

BEHIND THE SCREEN

The Lord pervades this world and in every living being; but this is in the latent form. He comes in the manifest form as a friend of man in the guise of a prophet or a master. And, it is through love that he gets united with His creatures.

The pantheistic strain which marks many of Bullah's poems, is quite prominent in this *kafi*. In the second stanza he says, "You yourself abide in one and all." Then why say, "I am different from you." The only difference is that He takes on an earthly form, when He comes as a master. The third and the fourth stanzas harp on the same theme.

The fifth stanza brings out the ecstasy of love, in which the one who has drunk from the cup of this wine cannot remain silent.

The last stanza deals with the price of love, which is like a fire where one has to get consumed—"O Bulleh Shah, make your body a furnace; burn your bones to dust in its fire." However, the reward that comes at the end is beyond all reckoning, for it is total bliss of union with the Lord—"Thus alone, can you behold the Creator!"

Kyon ohle baih baih jhaki da ?

Why do you sit behind the screen and peep?
From whom do You hide yourself?

You came as a friend to love yourself,
You have put over Your face the veil of *meem*.¹

1. The letter 'm' in Arabic. Here it signifies the illusion of duality.

From Ahad¹ You changed yourself into *Ahmad*.²
 And on your head waves the canopy of the cosmos.
 Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?

You yourself abide in one and all.
 Then why say, "I am different from you."
 You have yourself come to have a look at You;
 Only You have kept the veil of earth between.
 Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?

Who other than You at all exists?
 So why do You raise this futile quarrel?
 This is the height of high handedness—
 To talk of one to one's own self.
 Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?

Somewhere You are a Roman, somewhere a Syrian.
 Somewhere You are a master, somewhere a slave.
 You yourself are every one of them.
 Then why do You test the good and the bad?
 Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?

In whomsoever love raises its wayward head;
 The intoxicated one loses all sense of self.
 How can one ever remain silent.
 Who has drunk the cup from the Cup-bearer?³
 Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?

Of your own You have hastened to me;
 How long can You now remain in hiding?
 You have come disguised as King Inayat,
 And now You steal glances at me!
 Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?

1. The One, God.
 2. The prophet, the Master.
 3. The Beloved, the Master.

O Bullah, make your body a furnace;
Burn your bones to ash in its blaze.
Turn it into a vessel of love;
Thus alone, can you behold the Creator!

Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?
From whom do You hide yourself?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp.206-208, poem 95