

## THE MASTER

### Need of a Guide

God, the Supreme Being, the Ultimate Reality is within, and so is the soul, which is of the essence of God. Although both are within man, yet there is a veil between them, which does not let them meet each other. It is like the bride and the bridegroom being in the same bedchamber, and yet the bride remaining unaware of the presence of her spouse. It is like a man with immense wealth lying in his house, but who roams like a beggar seeking it outside. The only way in which the bride can find her Lord and the beggar can find his treasure is

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1. *Puratan Janamsakhi*, p. 137.
  2. *Adi Granth*: M.3. p. 117.
  3. *Adi Granth*: M.5. p. 274.

through the Word, which makes the necessary contact between the seeker and the sought. If the Word can solve the problem, in which man finds himself, the question arises: What is the part that the Master has to play in this drama ?

In a superficial sense the Master gives nothing from himself, but in a deeper sense his role is the most important. Since by God's design the wealth of the Word is already within every man, so the master does not give it from himself. But, from another point of view, he may be said to give everything. If a great treasure is hidden in a man's house, but he does not know how to obtain it, he is actually a pauper. If someone does not only tell him where it is lying, but also gives him all practical help and guidance to get it, he has virtually turned a beggar into a king. This is the role played by the Master for his disciple.

In the words of Soami Ji "The Guru is he who is one with the Word."<sup>1</sup> One who is in contact with the Word can bestow the supreme gift of such contact on others. That is why all great mystics refer to their masters in superlative terms of praise and adoration. They ascribe their entire achievement to their Master's grace, even when they themselves worked hard for it. In fact the individual's own effort emanates from the Master's grace, though apparently the two seem quite different. Whether we consider them integral or separate they are necessary for salvation. Says Soami Ji:

Without the Master's grace,  
and without your own effort,  
You will not be released from  
the cycle of birth and death.

Sar Bachan, p. 122)

1. Sar Bachan, p. 105.

Bulleh Shah is no exception to this rule and his writings are replete with love, gratitude and adoration for his *Murshid*, Inayat Shah. A few examples are given below:

1. Listen to the tale of Bulleh Shah.  
He caught hold of his guide to follow him.  
His *Murshid* is Shah Inayat.  
He will ferry him across the gulf.
2. Whosoever wishes to have a vision of Him,  
He cannot do so without an intermediary.  
If Shah Inayat were to reveal the secret,  
Then all mysteries would be solved.
3. The land of the Beloved is across the river,  
And the waves of avarice have engulfed me.  
The *Satguru* is holding the boat,  
Why do you tarry?
4. Come soon, O physician, or else  
I shall breathe my last!

Comparing the human body to the spinning wheel, Bulleh Shah calls the spiritual practice 'spinning'. In the following *kafi* he hints that in withdrawing the soul current from the nine outlets into the tenth door, and protecting it from the stratagems of the Negative power, the help that the Master renders to the disciple is invaluable:

The handle of the spinning-wheel has slipped down;  
I can now spin no more!  
The spindle has got many a bend, who would now  
call the iron-smith?  
Straighten out the spindle, O iron-smith;  
the thread gets broken again and again;

Every now and then it swings, it does not produce  
a single hank of yarn.

I shall deem to have spun a hundred maunds,  
O Bullah,  
If the Beloved were to clasp me to his heart.

Rizvi, in discussing the role of a master (Sheikh) writes: "The *Tariqa* was an arduous journey involving numerous risks and impediments. It could be traversed only under the strict supervision of Sheikhs or *pirs* who had themselves traversed all the hills and dales of the Path, and had survived the rapture of the 'states,' perceived the nature of actions, and experienced the severity of 'Divine Majesty' and the clemency of 'Divine Beauty'<sup>1</sup> All these obstacles confronted by a disciple "needed constant supervision by a Sheikh."<sup>2</sup>

Elaborating on what the Master does for his disciple, Bulleh Shah writes:

Catch hold of your *Murshid*, for therein lies  
God's worship.

In his love you are carefree and in raptures;  
In his love you are free from desire and possessions;  
And your heart becomes cleansed of all impurities.

O Bullah, how long can you hold back truth?  
Wisdom is contained in a single point!

The Master's power is not confined to guidance in this life. At the crucial moment of death, when all relatives and friends are helpless in rendering any help to the dying man, it is the Master who comes to his rescue:

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1. Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi: *A History of Sufism in India*, Vol. I., p. 99.  
2. Ibid.

Your testing time will surely come,  
 When all near and dear ones will desert you.  
 At that time the Sultan of Bullah  
 Will help you to be ferried across.  
 Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

Because of the overwhelming spiritual influence of a true Master, a radical change takes place in a devoted disciple. He virtually becomes a different person after his contact with the Master. Bulleh Shah writes about the metamorphic change wrought in him by his Master, Inayat Shah:

My Guide taught me a lesson,  
 No stranger had admittance there.  
 He showed me the beauty of the Absolute Lord.  
 And a tumult of unity overwhelmed me!  
 Who can now recognize me?  
 Now I have become a different person.

After the realization of the all-powerful nature of a Master, Bulleh Shah spoke out: "The Guru does whatever he likes." And, after such intimate relationship has been established between the disciple and the Master, as came to exist between Bulleh Shah and Inayat Shah, separation is extremely painful to bear. If it happens to come, there is intense longing for union, as is obvious from the following lines of Bullah:

O Bullah, may the Spouse come to my home,  
 And quench the fire burning within me!  
 I remember Inayat with every breath,  
 Come and meet me, my Love!

Bulleh Shah's love for his Master, intense though it is, does not always take the form of veneration. Often, in

the mood of a lover's playfulness, it expresses itself in a complaining tone on the fraudulent attitude of the beloved. His occasional appearance interspersed with periods of vanishment is tantalizing for the lover. Says Bullah in an incriminating tone:

Look, what tricks he plays with me,  
 My Master and Lord, Shah Inayat!  
 Sometimes he comes, and sometimes not,  
 Thus he enkindles a fire in my heart.

Some scholars have compared Bulleh Shah's philosophy to that of Rumi. In fact, some of them have called him the Rumi of Punjab.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless, Bulleh Shah's love for Inayat Shah is reminiscent of Rumi's love for Shams-i-Tabriz. This is what Rumi says about the role the master plays in the disciple's spiritual progress and ultimate realization: "The path leading to the Friend is extremely narrow. Who can walk straight on it without a sagacious guide? This arduous journey is beset with deep gorges, which cannot be crossed without the one who shows the path." That is why that gracious King ordained: "First, find a companion for the journey, and then undertake to travel on the path." Look for a guide, so that you may reach your goal without harm, for there is many a pitfall on the way. You are revolving round the same spot like a compass, so you remain where you are without any progress. For years on end you performed prayers and undertook fasts, but your heart stayed where it was at first. Have faith in the guide, who will take you to your destination without a word. To disregard the command of your Master is like shooting

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1. Such as Anwar Ali Rohtaki and Taufiq Rafat.

an arrow without a bow. Have you ever seen an arrow without a bow, reach its target or even nearabout it?

### The Perfect Master

The term "master" has been used for one who has himself traversed all the stages on the spiritual path and has ultimately become one with the Lord by merging into Him. To make this clear, saints and mystics have sometimes added the word "perfect" to the word "master", for an imperfect guide can take one only to a stage, where he himself has reached, and no further. So, if the goal is God-realization, a perfect Master, who himself has reached the final destination, is indispensable. A perfect Master is both man and God. He is a man, because he has the human form, but he is also God, because he has spiritually become one with Him. This is God's own design, because in no other way can He be realized. In His abstract form there can be no contact with God. So, He has to assume the human form to take man out of darkness into light, out of ignorance into knowledge, and out of bondage into freedom. When Bulleh Shah had the vision of God in his Master, he blurted out: "The Beloved has come as man!" and "God has come as man!" In a few more *kafis* he comes out with the same thought:

1. He is not a cowherd<sup>1</sup> but some light of God.  
He plays the unstruck melody on His flute.  
He has beguiled Heer of Syal with His charm.
2. Bullah, He<sup>2</sup> has come from afar!  
His form has attracted me.

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1. Used for Ranjha.

2. 'He' stands for the Master.

He showed me his pure effulgence.<sup>1</sup>

I cannot forget him for a moment.

3. You would enjoy the delights of spring,  
if you were to become slave of the *Arain*.<sup>2</sup>  
O Bullah, fix your gaze on him forever,  
For he is the vision of the Lord.
4. O Beloved, to meet you is to end all suffering.  
For the common folk you are a mere cowherd;  
For me you are the compassionate Lord Himself.

Other saints too have dwelt on the theme of identity between God and the Master. In a beautiful analogy, Guru Arjun Dev says: "The Lord's servant is like unto the Lord. Think him not to be different because of his human form. As a wave he arises in a myriad ways from the ocean, and then merges into it again."<sup>3</sup>

### Physical Love and Spiritual Love

Sufi saints have the tradition to regard the *Murshid* as the ladder for reaching the formless Lord. The *Murshid* is the mirror which reflects the glory of God. Bulleh Shah has called the physical form of the Master as the bridge that takes the disciple to his Master's real form. He states that unless one is in love with a form, there can be no love for the formless one. Love of the form is a thread, which sews the garb of love of the Formless. So long as the Lord does not come in the human form as a giver, how can the gift of divine love be obtained? Love for the Master is our real father and mother, because it gives birth to divine love. It is love for the form of the Master, through which the disciple

1. Divine light or vision of God.

2. Vegetable grower, here stands for Inayat Shah, Bulleh Shah's Master.

3. *Adi Granth* : M. 5., p. 1076.



learns to die while still living and thereby attains union with the Lord within:

So long as one falls not in physical love,<sup>1</sup>  
 The needle cannot sew without thread in it.  
 Physical love is a giver, a benefactor.  
 Whosoever is blessed by it, gets into raptures.  
 People in whose bones love makes its abode,  
 They verily die while they are still living.  
 Love is our father as well as our mother.  
 Whosoever it pursues, gets into a frenzy.

Jami, a great Persian poet, says in this context: "Consider yourself to be fortunate, if you fall in physical love. For, it is a means to raise you to love divine."

In this context, Bulleh Shah, making use of his favorite story of Heer and Ranjha, has brought out the true relationship between the soul and her Master. The eyes of the Master have shown the precious jewel, the Lord. His face reflects the beauty of Yusuf (the Lord). In its native state the soul is formless and luminous, but with the coverings of body and mind, as a yogin, its brilliance remains concealed. It is for this reason that Ranjha (the Lord) has to come to this world in the guise of a yogi (human form). But, when Heer sees in the yogi the sign (the attributes) of Ranjha, she is drawn spontaneously towards Him. Love of the soul for her Lord, which had been lying dormant from time immemorial, is now awakened. In her new realization she regrets the wastage of time spent before her newly-awakened love. When her love for and faith in the yogi becomes perfect, he takes her with him to the throne of Hazara (her final destination, the True Abode), which brings to an end all suffering involved in transmigration:

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1. Physical love here means the love of the physical form of the Master.

Ranjha has come in the guise of a yogi;  
Oh, what a mask He has worn!

This yogi has eyes like goblets,  
Beaming their glances like those of a hawk.<sup>1</sup>  
On beholding his face all cares vanish;  
These eyes have seen a precious jewel.<sup>2</sup>  
What are the marks of this yogi?  
He wears ear-rings and has a string of beads  
round his neck.

His visage reflects the beauty of Yusuf.<sup>3</sup>  
He has turned *Alif* into *Ahad*.<sup>4</sup>  
Ranjha is my yogi, I am His yogin;  
I shall serve Him like a slave.  
In vain have I wasted my earlier life.  
Now He has come and charmed me!  
It is now that Bullah revels in His presence.  
His old love has stirred up a storm in his heart.  
How can this now be kept a secret?  
He takes me along to the throne of Hazara.<sup>5</sup>

Ranjha has come in the guise of a yogi;  
Oh, what a mask He has worn!

In another *kafi* Bulleh Shah employs the same analogy of Heer and Ranjha, and indicates that after giving the command of creation (*Kun Fayyakun*), Ranjha (the Lord) leaves the Throne of Hazara (His True Abode) to bring back Heer (the soul). But in the land of Chuchak and Malki<sup>6</sup> (mind and maya), Ranjha had to assume the form of a cowherd. When, however, Heer was being forcibly sent with the Kheras (the Ego

1. He has searching looks. The allusion is to God seeking the soul of man.  
2. and 3. The Lord.

4. Alludes to the transformation of the Absolute into God.

5. The true Abode, the final destination.

6. Father and mother of Heer.