, the Essential Name is the same. For, it is the substance which has given rise to the attributive names. This does not mean however, that attributive names are altogether useless. They serve as the means for attaining the Essential or True Name. They are all pointers to our destination.

In an elaborate exposition of the two kinds of the Word or the Name, Soami Ji writes as follows :

Brother, I shall now define precisely what *Nam* is,
 And disclose the difference between its two kinds.
 They are called *Varnatmik* and *Dhunatmik*,
 And here is the distinction between these two.
 You may call it *Varn* or you may call it *Achhar*;
 It is the one that can be spoken with the tongue.
 Also, what can be used in reading and in writing,
 Is the same that is called *Varnatmik*.
 It is only a pointer to the *Dhunatmik*,
 But without a Master that cannot be achieved.

Sar Bachan, p. 95

The Bible says :

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was
 with God, and the Word was God.

John 1 : 1

Soami Ji conveys the same thought in his own words
 thus :

You will realize that *Nam*¹ and *Nami*² are one,
 If you have the good fortune to meet a Master.

Sar Bachan, p. 95

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1. The Name or the Word.
 2. The Being who bears the Name.

Zati Kalma or Unstruck Melody

The following *kafi* of Bulleh Shah would serve as an example of his account of the Unstruck Melody emanating from the Lord :

Wondrous music does the Lord play on the flute!³
 O, Lord of the flute, cowherd Ranjha,
 You are in tune with the whole world.
 You rejoice, but I am in dire misery.
 Pray, harmonize my tune with Yours.
 O flute-player, You are called the Lord.
 You reveal the peerless cosmic beauty,
 Albeit You remain invisible to the eyes.
 What a matchless game You play!

Everyone hears and talks of the music of the flute ;
 But it's the rare one who understands its meaning.
 Whosoever attains the joy of the Unstruck Melody,
 He becomes enamored of the flute.
 On hearing the sonorous notes of the flute,
 I shriek with joy in the manner of peacocks,
 For I rejoice in its variegated tunes.
 A single note lies behind the entire symphony !

This flute has five to seven stops,
 Each stop has its distinctive note.
 But one strain breathes through them all,
 And, it is this which has bewitched me.

1. Esoterically, music of the flute is audible at a high spiritual stage within. Rumi commences his great *Masnavi* from this stage. Its opening line is : "Listen to the flute as it narrates its tale, and complains of separation from its source."

This flute has a long account.¹
 Whosoever sought it, found it.
 Simple is the strain of this flute;
 The whole body is eloquent with His praise.
 O Bullah, all my troubles have come to an end.
 The Beloved has come and stands at the door.
 Now maintain your trade with the Word,
 Then your Master will stand as your witness.²

Bulleh Shah has written the entire *kafi* in adulation of the Unstruck Melody of the flute, but in the last stanza he has called it *Kalma*, the Word. It is clear from this identification, that he has used the "Unstruck Melody" and "the Word" in the same sense. He has called both God and the Master "Lord of the flute" or "Ranjha of the flute." From this it can be inferred that the essence of God and of the Master is the Word. Its being "in tune with the whole world" means that the Unstruck Melody resounds in the whole creation and in every being. "Pray, harmonize my tune with Yours" signifies that the underlying essence of the soul, the Word, the Master and the Lord is the same. It is for this reason that they can all merge into one another. Only the like can be absorbed into the like.

"Only the rare one understands the meaning of the flute music" hints at the extremely few people who are blessed with hearing the Unstruck Melody. It is those fortunate few, who begin to understand that all creation emanates from the Word. "A single note lies behind the entire symphony! And these fortunate ones "become enamored of the flute."

1. Refers to the limitless expanse of the Word.

2. Before the Dispenser of Justice, the Negative Power.

The line, "This flute has a long account," means that the scope of this divine melody is boundless. And, it is free from the stain of duality: "Simple is the strain of his flute."

The Unstruck Melody is basically one, but passing through different spiritual realms it assumes different forms. "This flute has five to seven stops, . . . But one strain breathes through them all."

At the end of the *kafi*, Bulleh Shah counsels that one should never forget the real aim of human life and should always maintain connection with the Word: "Maintain your trade with the Word." If this link is kept up, the Master will be present (in his astral form) at the time of the disciple's death to help him: "Your Master will stand as your witness."

In his poem, "Come fakirs, let us go to the assemblage," Bulleh Shah has called the Word, "Unstruck Music" (*Anhad da Vajja*) or "The Mystic's Music" (*Arif da Vajja*). He writes that the mystic practice does not lie in external observances such as wearing saffron clothes, but in connecting the mind to the unstruck music within. Without this union with the Word, the external gathering of fakirs in an assemblage is futile. Without such a union, human life and good actions all go waste "Your capital and interest both go down the drain." On the other hand, the one who connects himself with the Word, it raises him from man to God:

Come fakirs, let us go to the assemblage,
 and listen to the music of the mystic!
 There you will listen to the many-splendored
 Unstruck Melody, renouncing all rituals and
 ceremonies.

The unstruck music is all-uniting, foe to none;
 and it emanates from the orifice¹ of the head.
 Without the union the assemblage is fruitless;
 your capital and interest both go down the drain.
 Hard is mendicancy and the path of the lover,
 for you have to still the mind in that music.
 Such a lover becomes God from man,
 but Bullah has remained where he was.

Bulleh Shah, by calling the Word as God's Will or Decree, (Kun *Fayyakun*) has indicated that the Unstruck Melody also works as the Creative Power, which brings into existence the entire world. In one poem, he has described it as the path leading to the "Transcendent Being," and in another he has called it the call from the Celestial throne:

1. On the path leading to the Transcendent Being,
 I shall seat myself and play on the conch.
2. The call came from the Celestial throne,
 And a tumult arose in Mecca.

The praise of the Word is found in all mystic literature, whether in the East or the West, whether in one religion or another. And, in everyone of the statements made by them, its essential nature is clearly brought out. A short account supported by some quotations in various religions is given below.

Hinduism and the Word

The Hindu *rishis* have called the Word by many names: *Shabd*, *Nad*, *Vak*, *Akash Bani* (the Celestial

1. The opening in the center between and behind the two eyes, the third eye or eye center.

Sound), *Dibh Dhuni* (the Divine Melody), *Ram Dhun* (the Voice of God), etc. They have also regarded it as the Creative Power of the universe. In *Sama Veda* it is written that *Shabd* is God and *Shabd* is the Creator. The Upanishads are replete with adoration of the Word.

1. "There is a hymn which celebrates *Vak* (Speech) as the supporter of the world, as the companion of the gods, and the foundation of religious activity and all its advantages . . . This idea which, of course, has long ago been compared by Weber with the Greek Logos is ingenious:

"The Will of the Creator is thus considered as expressed in Speech."¹

2. "Prajapati certainly was alone (before) this (Universe). The Word (Speech) certainly was His only possession . . . He desired: Let me emit this very Word, it will pervade the whole (span). It rose upward and spread as a continuous (well-joined) stream of water."²

Ancient Greek Religion and the Word

The ancient Greek sages and philosophers have given the name "Logos" to the Word. In praise of the Logos it has been said: "There is one Logos, the same throughout the world . . . This wisdom we may win by searching within ourselves . . . It is the cosmic process, it is God; it is the life principle; it is divine law, or will of God. It prevails as much as it will and is sufficient for all things. Logos is the immanent reason of the world; it exists from all time, yet men are unaware of it, both before they listen and when they hear it. The Logos

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1. *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas*, Harvard and Oriental Series Vol. 32, pp. 435-36.
 2. Tandyabra 20: 14: 2, quoted by Bhagwat Datta in *Story of the creation*, p. 110.

... keeps the stars in their courses. It is the hidden harmony which underlines the discords and antagonisms of existences.”¹ Another philosopher writes in this context: “The Logos is mediator between God and the world, being the regulating principle of the universe, the divine intelligence . . . As the way, the truth and the life, as the inspirer of the highest morality, and last and not the least, as the living bond of union between the various members of his body. The spirit goes through all things, formless itself, but the creator of forms. The Logos as World-Idea is also simple. It assumes manifold forms in its plastic self-unfolding.”²

The Jewish Religion and the Word

In Hebrew language the word “Memra” has been used for Logos of the Greeks and for Kalma of the Muslims. Some scholars have traced its origin to the word “Amar” of the Armenian language, which stands for “Word” or “Speech”. Usage of the word “Amar” is older than even of “Logos,” So, we cannot say that the Jews got the idea from the Greeks. It has been used for the divine Word, the divine Decree, manifestation of divine desire, as also for the creative power of God, the principle behind all creation. Last, but not least, it has been used as the Creative Being or God, himself. Even before the advent of the Christians, the Word was called primeval, creator of the universe and the Decree of God. This thought binds the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims in one chain from the spiritual point of view.³

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1. Heraclitus of Ephesus (535-475 B.C.) Extract from *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* Vol. VIII pp. 135-137
 2. Anaxagoras (500-428 B.C.) Extract from *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* Vol. VIII pp. 135-137.
 3. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. Vol. VIII, pp. 542-43.

Christianity and the Word

In the *Bible* various other terms besides that of the "Word" have been used in the same sense. These are: the Logos, the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit and the Comforter. All of them denote the Creative Power of the Lord; and the power which can liberate man from the prison-house of this Creation.

The *Bible* says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."¹

Some other sayings pertinent to this theme are: "And I will pray to the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever."² "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost."³ "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."⁴ The Name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."⁵ "Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men."⁶

Zoroastrianism and the Word

In the religious system founded by Zoroaster in Persia, the Word has been called "Sarosh." Scholars have shown its resemblance with the Sanskrit words "Shabd," and "Shruti," and suggested that they were

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1. John 1:1-4
 2. John 14:16
 3. John 14:26
 4. John 4:23-24
 5. Proverbs 18:10
 6. Mathew 12:31

derived from the same root.¹ Also, like other terms used for the Word, "Sarosh" too has been considered as the ultimate divine power, from which has emanated the entire Creation.²

"Sarosh," which existed prior to earth, fire, vegetation and man is the manifest form of the Will of God. On the one hand it acts as the Creative Power, and on the other it teaches the noble lesson of cheerful acceptance of God's Will. Such acceptance is a necessary pre-requisite for spiritual progress.³ It is the viceroy of Ahurmazda (God) from the beginning of time. Its greatness is apparent from the prayer of Zoroaster: "Oh God, let "Sarosh" be granted to him, who is dear to You."⁴ Here its resemblance with the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, etc. of Christianity is noteworthy.⁵

Taoism and the Word

In the Chinese philosophical and religious system of Taoism, high praise has been showered on the greatness of the Tao.⁶ The Tao is primeval, and it is indescribable in words.⁷ The Tao has been identified with God Himself. It has also been called the Path, the Word, Discrimination, Decree, The Omniscient, the Unknown Essence of Creation, the Principle that moves the mind and the world, and so on.⁸ It has been regarded as the

1. From the same root as Sanskrit *Srutis*: Duncan Greenlees, *The Gospel of Zarathustra*, p. 54; also '*The Path of the Masters*', Julian P. Johnson p. 41-42, (13th Ed.)

2. Duncan Greenlees, *The Gospel of Zarathustra*, p. 52 (Yasara 57: 1-2)

3. *Ibid.*

4. Julian P. Johnson: *The Path of the Masters*, p. 41-42, (13th Ed.)

5. to 8. Southill, W.F.: *Three Religions of China*, London: Oxford University Press, 1929 (3rd. Ed.), p. 16

creative, the preservative and the destructive ground of the universe.¹

The Tao is no concrete object, but all objects emanate from it. It is formless, but all forms become visible through it.² Man is governed by earthly laws; the earthly laws are governed by divine laws; the divine laws are governed by the Tao, and the Tao is its own law.³ The Tao in its primeval state is nameless, but when it manifested itself in creation and in creeds, it acquired names.⁴ It is not only the root cause of creation, it is the principle which guides it and the ideal for all things.⁵ It is beyond good and evil, and is indicative of that state of bliss, the attainment of which is the very essence of the Tao.⁶ The Tao is the guiding principle for true morality, true religion, true spirituality and true conduct.

When the practice of the Tao ceased, the stress was shifted to morality, and then it was laid on intellect and cleverness.⁷ But, nothing can replace the Tao. Only by returning to one's source can eternal peace be achieved.⁸

Islam, Sufism, and the Word

In the *Qura'n*, the *Kalma* or the Word has been called all-powerful.⁹ Whatever it commands, it comes to pass.¹⁰ The Word of God is True.¹¹ On whomsoever God is merciful, He sends His *Kalma* through His Decree.¹² The Name of God is auspicious ; it is pure, and it bestows greatness on the one who practices it.¹³

1. to 6. Southill, W.F: *Three Religions of China*, London: Oxford University Press, 1929 (3rd. Ed.) p. 16.

7. James Legge: *The Texts of Taoism*, Tao Teh King, Part 81: 1.

8. Ibid 16: 1

9. *Qura'n* 9: 39

10. Ibid 36: 82

11. Ibid 6: 73

12. Ibid 40: 15

13. Ibid. 55: 78

The Sufis have accepted *Kalma* or *Saut* (Sound) as the creative power of the world. The sufi-saints have written profusely on it. A few examples are: "The world has come into being through the Sound. And, from it has spread light on all sides."¹ "The Great Name is the source of all names. It is the inner reality of all things. It is the ocean, and the world is its mere wave. But he alone knows it, who is one of us."² In other words, this secret is known only to the mystics. "The whole world is replete with Sound. But, you have to open your inner ear. You will then hear that never-ending melody, and you will cross the gate of death and go beyond the beginning and end of things."³ "Since the word has no limits, it has been called 'limitless' (*anhad*)"⁴ "O God, how sweet is your Name! My very existence has become sugar and honey in it. O God, What rapture is there in Your Name! Every letter in it puts me into ecstasy."⁵ Rumi goes on, in adoration, to call it the essence of all existence. "The Great Name is the Great God Himself. It is the core of existence, and puts to life even dead bones."⁶ "O God, Thy holy Name is my true friend. Thy Great Name brings me close to Thee."⁷

Sultan Bahu, a great mystic poet from Punjab has written much in praise of the Word. Says he about the True or Essential *Kalma*: "Where the *Kalma* is recited by the heart, there the tongue has no admittance. *Kalma* of the heart is read by lovers. What do our naive friends know about it?" The practice of this *Kalma* is by no means easy. It demands a heavy price for its attainment:

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1. Shams-i-Tabriz.
 2. Abdul Razzak Kashi.
 3. Shah Niaz.
 4. Ibid.
 5. to 7. Jalal-ud-Din Rumi: *Masnavi*.

“Sleep is prohibited for them, O Bahu, who earn the profit of *zati* Name.” But what they achieve after their great labor is worth all the trouble they have gone through: “They perform ablution with the Great Name, who bathe in the ocean of Unity.” Continuing, Bahu says that the *Kalma* is the greatest Creative Power: “All the fourteen realms emanate from the *Kalma*. What do the simple folk know?” “All the fourteen realms are contained in the *Kalma*, as also the *Qura'n*, the holy books and all the books of knowledge.” The Word is the greatest treasure, which has no peer anywhere outside: “There is no blessing like the *Kalma*, none within the two worlds.” “The *Kalma* is my rubies, my diamonds, the *Kalma* is my richest merchandise. Here, as also in the hereafter, O Bahu, *Kalma* is my total wealth.” It is through the Word, that one learns to die before the appointed time of his death. It takes him out of the delusion of duality into the reality of the One: “He will not die the death of mortals, in whom eternal love has been awakened. To him death and union will be the same, for he has practiced the *zati* Name of God.” There is no prayer worth the name, from which the practice of the Word is absent: “Who tries to earn spiritual merit without the practice of the *Kalma*, verily he dies as an infidel, in the manner of one gone crazy. Even if he were to worship for a hundred years, he would remain a stranger to God.”

Saints and the Word

Writings of saints are replete with praise of the Word, and on its practice are based their main teachings. The Word is not only the Creative Power, but is also immanent in everything. And, above all it resides

within man himself. Says Guru Nanak: "From the Word comes the earth, from the Word comes the sky, from the Word spreads light all around. The whole creation rests on the Word, and this Word, O Nanak, resides within man."¹ In this context, Guru Amar Das writes: "Through the Word comes all creation into being, and through the Word it goes out of existence."² Saint Dadu Dyal conveys the same thought thus: "O Dadu, all remain cohesive through the Word, and without the Word all disintegrate. Through the Word are all created, and in the Word they all merge. Of the One Word is all this fiat; so great is the power of the Word! It would have been quite different, had the Word been powerless." Guru Arjun Dev, in praise of the Word, writes: "His Name is the cure for all our ills. Sing its praises, as it gives salvation."³