

ARISE! AWAKE!

This *kafi* is in the nature of a warning. Human life is specifically meant for God-realization. Its duration is short, and it should not be wasted in frivolous activities. The fact of death should always be kept in mind. Bulleh Shah calls death the wedding-day.

Bulleh Shah has sometimes employed the analogy of wedding as death, in diametrically opposite ways. For a proper understanding of this analogy, it has to be remembered that death can be an occasion both for pain and joy. For the foolish worldly man who wastes away the precious gift of human life, death is a source for untold misery, but for the one who employs it for spiritual realization, it serves as an occasion for rejoicing.

An Indian bride has hardly any role to play in the choice of her spouse. She seldom gets the partner with whom she could be happy, and is often a victim of hostility in the house of her father-in-law. Similarly, the worldly-minded person who has made no spiritual progress during his life, suffers pain and misery at the time of death. His soul is forcibly withdrawn from his body by the cruel angels of death, causing him much torture. And, instead of meeting the Lord, the real Spouse, the soul is taken to the Lord of Death, the Lord of Justice (Dharamraj). He is also known as the Negative Power which punishes or rewards the individual according to his deeds. Such a 'wedding' would be worse than an abduction by a tyrant.

On the contrary, the bride who has accumulated the wealth of the Name of God as her dowry during her life, would find death to be a blissful experience. The Master

of such a soul would take charge of her, and would take her to higher spiritual regions for an ultimate union with the Lord. She would be released forever from the painful wheel of the eighty-four. For such a one death would prove to be a boon and a blessing, a true wedding indeed.

Human life provides the only outlet from the ever-recurring cycle of birth and death. Once the aspirant misses the chance, he has to go through once again the arduous wheel of eighty-four. Not only should one lead a pure and normal life, but one must also acquire the ability through assiduous spiritual practice to withdraw the soul current from the body to the eye-center. Bulleh Shah symbolically calls it spinning yarn from the spinning wheel. Various saints have called it 'dying while living'. Unless one learns to achieve this voluntary death, one cannot form contact with the Word, which eventually leads him to attain union with the Lord.

One who fails to avail of this opportunity, has a bleak prospect in front of him. He will depart from this world without a friend and without having made any preparation for the arduous journey ahead. Such has been the fate of the so-called great kings and conquerors, who strutted with great aplomb for a short while in this world, but had to leave helpless and empty-handed. Likewise, the great beauties before whom the mighty ones of this world knelt with humility, became food for worms in graves. In brief, all is transient in this world.

At the end of the poem Bulleh Shah states that even scholarship and erudition are of no avail for spiritual realization. What will take us to our goal of divine union is practice of the Word.

Utth jag ghurare mar nahin

Arise! Awake! Do not snore!
This slumber of yours is most inopportune.

One day you will have to leave this world;
You will then find your abode in the grave;
Your flesh will be eaten up by the worms;
Keep this in mind, forget not your death.
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Your wedding day¹ is approaching fast;
Have you dyed your clothes for your dowry?²
Why have you let yourself go to waste?
O you ignorant, you have no value for life!
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

You have frittered away your life in sleep.
Your auspicious moment has now come.
You have spun no thread on the wheel.³
What will you do, your dowry is not yet ready?
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

The day you were intoxicated with your beauty,
You were lost in the company of your mates.
In ignorance you wasted time in futile chatter,
You were totally unaware of the truth.
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Right from the beginning you were inept;
You were most shameless of the shameless.
As a glutton you filled your stomach to surfeit;
Till now you didn't avail your turn for release.
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

-
1. For a mystic, death is a wedding, for it leads to union with the Beloved.
 2. (Have you) Spiritually prepared yourself for the wedding.
 3. The spinning wheel is the symbol for the human body, and spinning yarn from it signifies spiritual practice or the process of withdrawing the soul current from the body to the eye center.

Now is the time for your nuptial departure.
 Why do you sleep with such false confidence?
 You have got to meet strangers¹ there.
 This market² will not remain brisk tomorrow.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

You will have to depart from this world,
 You will not set your foot here again.
 You will lose your lovely form and figure.
 You will not live here forever.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Your destination lies far, far away;
 You shall pass through forest and vale.
 It is hazardous to reach there on foot;
 And you do not seem to be an apt rider.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

You shall depart friendless, all by yourself;
 You shall straggle in dense forests.
 Take your provisions with you from here;
 For there no one gives aught on loan.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

You will go to an empty, desolate house;
 You shall live there friendless, a lonesome life;
 None will give you solace in your isolation;
 No one can keep you company there.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Those who ruled their lands with great aplomb,
 Those in whose honor bands were played,
 They had to leave their throne and crown.
 None can ever trust this world.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

-
1. Strangers are persons at the Bridegroom's house ; they depict saints and other realized souls.
 2. This world.

Where is now Alexander the Great?
 Death does not spare even *pirs* and prophets.
 All have had to leave behind their vain pride;
 There is none everlasting here, O friend.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Where now is Yusuf, the moon of Kina'n?
 Gone is Zulaikha with all her charm.
 Death at last made her mortal.
 No longer are they adorned and ornate.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Where is now the throne of Solomon,
 On which he used to ride the winds?
 The lord of death swallowed it too.
 None can hope to live for ever.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Where are chieftains, masters and kings?
 All have had to vacate their mansions.
 None could make this world his home,
 Even the one with armies countless!
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

The select of flowers—jasmine and tulips,
 The lily, the hyacinth, the peerless cypress,
 The autumn winds have flattened them all.
 Even the ecstasy of the narcissus is transient.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

As you sow, so shall you reap;
 Or in the end you shall come to grief;
 Like the wretched crane you shall shriek;
 For without the wings none can fly.¹
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

1. The poet seems to suggest that one must acquire those wings on which the soul can fly back to its eternal Home.

Your abode will then be such places,
Where live lions, wolves, evil spirits.
Your palaces and mansions will all be vacant,
How will you claim them as your own?
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

We are powerless in the fortress of learning;
He Himself brought us under His pen,
We were worthless without the Word,
And without the Word none can cross.
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Except the Lord none exists, O Bullah,
Neither in this world, nor in the next.
Take your steps with care and caution,
For you shall not come the second time.

Arise! Awake! Do not snore!
This slumber of yours is most inopportune.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 9-14, poem 6