

BĀBĀ NĀNAK

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(revised edition)

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*in memory of
my father and grandfather
Opar Singh Gill
Harnam Singh Gill*

FOREWORD

The Grand Narrative of Bābā Nānak presented by Professor Harjeet Singh Gill is based on the Janam Sākhīs and the interpretations of the compositions of the Guru in the Ādi Granth. These are reflections and meditations on the mysteries and the metaphysical complexities of the human and the divine universe. From the most mundane affairs of this world we move on to the dialectics of anthropology and cosmology in a language that is charged with a resonance and a rhythm that is both transcendental and allegoric.

The second revised edition, prepared under a Senior Fellowship awarded by the Punjabi University, includes the revised versions of the translations of the and Bārā Māhā. It serves as aṅṅfour Bānīs : Japujī, Sirī Rāg, Siddh Gos introduction to *Nānak Bānī* interpreted in English free verse.

S. S. Boparai
Vice-Chancellor

Punjabi University, Patiala, 2007.

PREFACE

*nikkē hūdē ḍhaggē chārē, waḍḍē hoē hal wāhiā
buddhē hoē mālā phēri te rab dā ulāmbhā lāhiā*

As a child, I was a shepherd. As an adult, I ploughed the fields. Now, in old age, I pray to appease the Almighty Lord ... Thus a popular Sufi saying sums up the three steps in the life of a Punjabi. Another Sufi discourse warns the young girl not to waste time in playing. She should prepare her dowry, for soon she will have to leave her parents' home, *pēkē*, to go to her in-laws, *sauhrē* ... These streets of her father will, one day, be only a dream. At the same time, the obdurate Qāzī can also not stop the ultimate reunion.

*iē nḥbālpan khéd lē kur, tērā aj ke kal muklāwā
ā, pēkēsauhrē ghar albat jān ā dāwākūr
ik din tēnu supnā thīsan, galīā bābal wālīā wo
gāē bhaur phullā de kolō, ud ālīā wō ḍ pattar saṅsan
jis tan laggē soī tan jāṇē, hor gallā karan sukhālīā wo
rauh wē qāzī dil nahīō rāzi, gallā hoīā tē howan wālīā wo*

I have followed the dictates of the first Sufi discourse but have reversed the cycle of the second commandment ... I spent (wasted) my youth in the streets of Paris (playing with) writing, teaching, discoursing on French intellectual tradition, of Abélard, Port-Royal Logic, Condillac, the modern philosophers of Signification (included mostly in my *Semiotics of Conceptual Structures*, 1996, and *Signification in Buddhist and French Traditions*, 2001), the tradition of my empirical as well as conceptual in-laws, *sauhrē*, to finally compose this biographical discourse of Bābā Nānak to come back to my Punjabi parents, *pēkē*.

The biographical episodes of the Bābā are based on the Janam Sākhīs. His compositions are interpreted in free verse...HSG.
Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 2003.

The second edition includes the revised and Bārā Māhā. It versions of the translations of Japujī, Siri Rāg, Siddh Gos am grateful to the distinguished Vice-Chancellor of the Punjabi University, Patiala, Padam Shri S. S. Boparai, and its Registrar, Professor Parmbakhshish Singh, for the award of Senior Fellowship to complete this revision...HSG.

Punjabi University, Patiala, 2007.

Reviews of the first edition of Bābā Nānak, 2003.

‘Oh no!’ I thought as I opened Harjeet Singh Gill’s *Baba Nanak*. ‘Not another of these attempts to retell the story of Guru Nanak in what is meant to be English poetry.’ These, it seems, almost invariably consist of dreary prose dressed up as flowery poetry. But I was wrong. I was very wrong. *Baba Nanak*, far from being cast in the style which one normally associates with the ‘poetry’ of English translations of the *Adi Granth*, is in fact an excellent piece of work. The works that it paraphrases are some of the finest of Guru Nanak’s works, set in the context of his life story and supported by passages from the *janam-sakhis*. *Japuji* naturally appears, as do portions of *Siri Ragu*, and the whole of *Barahmaha*, and *Siddh Gost*.

The style in which the life and travels of Baba Nanak is recorded makes exceedingly pleasant reading and those who wish to have the story well told as simple but effective English poetry will find Gill’s work a delight.

W. H. Mcleod

International Journal of Punjab Studies, Oxford, 2003, 10 : 1-2.

I do not know how Harjeet Singh Gill, Emeritus Professor of Semiotics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, was spurred into song when he elected to write in verse form the story of Guru Nanak, and of his divine hymns in a capsuled, simple, but effective style. Nothing, as far as I know, in Gill’s past suggested such a “return of the native” to the faith of his ancestors, for in his long academic career, he remained involved in the study of semiotics and signification under the tutelage of his French mentors and theorists of linguistics.

Whatever the reason, this volume underscores the nature of his inner transformation – from a logician and sceptic to a seeker after truth, with Baba Nanak as his light and guiding star. I could stretch the argument and see how the science of languages, which invests all human thought and its highest reaches, possibly led Gill to apply his earned insights to the Sikh scriptures...Gill’s rendering, thus, is simple, direct and nearer to fine prose. And he sustains this discourse with imagination and insight.

Darshan Singh Maini

The Tribune, October 12, 2003.

on the moonlit night
of November five, fourteen-sixty-nine
in the sacred land of the five rivers
a son was born
to mother Triptā
to father Kālū
the entire universe echoed
with the music of the spheres
with the harmony of the planets
the gods and goddesses
rejoiced with songs and dance
the cosmic dance of peace and prosperity
of absolute unity
of body and soul
of earths and heavens
piercing the fog of ignorance
of sin and superstition
of crass and corruption
the light of love and longings
spread over the entire universe

the child Nānak
brought with him
the hope of humanity
the hymn of serenity
the discourse of reason and rationality
in the Dark Middle Ages of Hindustān !

the sages paid homage
to the divine child
the learned bowed
to the miraculous birth
the yogīs, the sādhus, the seers
felt the cosmic rhythm
men and women
young and old
longed for his blessings
for his audience...

there was movement
in the planets
there was growth
in the plants
there was spring all over
once again there was life
there was love

there was hope of reunion
of ultimate bliss
of eternal peace
beyond faiths and fraternities
beyond castes and classes
there was cosmic equilibrium
between light and darkness
between sun and moon
between stars and spheres
between logic and love !

as Nānak grew up
his father engaged
a Brahman and a Muslim scholar
to acquaint the young lad
with the classics of his two traditions
soon Nānak was proficient
in Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic...

he reflected upon
the wisdom
the scepticism
the intellectual incisions
of the great masters
of the great prophets

of the great gurus
and wondered if
it was enough
to steer through
the vicissitudes of life
in this world of absolute contradictions
the world of real men and women
the world of flesh and blood

if there was more to knowledge
more to reason
more to meditation and reflection...

the more he learned
the more he knew
the more he was anxious
the more he was uncertain
about the absolute faith and fortitude
that was required
to stay steady and steadfast
in this world of upheavals
in this world of uncertainties
in this world of betrayals !

the divine child
went about his own way
reflecting and meditating
on the affairs of the world around
on the ceremonial limits
of temples and mosques
on the rites and rituals
of the priests and the qāzīs
he soon realised
that all was not false
if all was not true
he had to sift the pearls
from the heaps of mud

he had to purify
the stinking waters
of centuries of neglect
he had to constitute
a new discourse
where one could
differentiate and discern
where ideas and images
could form new conceptual constructs
delineate new horizons ...

it was a daunting task
but he had no choice
his very birth in this world
his very advent
in those tumultuous times
activated his spirit
his search
his inquiry
to the utmost limits
of the ancient discourses
of the ancient disputes ...

and in this environment
of faith and fortitude
there were miracles all over ...

once he was sleeping under the shade of a tree
as the sun moved
so did the tree...

on another occasion
it was the turn of a king cobra
to protect the divine child

from the scorching heat of the Punjab
for hours, the ferocious beast
kept his large hood
over the sublime face
that radiated with spiritual power...

often he was seen
in the company of
the wandering sādhus
the roaming yogīs
the solitary faqīrs
they discussed and discoursed
the eternal truths
the sublime verities
of spirit and mind
of this vast universe
of faiths and fraternities...

it was obvious however
that something was amiss
in those overcrowded thoughts

in those intellectual gymnastics
in those artificial simplicities
in those deliberate complexities
the truth
if there was one
was beyond those dialectics
was beyond those formal horizons !

when Nānak was sixteen
following the custom of the country
he was married to Sulakhanī
the union gave birth to two sons
Sirī Chand and Lakhmī Dās
Sirī Chand became a great yogī
his disciples continued the lineage for centuries ...

but family was not yet Nānak's mission
he spent his time in meditation and reflection
Nānak's silence and serenity
was getting more and more mysterious
as the parents were worried
he was sent to his sister to Sultānpur
to help his brother-in-law
in administration and accounts ...

from one world to another
the existence remained the same

the business of administration
did not interest Nānak
often he got stuck
at the number thirteen
which in Punjabi also meant “yours”
he continued to recite, *tērā, tērā*, thirteen, thirteen
yours, yours !
it was all yours, of the Almighty
of the Master of all !

at dawn Nānak used to go to the river
for a dip in the pure waters
of the flowing stream
to cleanse his body and spirit ...

Nānak was thirty-six years old
when on the night of full moon
on the night of soothing light
he went deep
into the waters of Wēī
the river of salvation...

the angels flew him to heaven
where the God Almighty
the Lord of the Universe
in the guise of a splendid old man
with long white beard
clad in red robes
was sitting on a golden throne
with all the gods and goddesses
in attendance to the Master of Heavens
the celestial music was vibrating
every horizon of the universe

the majesty, the grandeur
of the presence
of the audience
transcended all imagination ...

Nānak duly bowed before the Eternal Spirit
he was beckoned to step forward
to receive nectar
the milk of the heavenly buffalo
from the very hands of the Creator
of all worlds and heavens
of all stars and spheres...

Nānak was intoxicated
he had just received the blessings
the greatest gift of his life
the Knowledge of all knowledge
the Secret of all secrets
he had just acquired
the most splendid spiritual serenity
the vision of the most transcendental truth
the assurance of his mission
of love and peace
for all faiths
for all fraternities ...

the good tidings spread to the thirteen worlds
all gods and goddesses
all stars and spheres
sang in unison
Hail Nānak !
the Chosen of the Lord of the Universe !

now the entire universe
was Nānak's temple
where all gods and goddesses
all suns and moons
all stars and spheres
in perfect harmony
in perfect rhythm
of cosmic music
worshipped his Master ...

there was no Hindu
no Musalmān
all humanity
all men and women
of all races and religions
were one
before the One
and the Unique
the Creator and Master of the Universe

the Eternal Spirit
the Ultimate Transcendence
could not be confined
within any sects
within any bricks
within any boundaries
temples and mosques
dresses and diets
rites and rituals
must give way
to the absolute
to the universal ...

such was the mission of Nānak
the discourse of his truth
of his vision
of his philosophy !

the child Nānak was transformed into
Bābā Nānak
the Sage, the Master, the Guru
he set out
to reach the four corners of the world
to spread the truth of his vision
to meet the noble souls

of all religions, of all races

to discuss and discern
the problems and pains that inflict the suffering humanity
to propose peace and patience
discipline and detachment
to conquer the evil spirits
the temptations of this mundane world

to bring harmony
between body and spirit
between mind and intellect ...

love, service, serenity
peace, harmony, temperance
were the kernel themes
of his universal message
of his transcendental truth !

Bābā Nānak
and Mardānā, his companion
the musician with his melodious Rabāb
set out to travel and to witness
the vicissitudes of this world ...

the young Mardānā was always hungry
for the pleasures of body and flesh
Bābā Nānak always
counselled patience and perseverance

travelling through villages and wilderness
Mardānā had his wishes fulfilled
and more
his greed often overwhelmed him ...

Mardānā would collect alms and offerings
Bābā would insist on
throwing away all unnecessary baggage
Mardānā would feel lonely and frightened
in the savage jungles
Bābā would consider the wilderness
as the dwelling of the Lord
the disciple and the Guru
presented the dialectics
of flesh and spirit
the mediation continued
throughout their life !

in one of the sorties
Mardānā could stand no more
he was so hungry
he refused to follow the Master
in the ferocious jungles
the Guru asked him to eat
the fruits of a wild plant
the berries were so delicious
Mardānā kept some for later crises...

one day taken over by his usual hunger
he bit into the forbidden fruit
and fell unconscious
the Guru had transformed
the poisonous plant into delicious food
only once to quench
the thirst and hunger of Mardānā
he had to be patient ...

patience is sweet
greed is poison
the Bābā continued
with his eternal discourse !

while Mardānā could not resist
the riches of the world
the Bābā practised austerities in the jungle
he ate wild fruits
and tasted sand and hot winds
for days he meditated
in absolute isolation
in the company of his Master
the Lord of the Universe
under the canopy of the stars
listening to the sublime music
of the innermost rhythm
of the steady mind
of the resolution of all conflicts
achieving a harmony and balance
of absolute beauty
of absolute truth !

in April on the occasion of Baisākhī
Bābā Nānak and Mardānā
arrived on the banks of the Ganges
the devotees were taking the holy bath
throwing water to the East
towards the rays of the sun

to appease and worship their ancestors ...

Bābā Nānak went down
bathed and began to throw water
to the West, towards his home
towards his farmland ...

this ceremonial contradiction
this religious absurdity
infuriated the devotees
who considered it sacrilege
to go against the age old custom
and asked Bābā to stop
this most irreligious act
of changing the holy directions ...

Bābā Nānak answered by a counter-argument
why the devotees were throwing water to the East
how can it reach millions of miles
where in heaven were their ancestors
when it could not reach
a few hundred miles to his fields in the West !

on another occasion
he was asked to pray along with another devotee
after the prayer was over
the Bābā questioned the devotee
what was he doing during the prayer
instead of concentrating on meditation
on the transcendental spirit
of the Lord of the Universe

he was selling oil in Kabul
he was all the time thinking
of his business affairs
of his loss and profit
of his material needs...

there is no prayer
no religious, pious act
if there is no concentration
the mind and body
must be emptied of all frivolities
of all that is Other
that is foreign to spiritual purity
mere ceremonial prayer is of no use
it is hypocritical
it is a false path

it leads nowhere !

once the Bābā was offered a delicious meal
but he refused to eat
it was impure, he said
it was full of dirt and filth...

the host could not believe such words
such an utterance
that went against all the religious purities

the meal was prepared
with all the ceremonial precautions
all the taboos of caste and class ...

Bābā declared it impure
it was prepared by an impure person
by a corrupt master
who was engaged in evil deeds
who looted the poor
who suppressed the others
material gains were his only concerns

the purity of the meal
does not lie in the ceremonial purities
purity is honesty
purity is devotion
purity is love and care of the others
purity is the purity of the mind
of the soul
where inner harmony and love
are in tune with each other
where hatred, cruelty, corruption
are exiled to the other world
the world of the evil doers !

in one of the encounters
the Bābā was asked
how does one reach the Almighty ?
how does one acquire salvation ?
some practise extreme austerities
others indulge in every crass
some smear their bodies with ashes
others lie on sharp nails
some stay in water for days

others never bathe
some wear heavy clothes in summer
others stay naked even in winter
some have their heads shaven
others wear their hair long
some never leave their abode
others never stay home
some eat certain foods to propitiate their gods
others avoid the forbidden flesh and fruits
some don't eat cows
others don't eat pigs
some eat what is grown above the ground
others eat only what grows underground
some eat only on certain days
others pretend not to eat at all
even the days and nights
are divided into holy and unholy
there are auspicious hours
and there are dark days

the heads of humanity seem to be spinning
in this absolute confusion...

what is the right path
O Bābā, the divine Master ?

there is no right or wrong path
all paths lead to the Lord
austerities of the body lead nowhere
love, service, serenity
bring harmony and union
cleanse yourself of all envy
of all greed and pride
listen to the inner music
have faith in His bounty
only He who has created this universe
can differentiate and discern
the false from the true
the right from the wrong
in His will is every path !

normally we follow, O Mardānā
our customs and conventions
traditions and orders
they are the repository
of centuries of experience and wisdom
of sages, of elders

but they are not rigid
they are not sacred

this universe is not stationary
since millions of years
millions of stars and planets
earths and heavens
have been in movement
there is continuity
but there is also change
our cultures and concepts
must also follow
this law of evolution
the youth must pay respect to the elders
the elders must pay attention
to the ambitions of the youth ...

when the priests, the qāzīs, the jathedārs
lay down strict rules
of hearths and homes
of diets and dresses
when they insist
on specific ideologies
on specific discourses of religions and rituals
it does not work
it has never worked

differences and dissents
must be resolved
through discussions and debates
through love and affection
through respect for the other

the transcendental truth
if there is one
is the truth of hearts and harmony
of tolerance and temperance
of equality and fraternity !

there are too many questions
there are too many confusions
my dear Mardānā
the world is rife with divisions and dissents
the jihāds and the crusades
are the order of the day
spreading hatred and enmity
the rulers have no regard for their subjects
the subjects have no faith in their masters
it is Kaliyug

the Dark Age of ignorance and superstition
where men are suppressed
where women are ill treated
where children are bewildered
who know not what to do
what to follow ...

o dear friend
tune your melodious Rabāb
with the hymn of love and longings
with the music of service and serenity
let us proclaim the Age of Enlightenment
the age of reason and rationality
the age of friendship and brotherhood
the age of dignity and freedom
let us proclaim the mission
that I was charged with
by the Lord of the Universe
by the Creator of all humanity !

JAPUJĪ

let us meditate on
the One
the Eternal
the True
the Creator
beyond fear or faction
beyond time or space
beyond being or becoming
perceived by the grace of the Guru

True in the beginning
True through the ages
True in the present
Nānak, True, He will ever be !

His truth is beyond all reflection
beyond all silences and abstentions
His perception is beyond all hunger and thirst
beyond all projections and pretensions

how can we arrive at His truth ?
how can this wall of ignorance be removed ?

Nānak, one must live in His will
in His nature, in His order ! (1)

in His will
are created forms
in His will
are life and grandeur
nobility and servility are due to Him
there are some who are graced
and other who suffer for ever

in His will
is every one
beyond it
there is none
Nānak, he who comprehends His will brags not ! (2)

some sing His praise for His omniscience
and some celebrate His plenitude
some sing His praise for His noble deeds
and some celebrate His wisdom and thought
some sing His praise for His dispensation and destruction
and some celebrate His creation and consumption
some sing His praise, for He is inaccessible
and some celebrate His eternal presence
there is no limit to His manifestation
there are millions who sing
and millions who describe Him
He is the eternal benevolence
the devotees change from place to place
through the ages, He has sustained all
Nānak, all moves depend upon His will
and all life follows His wondrous disposition ! (3)

the righteous Lord
who dwells in Truth
love is His language of meditation,
His benevolence, His benediction

what can we offer in His majestic audience ?
words of love and affection
can alone adorn His omniscience
in the serenity of the dawn
are offered the hymns of devotion

His grace endows us with form
His benevolence leads to eternal salvation
Nānak, this is the righteous path of truth and transcendence ! (4)

beyond construction or constitution
in His will is His projection, His perception
His devotee is bestowed with His benevolence
Nānak, she vibrates with His music
with His magnificence

let us sing and listen
and tune in the melody of love
let us shed our miseries
and enter the house of bliss

with the grace of the Guru
we hear music
with the grace of the Guru
we acquire knowledge

the Guru is all pervasive
the Guru is Ishvar
the Guru is Gorakh, Brahma
the Guru is Pārvaṭī Māī

even if I knew
I cannot describe
words and thoughts
do not coincide

the Guru has revealed the mystery of the One
on whom depend all dispensation
I must never forget His manifestation ! (5)

in His will are sacred baths
beyond His will are all farce
in His will is all creation
beyond His will there is no salvation

if in the will of the Guru
a Sikh wavers not
there are pearls and diamonds
in his wisdom and thought

the Guru has revealed the mystery of the One
on whom depend all dispensation
I must never forget His manifestation ! (6)

if one lives for four ages
and extends it to tenfold
if he is known in nine regions
and all follow his hold
if he has a glorious name
and is famous all over

but if he is fallen from His grace
he is no more
he is the lowest of the lowest
a beast, a bastion of all blames

Nānak, He transforms the simplest
into the most talented
and the talented reach the heights of sublimation
but there is none
who can add to His excellence, His formation ! (7)

listen in for the truth
of siddh, pīr, sur, nāth

listen in for the truth
of the earth, the bull and the sky
the regions, the spheres and the underworld
listen in to transcend Time and Death

Nānak, the listeners ever in tune with Him
listen in to eradicate all misery and sin ! (8)

listen in for the truth
of Ishvar, Brahma and Indira
listen in to transform sinners into singers

listen in to comprehend
His mysteries and manners
listen in to reach the innermost depths of knowledge

Nānak, the listeners are ever in tune with Him
listen in to eradicate all misery and sin ! (9)

listen in for truth
temperance and knowledge
listen in for divine reflection
and perception
listen in for steady concentration
and convention

Nānak, the listeners are ever in tune with Him
listen in to eradicate all misery and sin ! (10)

listen in for the revelation of truth
listen in to acquire the state of
sheikh, pīr, pātshāh

listen in to be on the righteous coarse
listen in to discern His sublime discourse

Nānak, the listeners are ever in tune with Him
listen in to eradicate all misery and sin ! (11)

believe in to be in a state of transcendence
a state beyond all pretence

no prayer, no pen, no scribe
can delineate the state of His omniscience

believe in is a state of absolute purity
only a believer can achieve that serenity ! (12)

believe in to crystallise your perception
believe in to apprehend the entire universe

believe in to surmount all illusions
believe in that Death may not demand submission

believe in is a state of absolute purity
only a believer can achieve that serenity ! (13)

believe in to lead the righteous path
believe in to step in with honour and glory

believe in to follow the straight and the narrow
believe in to discern His truth and transcendence

believe in is a state of absolute purity
only a believer can achieve that serenity ! (14)

believe in to reach the door of salvation
believe in for all preservation

believe in for the harmony of the Guru and the Sikh
Nānak, believe in to escape all dependence

believe in is a state of absolute purity
only a believer can achieve that serenity ! (15)

the listeners, the believers, the elders
are honoured in His audience
they are accepted and counted
they embellish the company of the kings
they are ever tuned to the Word of the Guru
but their words and thoughts do not coincide
His infinite deeds are beyond their mind

the bull of Dharma, the son of dispensation
patiently and steadily follows the Order
one can never estimate the weight on the bull
there is one earth after another

there is no end to His universe
none can support His enormous pressure

the races, the castes, the colours are infinite
and beyond all description
only he who attempts realises their extension

who can fathom
His energy, His form, His compassion
His one Word led to infinite expansion
to the flow of endless waters

His wondrous nature is beyond all reflection
beyond any attempt at comprehension
what He wills is the righteous path
He is the eternal Nirankār ! (16)

infinite are the meditations
and infinite are the devotions
infinite are the rituals
and infinite are their recitations
infinite are the yogīs
and infinite are their renunciations
infinite are the devotees
and infinite are the thinkers
infinite are the seekers of truth
and infinite are the sages
infinite are the gallant warriors
and infinite are those who face danger and death
infinite meditate in silence
and infinite sit in eternal contemplation

His wondrous nature is beyond all reflection
beyond every attempt at comprehension
what He wills is the righteous path
He is the eternal Nirankār ! (17)

infinite are the fools
who live in the darkest recesses
infinite are the thieves
who loot and plunder
and infinite are those
who remain always under
infinite are the criminals
who kill and murder
infinite are the sinners
who sin and suffer
and infinite are those
who live in dirt and squalor
infinite are involved in stinking deeds
and infinite are those
who indulge in rage and rancour
thus reflects Nānak on the affairs of this world

His wondrous nature is beyond all reflection
beyond every attempt at comprehension
what He wills is the righteous path
He is the eternal Nirankār ! (18)

infinite are the names
and infinite are the places
infinite are the regions and spheres
they are all beyond the reach of the seers

with words we compose music
we sing cosmic hymns
with words we acquire knowledge
we articulate our perceptions
with words we communicate
we arrive at divine projections
with words we establish eternal unions
we present our reflections

in His Word is every creation
in His Word is every relation
all acts follow His dictate
His Word saturates every state

His wondrous nature is beyond all reflection
beyond every attempt at comprehension
what He wills is the righteous path

He is the eternal Nirankār ! (19)

hands, feet and body
drenched in dirt
are cleansed with water
and soiled clothes
are washed with soap
but only meditation cleanses the stinking sinner

sin and service leave their traces for ever
as you sow
so do you reap

Nānak, as He wills
so is there advent and end ! (20)

rituals and renunciations
charities and recitations
are only outer manifestations
but listening and believing
devotion and love
cleanse the inner self

before Thy benevolence and beatitude
I can only offer my servitude

bereft of Thy blessing
there is no devotion, no meditation

Thou art the Word
Thou art the Utterance
Thou art the Creation
the universe is an expression
of Thy beatitude and benediction

who knows the time, the hour
the day, the week
the season, the month

when it all came to be

the brahmans have not located the time in the Purāṇas
the qāzīs have not mentioned the hour in the Qurān
the yogīs know not the day, the week, the season, the month
only the Creator knows the hour of His creation

how can I discern and discourse
divide and describe
Nānak, each claims to be the wisest of the scribes

the Lord is great
as He wills
so it is done
Nānak, he who pretends to know
is lost in the row ! (21)

there are millions of underworlds
and no count of skies
the Vedas searched in vain
and came to the same refrain

some have counted eighteen thousand
some more
there can be no count
there can only be delusions

Nānak, He alone can discern His own dimensions ! (22)

descriptions and discourses
lead not to knowledge
rivers and streams get lost in the ocean
reflections and perceptions do not attain His projections

a Sultān with sway over seven seas
and mountains of gold
compares not with the smallest insect
who forgets not his Lord ! (23)

there is no limit to His description, His discourse
there is no limit to His deeds, His dispensation

there is no limit to His perception, His projection
there is no limit to His reflection, His selection

there is no limit to His form
there is no beginning, no norm

many have attempted to reach His limits
they are all lost in His infinite
His form is beyond all perception
beyond all count and conception

the great Lord resides at higher planes
greater is His name
only He who rises to His level can perceive Him
He alone knows His abode
Nānak, all grace is within His mode ! (24)

His compassion is beyond all description
His generosity is beyond all prescription

many a gallant warrior is at His door
one cannot count the seekers' rows
many are stuck in their ambitious muck

there are many who find and forget
and there are fools who never regret
there are the ones whose lot is hunger, thirst and misfortune
this too is within His will and boon

fetters and freedom are in His will
none can alter His order
he who goes beyond His will
he alone suffers His mill
He knows what is in store
others can say no more
Nānak, he is made the King of kings
who is in tune with Him and sings ! (25)

precious are the virtues
and precious is their reception
precious are the traders
and precious is their conception
precious things are received
and precious is their consumption
precious is His love
and precious is His reflection

precious is the order
and precious is the court
precious is the measure
and precious is its treasure
precious is His compassion
and precious is His grace
precious are His deeds
and precious are His dictates

it is beyond all price
it is beyond all estimation
one can only realise it in meditation

there are Vedas and Purāṇas
there are infinite readings and discourses
there are Brahma, Indra, Gopi and Govind
but none can reach Him

there are Ishvar and siddhās
there are many buddhās
demons and gods
noblemen and sages
all describe His images

many attempt to perceive Him
all leave in despair
one group follows another
but none is able to repair

as He wills, so it is done
Nānak, He alone knows His truth
man tries in vain
fool of fools, insane ! (26)

imagine the wondrous abode
where the protector of all resides
where the musicians sing
where the hymns vibrate
where different tunes adore His state

all sing Thy praise
the air, the water, the fire
Dharamrāj in His palace
with Chitra and Gupta
the keepers of deeds and duties

there are, Ishar, Brahma, Devi
all sing in unison
Indra on his throne
gods in His attendance
the siddhās in meditation
the sages in deep thought
the disciples, the ascetics
the seekers of truth
and the brave warriors
all are tuned to the same hymn

the brahmans, the rishīs
throughout the ages sing along
the maidens fair
and the creatures of the underworld
join the chorus

the most precious
the sixty-eight pilgrimages
the valiant soldiers
in the four corners of the universe
in all spheres and centres
sing Thy praise

they alone can sing
who follow Thy will
Thy devotees are ever in tune
there are so many others
one can count not
Nānak, they all enjoy the same boon

He is the everlasting truth
the true Lord
truth is His designation

He is
He will ever be
the Creator of the universe
as He wills
so it is done
none dare oppose Him
the King of kings
Nānak, in His will are all things ! (27)

let your earrings be of patience
your begging bowl of hard work
and your ashes of meditation

the fear of death
your rags
the purity of mind
your yogic order
and faith in Him
your staff of a pilgrim

in every class
in every creed
the victory over mind
is the victory in deed

salutations to the highest
whose form is sublime
who has no beginning, no end
who is present through the ages ! (28)

with truth and transcendence
the cosmic music vibrates in the universe

the austerities, the miracles
are all wanton waste
the nāths, the siddhās
must follow His dictate
as He wills
so is union and separation
it all depends upon deeds and devotion

salutation to the Highest
whose form is sublime
who has no beginning, no end
who is present through the ages ! (29)

from one mother is born the order of the universe
with three disciples
the creator, the protector, the destroyer

as He wills
so it is realised
all follow His command
His vision surveys all
yet He is invisible
it is a strange spectacle

salutations to the Highest
whose form is sublime
who has no beginning, no end
who is present through the ages ! (30)

in every cosmos is His abode
in all spheres there is even mode

the Creator transcends His creation
Nānak, His truth saturates every action

salutations to the Highest
whose form is sublime
who has no beginning, no end
who is present through the ages ! (31)

if there are millions of tongues
vibrating His name
there will be one eternal verse
of the Lord of the universe

many a step leads to His path
but only a few reach His abode
the tales of heaven
lure many a lowly rogue

Nānak, His grace alone can lead us there
duplicities and divisions
are dissolved in His divine discourse! (32)

one cannot force
word or silence
request or receiving

one cannot force
thought or perception
system or salvation

Nānak, He alone has the will
to frame and force
as He desires
so it is ordained ! (33)

seasons, periods, nights and days
wind, water, fire and earth
form the temple of His gaze
there are all kinds of colour and life
there are infinite names

with deeds and devotion
the truth of the True prevails
and the five chosen shine

the false and the true are differentiated
Nānak, thus is His judgement enunciated ! (34)

in Dharam Khaṇḍ there are deeds and devotions

let us describe the Gyān Khaṇḍ
 where infinite are the winds, waters, fires
 and infinite are the Krishnas and Maheshas
 infinite are the brahmans
 and infinite are the forms, colours, costumes
 infinite are the spheres of deeds
 and infinite are the words of wisdom
 infinite are the Indras, suns and moons
 and infinite are the spheres and regions
 infinite are the siddhās, buddhās, nāths
 and infinite are the gods and goddesses

infinite are the ways, words
 infinite are those who know
 and infinite are those who follow
 Nānak, there is no end to the devotees' rows ! (35)

knowledge is supreme in Gyān Khaṇḍ
there are music, spectacles and celebrations

form reigns in Saram Khaṇḍ
there are created the most beautiful curves
whose forms one can articulate not
all attempts lead to deception

there are formed
consciousness, intelligence and reflection
in this cosmic domain
the surās and the siddhās
acquire wisdom and perception ! (36)

only deeds matter in Karam Khaṇḍ
where the warriors and the valiant heroes dwell
who are swayed by His grace, by His benevolence
where the devotees are immersed in His devotion
whose forms are beyond any perception
they die not, nor are they deceived
they resonate with His grace
in beatitude, they enjoy His sublime gaze

the formless dwells in Sach Khaṇḍ
radiating grace and benediction
there are infinite regions and spheres
they are all beyond the reach of the seers
there is light, there is form
as He wills, so is His norm
there is vision
there is growth
there is reflection
Nānak, its articulation is beyond all perception ! (37)

discipline is the oven
and patience is the goldsmith
with the hammer of knowledge
He strikes on the plate of intelligence

with the bellows of fear
and the fire of faith
from the pot of love
flows the nectar of reflection
in the atelier of Truth
is formed the True Word

this is given to those
who are blessed
Nānak, He is ever gracious ! (38)

air is the Guru
water, the father
and, earth is our mother

in the nursing hands
of day and night
plays the whole world

He watches every good and bad deed
as we act, so do we reap

those who spend their lives
in deep thought and meditation
Nānak, they radiate with glory
and enjoy eternal salvation !

this was Japujī
meditations on God and His universe
the affairs of this and the other world
Mardānā wanted to know
if it was always so
when did this universe come to be
how all this happened ?
how things began ?
how they turned the way they are ?

the Bābā was always there
to answer his disciple's questions
to satisfy his inquisitive nature
no, he said, it was all different
long, long ago
millions of years ago
it was all dark ...

*arbad narbad dhūdhukārā
 dharn na gagnā hukam apārā
 na din rain na chand na sūraj sun smādh lagāēdā
 khānī na bānī paun na pāñī
 opat khāpat na āwaṅ jāñī
 khaṅḍ patāl sapat nahī sāgar nadī na nīr wahāēdā
 na tad surg macch piālā
 dozak bhist nahī khai kālā
 nark surg nahī jamaṅ marnā na ko āē na jāēdā ...*

long, long ago
 millions of years ago
 it was all dark
 all silent and sombre
 there was no earth, no sky
 only the Being of the Lord prevailed everywhere
 there was no day, no night
 no sun, no moon
 only the Almighty Lord immersed in His light

there was no life, no language
no regions, no air, no water
there was neither birth nor death
none came, none left
there were neither planets nor underworlds
neither rivers nor oceans nor streams of water
there were neither hells nor heavens
neither growth nor decay
neither rise nor fall
nor the eternal cycle of birth and death
there was neither Brahma nor Bishan nor Mahesh
there was none other than the sovereign Lord Himself

there were neither men nor women
neither castes nor creeds
neither sins nor sorrows
there were neither sanyāsīs nor renunciants
neither siddhās nor seers
there were neither yogīs nor jangams
nor any claim to be the Nāth of all of them
there was neither fasting nor penance
neither austerities nor abstentions
none to rival the eternal Lord

there were neither lovely maids nor Krishnas
 neither cows nor shepherds
 there was neither the magical farce nor the futile deceptions
 there were neither ceremonies nor deceiving rituals
 neither illusions nor delusions

there was neither any caste nor any creed
 neither any indulgence
 nor the ruthless wrath of the eternal Time
 there was neither praise nor jealousy
 neither life nor breath
 there was neither Gorakh nor Machhandar
 neither endless disputes nor futile discussions
 neither any camouflage nor deliberate deceptions
 there were neither brahmans nor khatrīs
 neither gods nor temples
 neither cows nor the magical rituals
 neither elaborate ceremonies nor sacrifices

there were neither pilgrimages nor sacred baths
 neither mullahs nor qāzīs
 neither sheikhs nor hājīs
 there were neither subjects nor kings
 neither prides nor humiliations

there were neither infatuations nor false devotions
neither bewildered minds nor illusions
there were neither friends nor enemies
neither the blood of the mother nor the sperm of the father
there was but one sovereign Lord
who imbibed in Himself all truth and transcendence

there were neither Vedas nor Qurāns
neither Smritīs nor Shāstras
neither readers nor interpreters

there was no sun to rise, to set
the sublime Lord imbibed in Himself
all manifestation, all immanence
and when He willed
it all came to be
in all its mysteries and extensions
the universe appeared in all regions and spheres
Brahma, Bishan and Mahesh came into existence
and with them all the snares of māyā

rare were those who discerned the Word of the Lord
who perceived the will of the Sovereign
who reflected upon His manifestation
in all regions, in all planets

who meditated upon His extensions

Nānak, those who discern His truth
who vibrate with His truth
they are blessed by the Lord
they live in His truth
they find His sublime refuge !

and now my dear Mardānā
every thing is changed
it is Kaliyug
the Dark Age of Hindustān
corruption and cruelty
are the order of the day
charity is given
from the looted wealth
the gurus go to the houses of the disciples
women follow men only for their wealth
they bother not where they go
with whom they sleep
the Vedas are forgotten
only selfish motives prevail

the qāzī sits in judgement
he rolls his sacred beads
and declares justice in favour
of the one who bribes him
the hindu has forgotten his sacred books
his courtyard is washed clean
but his heart is polluted
the yogī lives with his women
with his children running around
he has smeared his face with ashes
and his head with dust
all this for a few loaves of bread
the temples, the mosques, the guru dwārās
have become the veritable dens of corruption
the dwelling places of evil spirits
of demons, of devils...

this sacred land of rishīs and bhaktās
of Purāṇas and Qurāns
of noble men and women
of the devotees of the Lord
is invaded by the foreign hoards
who should be blamed ?
the Bābā was in pain to describe this absolute cruelty

this absolute massacre
he asked his Master ...

*khurāsān khasmānā kīā hindostān ḍrāeā
āpē dos na deī kartā jam kar mughal charāeā
ēī mār pāī kurlāṇē tē kī dard na āeā
jē saktā saktē ko mārē ta man ros na hoī
saktā sīh mārē pe waggē khāmē sā pursāī*

if a powerful warrior fights with another
it can be understood
it can be permitted
but when the terrible armies crush
the meek and the humble
where should one go ?
with whom one should plead ?
it is all in His will
where should one turn to ?...

and in utter distress
he meditated
where are the mansions and horses ?
the warriors with swords and spears ?
the luxuries of plenty and prosperity ?
where are all the beauties and beds ?
where are all the attendants ?

Bābā was sure
all wealth is acquired by evil deeds
death destroys all ambitions
in His will is every act
when Bābar invaded Hindustān
all prayers were lost
all ceremonies were doomed
all charms were of no avail
no invader went blind
no miracle happened
Mughals and Pathāns fought pitched battles
the entire land was drenched in blood
His will prevailed
and death took its toll
the veils of many a woman were torn
and several lost their husbands
there was no let up
His Order transcended all religions and rituals...

it is the age of the dagger
of the butcher kings
religion has vanished
the dark night of falsehood
is spread all over
the moon of truth

is under the clouds of corruption...

cheating and deceiving
are the order of the day
the kings, the denizens, the world at large
are all stuck in the mire of deception

the gold, the silver, the pearls
are only illusions
so are our bodies, our clothes, our forms
men and women deceive each other
love and friendship
are replaced by fraud and insincerity...

Bābā continued to articulate
the vanity of the ignorant
the verity of the universe
of men and women
of hearts and hearths
in a long composition in **Sirī Rāg**
he meditated on the complexities of life
on the mysteries of the divine
on the frivolities of human nature...

SIRĪ RĀG

palaces studded with diamonds and pearls
lit with the most beautiful lamps
perfumed with the sweetest fragrance
are all illusions, all distractions
in His meditation and reflection

in separation
my heart aches
my body burns
bereft of the union with my Guru
there is no refuge, no support

the splendour of diamonds and pearls
the brightness of luxurious beds and beautiful women
lust and longings
indulgence and infatuation are all illusions
all distractions
in His meditation and reflection

endowed with all the miracles and magic
hidden in the eternal depths
these supernatural powers
are all illusions
all distractions
in His meditation and reflection

inflated in the pride of a Sultān
with armies and populace to follow
Nānak, such haughty positions
are all illusions
all distractions
in His meditation and reflection ! (1)

if I live for millions of years
sustained by air and water
if I hide myself in the darkest caves
where sun and moon never appear
I cannot attain Thee
without Thy grace, compassion and comprehension

the true Lord transcends all forms
His discourse is above all norms

if I torture my body with nails
cut my limbs with sharp knives
grind myself in burning wheels
I cannot attain Thee
without Thy grace, compassion and comprehension

if I fly like a bird in the vast spaces
remain hidden from every gaze
without eating or drinking for days
I cannot attain Thee
without Thy grace, compassion and comprehension

if I have thousands of reams of paper
unlimited ink and a fluent pen
to describe and discern my Lord
I cannot attain Thee
without Thy grace, compassion and comprehension ! (2)

all steps leave their traces
our speech, our thoughts
our dreams, our discourses
our behaviour, our breathing
Bābā, all lead to the eternal illusion
the blind do not see the truth
they are doomed for ever

within life and death
time is eternal
the mourners do not help the sinner
only the good deeds transcend this eternity

all attempt to comprehend the incomprehensible
His discourse is beyond all discernment
His truth is beyond all description
only the true Lord is eternal
the rest is all ephemeral

blessed are the poorest of the poor
Nānak resides with them
he lives their life
and bothers not about others
God's grace protects these humble creatures !(3)

greed is the dog
deception, the scavenger
the dishonest, the corrupt
devour rotten corpses
jealousy and hatred leave bad taste
and anger burns our hearts and hearths
indulging in flattery and false glory
the divine path is obliterated

Bābā, those who meditate and reflect
are honoured in His audience
and the good deeds are rewarded

evil ferments evil
the sinner is drenched in his sins
the being is doomed in the lust
for gold and silver
for wealth and women
for horses and chariots

the discourse that leads to His perception
is the discourse reflected
falsity and deception
are doomed for ever
as He wills
so it is accepted
the rest is lost and infected

all honour, all treasure
are bestowed on those
who live in His will
in His order

Nānak, they are rich and happy
they need no worldly goods
no false baggage
they are honoured, they are respected
others are lost in the wilderness ! (4)

there are those who indulge
in all kinds of intoxicants
they lose all senses
all measures of truth
all accounts of life and death

and Nānak, there are others
who are blessed by the Lord
who deal in truth
who recognise the eternal verity
who serve the Almighty
who are honoured in His audience

the wine of truth is beyond all crass
it is transparent and transcendental
the devotee is beholden to those
who are blessed with His truth
who live in His truth

those who meditate on His Name
on His Form and Concept
they breathe fresh air
they bathe in pure waters
their life is sacred
their happiness is sublime

how can one forget that Master
on whom depend all dispensation ?
every thing else is impure, farce
in His will is every truth, every perception ! (5)

burn your desires
and comprehend and converse
to discourse on the truth of the Lord
to discern His sublimity, His serenity

Bābā, let devotion be your pen
and your heart, your scribe
to discern and delineate His universe
to present your credentials in His audience

where there is reflection
there is serenity
where the mind is steady
and the heart follows the divine rhythm
there is sublimity
there is birth
there is death
there is being
there is becoming

there are those with honoured names
and there are others
who are wretched for ever

at the end they are all one
without class or creed
without wealth or greed

my being is scared
afraid of the unknown

Nānak, the sultāns and the sardārs
all submit to the final judgement
all are subjected to the eternal ferment ! (6)

in His will are all sweets, all tastes
in His meditation are all rhythms, all hymns
in His reflection are all projections, all perceptions
every other projection is bitter, beaten
that corrupts minds
that pollutes souls

in His devotion
is every dress, every splendour
in His benediction
is every grandeur
in His blessing
is every decoration
every other dress is deception
that corrupts minds
that pollutes souls

in His path
are all horses, all chariots
all silver, all gold
all arrows, all spears
all the insignia of royalty
every other path
every other chariot
corrupts minds, pollutes souls

in His peace is every peace
in His bliss is every bliss

Nānak, the true Lord transcends all norms
every other form is illusion, depression and deception
that corrupts minds
that pollutes souls ! (7)

rituals and riches
reflections and discourses
concepts and conventions
pilgrimages and purities
depend upon His will, His order

Bābā, empty logic leads nowhere
from absurd intelligence emerges ignorance
those who command respect
with force and wealth
those who perform miracles
with austerities and abstinence
are not honoured in His audience

but those who live in His will
who meditate and reflect
who are merged in His being
in His spirit
are the beloved of the Lord
they live in His eternal order

when the body decays
when all discourses are silent
when all senses are lost
the being withers
Nānak, the world is shattered
the universe is pushed into oblivion ! (8)

the talented exercises her talent
the foolish spreads her ignorance
only truth and temperance lead to His bliss, to His benediction
there is no boat, no oars
how can I cross the river of separation
to reach my Lord, my eternal Love ?

my Lord is splendid on His throne
He is generous
His abode is beautiful
adorned with diamonds and pearls
there are infinite horizons
how can I attain their heights ?

with the benediction of the Guru
we acquire the boat, the oars
to cross the river
to reach the Lord

the Guru is the ocean of truth
the universe of peace
the world of serenity
Nānak, with the blessings of the Guru
one attains the sublime horizon ! (9)

come sisters
let us talk about our Lord
of His virtues and our ignorance
of His love and our indulgence
the whole world is led by Him
it is the mystery of His Word
the secret of the divine discourse

ask the brides
how they adored their loves ?
how they practiced patience and service ?
how they remained steady and sincere ?

the Guru's discourse helps us all
the Lord is supreme
His nature is a wonder
His creation is a miracle
His form is infinite
His abode is splendid
Nānak, merged in truth and love
the true Lord leads to the eternal truth
to the divine verity ! (10)

thank God I am saved
pride hath given way to humility
and the demons have been subdued
desires and lust have taken leave
the heavenly bliss has descended
and truth prevails every where
fear is replaced by love
and the heart follows the rhythm of the divine Word

there are so many seekers
so many destitutes
but there is one universal bounty
whose blessings bring peace
whose bliss brings serenity

this world is a dream
in a moment this spectacle is over
union and separation are in His hands, in His will
as He wishes, so it is done
it is all in His will, in His order
Nānak, the Guru bestows truth and tranquillity
with the blessing of the true Lord

there is serenity, there is sublimity !(11)

the devotees merge in the Lord
as different elements in a pot
the burning desire of union glows for ever
their patience, their passion
attain the ultimate truth
they are blessed
their company is a bliss
their discourse leads to the true path
to the temple of absolute truth
of divine love, of spiritual union

in the discourse of the Guru
is the salvation of the disciple
in its absence are all temptations
in the discourse of the Guru
is the purity of the mind
in its absence is all dirt and defection

the Guru's discourse is sublime
it quenches all thirst
Nānak adores that Guru
whose discourse shows His omniscience
His transcendence ! (12)

the destitute is lost
her life is deserted
like a falling wall
she has no support
bereft of the discourse of the Guru
there is no solace
no respite from sufferance
bereft of His love
all décor is doomed
there is no place for falsehood
no place for deception

he is the wise farmer
who deals in truth
who plants the right seeds
who brings peace and recognition

the one who knows her Guru
knows the ultimate truth
she is blessed
she is saved

the one who is oblivious of His presence
is lost in ignorance and infatuation
she is caught in the eternal cycle
of birth and death

all the embellishment of the bride
the ornaments, the fragrance
the bright attire
are of no avail
if the Lord is indifferent
if His blessings are not bestowed
all luxuries are evil
all indulgence is fruitless

bereft of the discourse of the Guru
there is no salvation
Nānak, in the discourse of the Guru
there is love, there is sublimation ! (13)

when life slips away
the body decays
the burning light extinguishes
the smoke lingers
there is mourning
there is sadness

greed and pride engulf the being
the Lord is forgotten
the mind is led astray
there is tension, there is thirst
only the Guru can save thee
from evil deeds
when life is no more
there is no desire, no distraction
no pride, no prejudice

if the Guru is gracious
the mind is held in devotion
truth and tranquillity prevail there
cutting the cycle of birth and death

Nānak, the being is honoured in His audience ! (14)

the body burns on the funeral pyre
the mind is haunted by the evil spirits
bereft of devotion
the mind is stretched in different directions

with the discourse of the Guru
the devotee crosses the river of separation
bereft of his discourse
the being is caught in the eternal cycle

the mind is purified
by the divine truth
the body is washed
by the divine nectar
in His will is the eternal peace
the eternal order

in the beginning was the truth
it led to the flow of waters
to the birth of life
to the light of love
to the rays of purity

in His will
the being acquires the right perception
Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is meditation, there is reflection ! (15)

Nānak, with the boat of truth
and reflection on the Guru's Word
one crosses the river of life
others revolve in the eternal cycle

the foolhardy, the manmukh, is doomed
the devotee of truth, the gurumukh, swims across
bereft of the grace of the Guru
there is no crossing, no salvation

on the one side
there is destruction, there is burning
on the other
there is construction
there is growth

He is the source of life and death
He is the source of all union and separation

in every breath of the devotee
is the presence of the Creator
the devotee lives in His presence
she drinks His nectar
her pride is gone
her devotion is eternal

due to Him light spreads
and darkness recedes
the devotee is enlightened
she acquires the eternal truth
the ignorant lives in darkness
in eternal confusion and wilderness

the eternal lamp burns for ever
the divine discourse is realised
the devotee is honoured
her knowledge is sublime, her truth is supreme
Nānak, her life is steady
her path is serene ! (16)

o dear friend
it is the time of union, of love
as long as you are young
there is life, there is desire
the time spent in devotion, in reflection
is the time of union
of eternal bliss

the devotee is merged in devotion
there is no place for pride and prejudice
it is the time for listening, for meditation
for reflection and comprehension

it is the time to eradicate all evil thoughts
of desire and delusion
it is the time to be with Him
with His truth and transcendence
it is not the time of deceit and deception
it is the time of reunion and reception

in His company the devotee acquires His culture
in His company the devotee attains His nature
in His company is purity and piety
in His company is steady serenity

Nānak, He prevails in the three worlds
with love and affection
the devotee realises His omniscience
in His union
there is temperance, there is transcendence ! (17)

there is no fear of death
no desire to live
every beat of my heart
is in the hands of my Lord
every vibration of my soul
depends upon the rhythm of His will

o devotee
meditate and reflect on His nature
on His culture
to eradicate ignorance
to gain knowledge
of His truth
of His transcendence

the Guru dispels all doubts
all evil thoughts of life and death
of longings and lust

the rhythm of His music
vibrates in every beat of the universe
in every breath of the devotee

in the devotion of the Guru is your life well-spent
in His audience is all honour
in His audience is the union of all impulses

body and mind
spirit and soul
are united in Him
are immersed in the sublime Being

if the mind is steady
and the reflection is serene
there is peace, there is projection
there is divine perception
Nānak, there is bliss
there is the extinction of all misery and sin ! (18)

this mind is stuck in greed and lust
the Guru's Word is forgotten
the evil thoughts lead to the eternal cycle
in the company of the Guru
there is the treasure of virtues
there is the absence of pride and prejudice
in His will is peace and patience
in His service is honour and respect

day and night there is meditation
there is reflection
there are all the pleasures of body and soul
there is service, there is serenity

the sinner is immersed in her sins
she has lost all vision
she is afflicted with all miseries
the demon has smothered her
the foolhardy, the manmukh, is lost
the devotee, the gurumukh, enjoys truth and tranquillity

the ignorant, the manmukh, is engrossed
in the affairs of this world
in corrupt practices
and evil deeds
the devotee, the gurumukh, serves her Lord
and enjoys the blessings of the Guru
she forgets not her Master
she is recognised in His audience ! (19)

a moment of separation
leads to anguish, to anxiety
bereft of His blessings
there is no peace, no serenity

the Guru's union is love
in his company is virtue
chosen are those
who live in His bliss
who live in His light
in His supreme attention
in His sublime sight

there is no place for haughty aggression
no place for doubts and depression
lust for the ephemeral, greed for the transient
lead the being astray
from the divine path, from the righteous deeds
the beloved longs for His love
the burning desire gives way
to union and celebration
there is bliss
there is happiness, there is devotion
there is love, there is affection ! (20)

in His Word is love
in His discourse is bliss
His eternal truth separates the false from the true
His presence is a treasure full of diamonds and pearls

the Guru is the purest diamond
his discourse leads to the Transcendent
to the sublime union

those who deal in truth are never forgotten
their fire is extinguished, their thirst is quenched
they are beyond the reach of the demon
they swim across the river of life
they resonate in His sublime light

those who live in truth
live in love and union
in all the riches of the world
there is no treasure
richer than the love of the Lord
purer than the union with the Master ! (21)

roaming around in different lands
the being moves from one confusion to another
the inner dirt remains dark
life is laden with sin and suffering
bereft of the discourse of the Guru
there is no reflection, no perception

the inner fire must be extinguished with meditation and reflection
the Guru's Word discerns truth and transcendence
in His will is all serenity
in His will is peace and prosperity
in His will is all bliss, all honour

the being is dissolved
the pride melts away
those who go astray
are lost for ever
are doomed to darkness

this life is precious
this meditation is a treasure

in His union is love
in His vision is comprehension

in His order
the being swims across the river of life
she is honoured
she perceives the divine light ! (22)

those who deal in truth
retain the precious treasure
their profit stays for ever
for the Lord knows the right from the wrong
the false from the true

stay with truth my friend
it leads to eternal virtue, to eternal bliss

those who deal in deceit and deception
they are never happy
they live in eternal agitation
like a deer caught in a net
they always live in separation
in dejection, in depression

deception has no place, no caste, no creed
it is destined to face ignominy

Nānak, the discourse of the Guru
discerns the truth from falsity
in its meditation is every virtue

in its reflection is eternal serenity !(23)

all these riches and rituals
all this wealth and youth
are ephemeral, a matter of days
there is nothing to be proud of
there is nothing that lasts for ever
it is the time for meditation and reflection
for recitation and reception

many a friend is already gone
lying buried in cemeteries
o young, beautiful girl
think of your in-laws, of your future
your Lord will love
only your virtue and your truth
spend your time in His love
in His affection
in good deeds
in His sublime reflection ! (24)

He is the jouissance
He is the indulgence
He is the body
He is the bed
He is the joy incarnate

He is the fish
He is the fisherman
He is the net
He is the bait
He is in every play
in every pearl
He is the eternal lover

He is the lake
He is the swan
He is the seeker
He is the sought ! (25)

let your body be the soil
your good deeds, the seeds
and meditation, your water
be the farmer of the Lord
and raise the crop of virtue

shed all pride and lust
your parents, your women, your children
will all be left behind
stuck in the eternal grind

weed out all your evil thoughts
live a life of steady and serene ideas
live under the shadow of the inevitable death
discern the sacred texts
to recognise the eternal Lord
for the merger of the seeker and the sought ! (26)

sow good deeds in your fields
and irrigate them with the water of truth
be a farmer with faith in Him
you need not bother about hell and heaven
about this or the other world
clever chat will lead you nowhere

wasting your youth in ambition and desire
you will lose your very being
your very attire

evil thoughts breed evil
dirt leads to more dirt
the pure lotus is not recognised
the truth of love is lost
indulging in wealth and women
there is no peace, no projection

those who live in His will
live in His truth
they find the sublime refuge

all these austerities and abstentions
all these ritual prayers and ceremonies
lead you astray

all these riches, all these pearls
are a matter of days
under the shadow of death
all wealth and hearth are washed away ! (27)

He alone is the Maula, the Master
 who is the Creator of all humanity
 all beings, animate and inanimate
 who has put together all elements
 to create new forms, new lives

o mullah, the priest
 the end awaits us all
 live in His will, in His order
 to avoid all misery and fall
 o mullah, o qāzī
 you deserve to be a priest
 if you live in His knowledge, in His discourse
 all your learning, all your rituals
 will lead to depression, dejection and remorse

a qāzī is he who lives in His meditation, in His reflection
 meditate on the truth of the true Lord
 your five prayers
 and your learned discourses
 are of no avail
 when the last hour strikes
 when the end is announced ! (28)

the greedy dog has taken over
 led by the bitches of depression
 they bark day and night
 there is a dagger to kill and rotten corpses to eat

bereft of His will and bliss
 the being has taken awful form
 only His blessing can save the humanity
 this is the only support, only hope

burnt in hatred and jealousy
 passion and anger, loot and plunder
 the being leads the life of a scavenger
 in the garb of a faqīr
 there are deceits and evil deeds
 the being has become a thief, a thug
 the more he hankers after
 the more he is drenched in dirt

the ungrateful being is tortured
 he dare not appear in His audience
 bereft of all support and bliss
 the scavenger is lost for ever ! (29)

all knowledge is due to Him
all discernment is due to His will
as He knows, so He acts
there is but one measure for all deeds
there is no place for clever chat

all dispensation is due to His blessing
due to His compassion
it is all His creation
His conception
His convention

His benevolence is transparent
His kindness knows no limit
acts and intentions go together
without good deeds there is no salvation

he has the knowledge
who knows his Master
his acts are supreme
his words are serene ! (30)

Thou art the ocean of knowledge
I am but a small fish
how can I apprehend
Thy vast dimensions
Thy innumerable conceptions

I know not the fisherman
I know not the boat
Thou art my only refuge
my only support
I cannot fathom the depths of Thy benevolence
the heights of Thy transcendence

Thou art omniscient
Thou art gracious
I am ignorant, I am indulgent
Nānak, I pray, I beseech
I lay myself at Thy feet

I reflect, I meditate
I yearn for Thy love
Nānak, to see, to perceive, to comprehend
all depends upon Thy will
upon Thy benevolence, upon Thy benediction ! (31)

in His will is all bounty
in His will is all charity

if He wills, there is construction
if He wills, there is destruction
He is the Truth, the Verity
the being is lost in ignominy

he who sows knows his plants
their nature, their culture
their flowers, their seeds
as you sow
so do you reap

the false wall is constructed in ignorance
the fool's acts follow no course
Nānak, in His will is all truth
all wisdom, all discourse ! (32)

what has to happen
will happen
His will cannot be altered
His order cannot be changed

there is no light without oil
one must discern and describe
the wisdom of the sacred texts
one must realise the eternal truth

this is the oil that makes the lamp burn
it gives light and comprehension
it leads to the righteous path
to the truth of the Lord

Nānak, this world is ephemeral
this life is short
in His grace
is all humility
all service
all serenity ! (33)

and thus the Bābā continued
to discern and describe
the vicissitudes of life
the complexities of human thoughts and deeds
Truth and Love were always the two eternal themes
of his divine discourse
he was critical of all rituals
of all ceremonies
of all that was based on falsity and corruption
he went to see all the sādhus and the faqīrs
the yogīs and the siddhās
he was always engaged in dialectical discussions
he was ruthless in his opinions
in his sarcasm
in his critique
he spared none
the highest, the richest

the mighty, the princes

he was sad
that this wonderful world
this sacred creation of the Lord of the universe
was so polluted
so corrupt
in the name of religion
the humble people were looted
the meek had no place in this world of the powerful
he lamented the darkness of the mind
the ignorance of the spirit
the stronger suppressed the weak
the powerful crushed the poor
he often wondered
why the Lord Almighty let this happen
why so much sufferance was the lot of his countrymen
why the women were considered evil
who gave birth to pīrs and princes
who gave birth to sādhus and scholars
on whom depended all creation
all birth, all begetting
all friendships, all families ...

the places of worship, the houses of God
had become the dens of corruption

the sacred courtyards had become the dwellings of the demons

he encouraged the farmer to sow the seeds of good deeds
to plough the fields of truth and love
he asked the Hindus to wear the sacred thread of humility and honesty
he asked the Muslims to substitute their five prayers
with truth, justice, charity, love and devotion
he told the merchants to deal in the business of truth
to meditate on the nature of honesty and generosity
he told men to be righteous and courageous
he told women to be true to their love and longings...

Mardānā and his Guru, the venerable Bābā
went around the world to witness
what was going on in their beloved country
in the sacred land of the great rishīs, of sublime saints
who once excelled in spiritual life
in serene and superb living
in perfect co-ordination of thoughts and deeds
in humility and charity
in love and devotion

and he told his dear friend, Mardānā
not to despair
the Lord is great
great is His universe

and even greater is His will and order

there is always hope in His devotion
in the humble attitude of love and affection
in meditation and reflection ...

maybe the things will change
as He wills, so it is done
in Him there is hope, there is happiness
there is music, there is rhythm
His nature is wonderful
there is no limit to His manifestation
His sublime presence ...

and in this vein he composed his **Bārāh Māhā**
on the vicissitudes of nature in the twelve months
in the twelve moods of his wonderful Punjab
the sacred land of the five rivers...

BĀRĀH MĀHĀ

in Chēt (March) there is spring
the butterflies spread their wings on the flowers
the nature is in full bloom
the beloved longs for her Love
in separation, in anguish
she spends her time in sorrow, in sufferance
the cuckoo sings the melodies of love on the mango tree
the butterflies sing and dance on the flowers
Nānak, in this auspicious month of Chēt
the beloved resonates with His love, with His devotion
she vibrates with the pangs of separation !

in Waisākh (April) the branches are adorned
with fresh green leaves
the beloved awaits for His love
for His benevolence
to cross the river of sorrow and sufferance
bereft of His grace
she is restless, she is tormented in anguish

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
she discerns His truth, His transcendence
she perceives her Love in meditation
in reflection !

in Jēṭh (May) the being cannot forget her Love
it is hot, it is burning
she is restless
she prays, she yearns to meet her Love
to be with Him in His sublime presence

Nānak, she meditates, she reflects
to discern His truth, His transcendence
to be blessed by His benediction
by His benevolence !

in Asār (June) the sun burns in the sky
the earth is scorched
engulfed by the overwhelming fires
all water evaporates
the creatures suffer in hunger and thirst
the chariot of the sun burns
all that falls in its crest

Nānak, the beloved who prays and reflects
is rid of her sins and sufferance
she vibrates for her Love
she resonates in His presence !

in Sāwan (July) it is pleasant
the clouds of hope hover over the entire universe

my Love is in far away lands
I suffer in separation, I yearn for His affection
lonely, restless, in anguish, in pain
I tremble with every movement, every strain

Nānak, blessed is the beloved
who resonates with His union
who vibrates with His communion !

Bhādō (August) has not brought peace and serenity
the devotee is stuck in divisions and duality

there are rains all over
the earth is soaked in water
the night is dark and the clouds are thundering
the cuckoo sings the hymns of the Lord
the peacocks are dancing
the lakes are full, the insects are gathering

Nānak prays for the grace of the Guru
to spare his devotee
from all sorrow and suffering !

in Asun (September) the beloved withers in anguish
bewildered, she is lost in dualities
in falsehood and pretension, there is no serenity

the heat is receding, the cold is approaching
there are fresh green branches on the trees
but there is no let-up in sorrow and sufferance

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is love, there is peace, there is fragrance !

in Katak (October) His will surveys the entire universe
the devotee discerns His truth, His transcendence
with the lamp of meditation and reflection
with the oil of love and the wick of affection
there is union, there is reception

those who are drenched in sin and squalor
they are doomed, they are lost in wilderness

Nānak, those who are blessed by the Lord
they are saved
they are bestowed with His benediction
with His benevolence !

in Maghar (November) there is harmony
between the body and the mind
the beloved prays to the Lord
for His love sublime

she reflects upon the ingenuity of the eternal Creator
upon His truth and transcendence
upon His benediction and benevolence
she vibrates with the hymns of devotion

Nānak, she adores the Lord
with all her love and affection !

in Pokh (December) it is biting cold
all nature is withered and dry
the devotee lingers in anguish, in separation
in anxieties, in dejection

those who resonate with His love and devotion
they are blessed by the grace of the Guru
they vibrate with His hymns, with His reflection
they perceive His light in every projection

Nānak prays to the sublime Lord
for His audience, for His omniscience
for His grace, for His presence !

in Magh (January) the devotee bathes
in the pure waters of divine reflection
she resonates with cosmic rhythms
she vibrates with love and affection
she enjoys the holy dip
in the union of Ganga and Jamuna
in the depths of the seven seas

Nānak, the month of Magh is sweet and serene
the devotee bathes
in the pristine waters of the divine stream !

in Phalgun (February) the weather is ecstatic
there is sublime communion
all greed and lust are gone
there is joy, there is union

in His will, in His bliss
all evil is eradicated
all actions are sublimated
there is no place for false embellishment
for superficial decoration
in love and affection
there is purity of meditation
there is sublimity of reflection

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is union, there is divine reception !

all seasons are pleasant
all weathers are auspicious
all periods, all moments herald the sacred times
of divine union, of sublime communion

in the presence of the Lord of all projections
all decoration, all embellishment
bring joy and bliss of the sublime union
there is love, there is affection
the devotee is surcharged with divine perception

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is meditation, there is reflection
there is love, there is affection !

it was Bārāh Māhā
meditations and reflections
on the nature and the vicissitudes of the seasons
in the Punjab
the sacred land of five rivers

in his Udāsīs, the travels to the different
far away lands of Hindustān and beyond
the Bābā often met the religious mendicants
of different sects
siddhās and yogīs
who practised austerities
to achieve supernatural powers
to be able to perform miracles
to impress the simple people
to involve the innocent populace
in all kinds of rituals and rites
which led nowhere
which only created more problems for the ignorant
the divine purpose was often forgotten

the appearances took over the transcendence
 these siddhās and yogīs lived in a different world
 in āshrams and ḍerās
 away from the common people
 they gave the impression of simplicity
 divinity and sublimity
 in practice, there were deluded
 in their own net
 in their own illusions
 they stayed away
 from the real problems of the people
 their miseries, their measures
 the metaphysical snares
 replaced the Truth of the True Lord ...

in one of the compositions, the **Siddh Gosht**
 the dialogue with the siddhās
 he described and discerned
 the complexities and absurdities
 of religious life based on false metaphysics
 where the truth and love of the Lord of the universe
 were forgotten
 were reduced to mere ceremonies
 mere disputes over frivolous issues
 mere discussions in the void

mere intellectual gymnastics
to mislead the innocent
to misappropriate the spiritual and the divine

in **Āsā dī Wār** the Bābā described
this terrible state of affairs...

the disciples gather, the gurus dance
the feet stamp, the heads move
there is dust all over the hair
people laugh and return home
all this jugglery for a few loaves of bread
this indignity, this stampede on earth ...

all austerities are hollow
all miracles are illusions
the only miracle
is the miracle of His Creation
of His Truth
of His Love...

RĀG RĀMKALĪ
SIDDH GOṢṬ

hail the assembly of the siddhās
hail the assembly of the sages

I bow before my Lord
who imbibes in Himself all truth and transcendence
I offer my head, my heart to the Almighty Lord

Nānak, in the company of the sages
there is truth, there is tranquillity
there is honour, there is serenity ...

in wilderness, in wandering
there is no truth, no reflection
bereft of the true Word
there is no perception, no salvation ! (1)

where do you come from ?
who are you ?
what path you follow ?
what indeed is your goal ?

in search of the divine truth
I live in His will
I hail the assembly of the sages

O Bairagī, please tell us
where do you stay ?
where do you subsist ?
where do you come from ?
where do you go ?
Nānak, what indeed is your path ? (2)

my heart vibrates with His eternal presence
my mind follows the path of righteousness

in His will is steady serenity
Nānak, in His will is divine sublimity

with the Word of the Guru
there is perception of His omniscience
there is reflection of His truth and transcendence ! (3)

Charpat asks Nānak
how can we cross the river of sorrow and sufferance ?
how can we arrive at its perception ?

one who asks this question knows the answer
you are the yogī, the sage
you should know better ! (4)

as the lotus remains pure in water
as the duck glides along
so with the Word of the Guru
with meditation and reflection
one crosses this river of sorrow and sufferance

those who live in steady serenity
who surmount all anguish and anxiety
Nānak hails those sages
who perceive and teach His truth
who live in His refuge ! (5)

o wise and noble sage
do not be angry
please answer us gently
how does one find
such a Guru sublime ?

o yogī, this restless mind finds its steady serenity
with meditation and reflection
with love and affection

with truth and transcendence ! (6)

remain away from all hustle and bustle
wander in the jungles
and eat fruits and roots
to meditate and reflect upon the eternal truth

with sacred baths at holy sites
we eradicate all impurities and dirt
Loharipa, the disciple of Gorakh
explains thus the sublimity of the yogic discipline
of steady serenity and divine reflection ! (7)

one should stay steady and serene
in country and town
Nānak, bereft of His reflection
there is no perception
there is greed and lust
there is hunger and thirst

those who are blessed by the Guru
they live in His truth
they trade in His truth
Nānak, with mild sleep and little eating
they spend their lives in meditation and reflection ! (8)

to live in His omniscience, in His presence
is the true path of transcendence
all these yogic disguises and pains
serve no purpose
these are efforts in vain

Nānak, those who follow the righteous path
do not suffer anguish and pain
they enjoy the divine bliss
they stay steady and serene ! (9)

with the resonance of His Word
with the earrings of His discourse
there is no pride, no pretence
there is no passion, no anger, no offence

Nānak, in His blessing, in His benevolence
there is truth, there is transcendence
with the grace of the Guru
there is reflection, there is omniscience ! (10)

o yogī, let the control of passions be your begging bowl
and the discipline of five senses, your cap
the submission of body, your seat of meditation
and the temperance of mind, your loin cloth
let truth, patience and serenity be your disciples

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is meditation, there is reflection
there is divine truth, there is sublime perception ! (11)

who is hidden ?
who is saved ?
who is in tune with the eternal rhythm ?
who is born ?
whom death takes away ?
who is immersed in the three worlds ? (12)

my Lord is immanent in the whole universe
the devotees are saved
they resonate with divine hymn
they vibrate with His sublime rhythm

bereft of His grace
the being is caught in the eternal cycle

Nānak, with His benevolence
the devotees perceive His truth and transcendence ! (13)

how is the being in bondage ?
how is he stung by the serpent ?
how is he lost ?
how is he found ?
how is there light ?
how is there darkness ?
whoever perceives this truth is our Guru ! (14)

o yogī, bereft of His Word
there is bondage
there is serpent
bereft of His Word
there is sorrow
there is sufferance
with the grace of the Guru
darkness recedes and light pervades
Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
all pride and pretence fade ! (15)

the one who controls his senses
who is steady and serene
whose mind flutters not
whose body follows His discipline
he perceives His truth in His sublime cave
Nānak, in His will, in His truth
he is sound and safe ! (16)

why is this renunciation ?
why is this wandering ?
why is this guise of a sage ?
what indeed is your goal ?
how do you intend to cross
the river of sorrow and sufferance ? (17)

in search of the true devotee
is this wandering
for his love, for his presence is this disguise
I live for truth
I trade in truth
Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
one crosses the river of sorrow and sufferance ! (18)

how have you followed this grind ?
 how have you controlled your mind ?
 how have you transcended hope and despair ?
 how have you perceived the sublime light ?
 how can one cut into iron without teeth ?
 Nānak, how can one arrive at His truth ? (19)

with the grace of the Guru
 this mind is steady and serene
 with the Word of the Guru
 it vibrates with divine hymns
 with the Word of the Guru
 there is no hope, no despair
 the devotee perceives His light in every sphere

with discipline and temperance
 the iron of evil is cut with His omniscience
 Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
 there is discerning
 there is the crossing of the river of sufferance
 there is benediction

there is benevolence ! (20)

what was there at the beginning of Time ?
where was the Creator ?
how does one perceive this sublime truth ?
how does one stay steady and escape the final grind ?

with the Word of the Guru
there is no fear, no ferment
no pride, no pretence
Nānak is beholden to those
who perceive His truth
who live in His benediction
in His divine refuge ! (21)

where does one come from ?
where does one go ?
where does one stay steady and serene ?

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee sheds greed and lust
with the grace of the Guru
he gains His trust

how does one arrive at His perception ?
how does one follow His projection ?
Nānak, please enlighten us with this sublime reflection

in His will is birth
in His will is death
in His will is every breath
with the Word of the Guru
the devotee perceives His truth
with the Word of the Guru
he stays in His divine refuge ! (22)

in the beginning of the beginning
at the beginning of Time
there was none but the Lord sublime

with the Word of the Guru
the devotee discerns the discourse of His manifestation
the discourse of His immanence

with the Word of the Guru
with meditation and reflection
the devotee is rid of all dualities and divisions
of all conflicts and confusions

Nānak, with the Word of the Guru
the devotee reflects and perceives His truth
with the Word of the Guru
the devotee lives in His sublime refuge
with the Word of the Guru
the yogī sheds all pride and pretence
he enjoys His benediction and benevolence ! (23)

from the divine immanence
there was sublime manifestation
the Creator transcended His creation

with the Word of the Guru
there is truth
there is transcendence
there is reflection
there is perception

there is but one unique verity
it resonates in every breath of the devotee

with the Word of the Guru
the yogī perceives His truth
the lotus of his mind is in bloom

with the Word of the Guru
the yogī burns his dualities and desires
he discerns the mysterious universe
Nānak, the devotee realises his self in every creation
he is bestowed with His sublime reflection ! (24)

those who reflect upon His truth
they resonate with His truth
they vibrate with His truth

those who live in falsities and pretensions
their mind is restless
they are caught in the eternal cycle

with the Word of the Guru
there is no birth, no death
there is no pride, no pretence

bereft of His grace
there is anguish, there is pain
all the physical efforts are in vain

with the Word of the Guru
there is perception, there is salvation
Nānak, with the Word of the Guru
there is renunciation, there is devotion
there is reflection, there is benevolence ! (25)

the ignorant follows the wrong path
restless, bewildered, he wanders in the jungles
he is stuck with greed and lust
he is sick with hunger and thirst
he prays at the graveyards
he is lost in ceremonies and superstitions
bereft of the Word of the Guru
he is caught in dualities and divisions

Nānak, with the Word of the Guru
the devotee perceives His truth
he lives in divine refuge ! (26)

the devotee lives in the fear of the Lord
he follows His divine command
with the Word of the Guru
he controls his bewildered mind

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee vibrates with divine hymns
his heart resonates with cosmic rhythms

Nānak, with meditation and reflection
the devotee is immersed in His sublime projection ! (27)

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee discerns the Vedas
with the grace of the Guru
the devotee crosses the river of life
with the grace of the Guru
the devotee perceives the divine light
with the grace of the Guru
the devotee reflects upon His immanence
Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
the devotee is saved
he enjoys His benediction and benevolence ! (28)

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee discerns and describes the eternal verity

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee resonates with love and affection
he spends his time in meditation and reflection

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee attains the spiritual height
with the grace of the Guru
he fathoms the mystery of life

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
the devotee is rid of his desires and strife ! (29)

in His will is the wondrous creation
in His will is construction and conception

with the grace of the Guru
there is love, there is affection
there is truth, there is transcendence
there is benediction, there is benevolence

bereft of meditation and reflection
there is no honour, no reception
Nānak, bereft of meditation and reflection
there is alienation, there is dejection ! (30)

with the grace of the Guru
there is reflection, there is discerning
there is truth, there is transcendence

with the grace of the Guru
there are no dualities, no divisions
there are no wanderings, no renunciations

with the grace of the Guru
there is the crossing of the river of sufferance
Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is benediction, there is benevolence ! (31)

in His reflection
there is divine perception
there is no pride, no pretence
there is truth, there is immanence
there is temperance, there is discipline
there is serenity, there is salvation

in His reflection
the devotee perceives the truth of the three worlds
Nānak, in His reflection
there is peace, there is projection ! (32)

in His reflection
there is dialogue and discussion
in His reflection
there is discipline and devotion
there is perception and discerning

bereft of divine reflection
it is all baseless begging

Nānak hails the devotees
who resonate with meditation and devotion
who follow the divine projection ! (33)

with the grace of the true Guru
there is meditation and reflection
there is devotion and discipline

the yogīs are lost in their twelve sects
and the sanyāsīs in their six

those who reflect upon the Word of the Guru
are saved, are honoured
bereft of the Word of the Guru
there is duality, there is division

Nānak hails those fortunate devotees
who vibrate with His truth
who live in His truth ! (34)

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee receives the jewel of meditation
with the grace of the Guru
he reflects, he discerns
he trades in truth
he stays steady and serene

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee perceives His immanence, His manifestation
Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
the devotee escapes all evil and deception ! (35)

with the grace of the Guru
there are charities, there are sacred baths
with the grace of the Guru
there is meditation, there is steady perception
there is honour, there is reception

with the grace of the Guru
there is no fear, no ferment
no conflict, no confusion

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is love, there is affection ! (36)

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee discerns the Shāstras, the Vedas
with the grace of the Guru
the devotee comprehends the mysteries of the universe

with the grace of the Guru
there is no enemy, no jealousy
no duality, no division
with the grace of the Guru
the devotee is saturated with His meditation

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
the devotee arrives at His truth and transcendence ! (37)

bereft of the grace of the Guru
the being is caught in the eternal cycle
bereft of the grace of the Guru
there is anguish, there is pain
bereft of the grace of the Guru
all efforts are in vain

bereft of the grace of the Guru
there is hunger and thirst, there is poison
bereft of the grace of the Guru
the being is stung by the serpent
Nānak, bereft of the grace of the Guru
there is fear, there is ferment ! (38)

with the grace of the Guru
there is smooth crossing of the river of life
there is no sin, no sufferance
there is eternal light
with the grace of the Guru
the devotee discerns the Word divine

with the grace of the Guru
there is meditation, there is reflection
Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is sublime perception ! (39)

with the grace of the Guru
the bridge was built
and the Lanka of passions was destroyed

with the grace of the Guru
Babhikhan's secret was disclosed
and Rāwan's kingdom was ruined

with the grace of the Guru
even the stones did not drown
with the grace of the Guru
thirty-three million gods were safe and sound ! (40)

with the grace of the Guru
there is no cycle of birth and death
with the grace of the Guru
there is honour, there is respect

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee discerns the right from the wrong
he follows the contours of the divine discourse

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is no bondage, no hindrance
there is truth, there is transcendence ! (41)

with the grace of the Guru
there is meditation, there is perception
with the grace of the Guru
there is no pride, no pretension

with the grace of the Guru
there is devotion
there is cosmic reflection

with the grace of the Guru
there is truth, there is transcendence
Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is discerning, there is benevolence ! (42)

what is the beginning ?
what is the auspicious time ?
who is your Guru ?
whose disciple you claim to be ?

what is your reflection ?
what is your perception ?
O Nānak, please tell us
what indeed is your discourse ?
how does the Word help you across ? (43)

from the beginning of the beginning
is the grace of the Guru
is the auspicious time
His Word is the Guru
that saturates our mind
Nānak, He is, He will ever be
the Lord sublime
with the grace of the Guru
the devotee sheds all pride and pretence
His Word resonates in the entire universe

the devotee vibrates with His love and benevolence ! (44)

how can one cut into iron with the teeth of wax ?
 how can one face the onslaught of māyā ?
 how can one escape pride and prejudice ?
 in which cave can we keep the house of snow and the coat of fire ?
 what is the goal of meditation and reflection ?
 what is the source of truth and perception ? (45)

with the Word of the Guru
 the being escapes all pride and pretensions
 all dualities and divisions
 beret of the Word of the Guru
 the being is lost in falsities and deceptions
 with the Word of the Guru
 there is meditation, there is reflection
 Nānak, with the Word of the Guru
 the fire is extinguished
 the being is free from all false projections ! (46)

those who live in fear and ferment
they meditate, they reflect
they discern His Word
they vibrate with His love and affection
their passions are sublimated
they live in His will, in His bliss
Nānak, they are blessed
by His benediction, by His benevolence ! (47)

how is our mind drenched in darkness ?
how is it enlightened by the sun of divine perception ?
how can one escape the eternal cycle ?
how can we surmount the demon of death ?
how can we discern and perceive His truth ?
please Nānak, discern and describe these reflections ! (48)

with the Word of the Guru
the mind is enlightened
the sun of knowledge rises
and the darkness recedes

with the support of meditation and reflection
there is no despair, no dejection
there is steady serenity
there is easy crossing of the river of life
with the grace of the Guru
there is truth, there is light

Nānak, such a devotee escapes the demon of death
there is truth, there is trust ! (49)

in meditation, in reflection
there is perception, there is sublimation
bereft of meditation
there are sins and sufferance
in meditation, in reflection
there is peace, there is projection
there is no duality, no deception
Nānak, when the Word resonates in the universe
there is divine music, there is transcendence ! (50)

my Lord is sublime
His immanence surveys the three worlds
the devotee who perceives His transcendence
is bestowed with His benediction, with His benevolence
he discerns His mysterious universe
he attains His love, His essence
the devotee who meditates and reflects
who sheds all pride and pretence
Nānak, he is blessed with His omniscience, with His presence ! (51)

all talk about His immanence
how do we perceive His presence ?
how do we discern His omniscience ?
it all depends upon deeds and devotion
as we are born, so are our actions
Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is no cycle of birth and death
there is meditation, there is redemption ! (52)

in meditation and reflection
the devotee transcends the physical universe
he discerns His truth and transcendence
he vibrates with cosmic hymns

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
the devotee discerns the Word of the Guru
he lives in truth
and enjoys the divine refuge! (53)

in meditation and reflection
there is peace and projection

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee is always awakened
he sleeps no more

with the Word of the Guru
there is discerning, there is sublimation
there is easy crossing, there is salvation

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is presence, there is benevolence ! (54)

bereft of His grace
the being is bewildered
he discerns not the sublime truth
he is ensnared in falsity
the demon of death hovers over his destiny

bereft of the Word of the Guru
there is no honour, no respect
there is no crossing, no support

Nānak, bereft of meditation and reflection
there is no devotion, no reception ! (55)

with the Word of the Guru
there is discerning, there is perception
with the grace of the Guru
there is serenity, there is salvation
bereft of the His Word
the ignorant is lost
he faces the onslaught of sins and suffering
Nānak, in His will is all knowledge, all discerning
all benediction, all becoming ! (56)

in His truth
there is transcendence, there is treasure
the devotee crosses the river of life
and helps others along in discerning His truth and light

Nānak, in truth and transcendence
there is meditation and reflection
there is benediction and benevolence ! (57)

what is the Word ?
whose discerning helps us cross the river of life ?
what discipline we follow ?
where is His light ?

how can we reflect upon His Word ?
how do we perceive the eternal truth ?
please Nānak, explain to us this mystery
how do we comprehend this complexity ?

with the Word of the Guru
there is no duality, no division
no conflict, no confusion
with meditation and reflection
there is projection, there is divine perception ! (58)

His Word surcharges the whole universe
it resonates in every heart
it is the source of all reflection
it is the source of divine perception

with the grace of the Guru
His Word saturates our mind
with the grace of the Guru
there is no duality, no bind

with the grace of the Guru
there is steady serenity
there is sublimity
the devotee crosses the river of life
he perceives the divine light

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
with the Word of the Guru
there is truth and transcendence
there is benediction and benevolence ! (59)

o yogī, all your breathing exercises
all your physical gymnastics
serve no purpose
they lead nowhere

with meditation and reflection
there is projection, there is divine perception
with the grace of the Guru
the devotee perceives the truth of His immanence
His sublime Word resonates in his heart
he is enlightened, he discerns His essence

with the Word of the Guru
there is communion
there is love, there is affection, there is union
Nānak, with the Word of the Guru
there are cosmic projections
the heart beats with divine perceptions ! (60)

the air is the breath of life
but where does the air come from ?
what is the source of our knowledge ?
what is the source of our perception ?

o yogī, bereft of the Word of the Guru
there is no air, no breath
there is greed and lust
there is hunger and thirst
the Word of the Guru is the source of all knowledge
of all truth

what is the eternal truth ?
what is the sublime refuge ?

Nānak, with the Word of the Guru
the devotee discerns His truth
there is steady serenity
there is sublime refuge ! (61)

when there is no meditation, no reflection
when the Word of the Guru is forgotten
when there is no discipline, no devotion
when there is no truth, no transcendence
there is no serenity, no salvation
Nānak, with meditation and reflection
there is benevolence, there is benediction ! (62)

with the grace of the Guru
there is meditation, there is reflection
there is the nectar of His truth and transcendence

with the Word of the Guru
there is discerning, there is perception
there is smooth crossing, there is sublimation
Nānak, with the Word of the Guru
the devotee discerns the sublime truth
he remains steady and serene in divine refuge ! (63)

how can this mind, this wild elephant
be disciplined ?
o renunciant, where is that sublime Word ?
that brings peace and serenity
that controls human vanity

with the grace of the Guru
the restless mind is steady and serene
the heart vibrates with divine hymns

how can one perceive this verity ?
how can one fathom the inner complexity ?
how can the warm sun of knowledge rise
in the cave of the cold moon ?

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
there is no pride, no prejudice
there is serenity, there is verity
there is patience, there is tranquillity ! (64)

with the grace of the Guru
there is knowledge
there is perception
there is steady discerning

there is no need of breathing exercises
no need of physical gymnastics

with the grace of the Guru
the heart vibrates with divine rhythms
there is eternal light
there is divine life
there is truth
there is transcendence
the whole universe resonates with His benevolence

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
the mind is steady
the heart beats with serenity, with sublimity ! (65)

when there was no mind, no body, no heart
how could there be meditation and reflection ?

when there was no form, no figure, no blood, no bones
how could there be any perception
of His truth, of His transcendence ?

Nānak, the devotee dyed in the colour of meditation
perceives His truth, His transcendence
in all conditions, in all times ! (66)

when there was no mind, no body, no bones
there was eternal silence and sublimation
when there was no breath, no lotus within
there was eternal truth and transcendence
when there was no form, no figure
there was the Word in the beginning and for ever
when there was no earth, no sky
there was the eternal light in the three worlds

Nānak, all forms, all figures were within His immanence
He was, He is, He will ever be
the source of all life, of all light
of all creation, of all sight ! (67)

how is there creation ?
how is there destruction ?

o yogī, bereft of meditation
there is no creation, no consumption

bereft of reflection
there is pride, there is prejudice
there are sins, there is sufferance

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee perceives the divine truth
there is purity, there is presence
with the Word of the Guru
there is no pride, no pretence
there is truth, there is transcendence

Nānak, bereft of meditation and reflection
there is no discerning, no perception ! (68)

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee discerns the divine discourse
with the grace of the Guru
there is truth
there is transcendence

rare is the devotee who perceives His truth
rare is the devotee who finds His refuge

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
the yogī follows the divine projection
there is steady serenity in meditation and reflection ! (69)

bereft of the grace of the Guru
there is no peace, no serenity
bereft of the grace of the Guru
there is no meditation, no sublimity

bereft of the grace of the Guru
there is no reflection, no salvation
bereft of the grace of the Guru
there are sins, there is sufferance

Nānak, bereft of the grace of the Guru
this life is drenched in falsities and deception ! (70)

with the grace of the Guru
the devotee controls his mind and pride
with the grace of the Guru
there is eternal light

with the grace of the Guru
there is no fear of the demon of death
with the grace of the Guru
there is no conflict, no strife

Nānak, with the grace of the Guru
the divine truth is in sight ! (71)

o yogī, bereft of meditation and reflection
there is no yoga, no perception

with divine reflection
there is peace, there is projection
there is truth, there is transcendence

bereft of meditation and reflection
there is duplicity, there is division
there is conflict, there is confusion

with the grace of the Guru, o yogī
there is yoga, there is perception

Nānak, bereft of meditation and reflection
there is no discerning, no salvation ! (72)

my Lord alone knows His dimensions
none else can discern His extensions
He is manifest, He is immanent
He is the sole agent of every action

many a siddhā has searched in vain
none has perceived His grain
He is, He will ever be the Sovereign of His universe
of this grand spectacle

Nānak, there is but one unique Lord
in His will is every action, every dispensation ! (73)

thus the Bābā continued his discussions, his debates
with the siddhās and sādhus of his time
there was no place in his path
for false deals and delusions
for endless disputes over austerities and renunciations
for ceremonial paraphernalia ...

the corrupt, the dishonest, the cruel
could not be saved
by rites and rituals
miracles and mysteries
prayers and pilgrimages

the salvation
if there was one
depended on
truth
love
purity
every thing else was illusion of the mind

delusion of the soul ...

once Mardānā and the Bābā visited
the famous temple of Jagannāth
the priests were busy in the worship of the idol
with candles and flowers
the Bābā asked them to shun all these rituals
all these rites and superstitions ...

he asked Mardānā to tune his Rabāb
to compose the divine worship
to vibrate the cosmic music

the whole universe prays for the Lord, he said
the skies serve as the vast plateau
where the sun and the moon burn as two lamps
and the stars twinkle in the sky
there is the incense of the woods
and the east and the west winds
sweep the extensive spaces
with the fragrance of His gardens
what a wonderful spectacle it is
what splendid worship

of the Lord of life and death

all souls vibrate with inner music
there are millions of eyes
millions of forms
merged in one eternal Form
there are millions of faces
millions of silhouettes
all form a part of the same universal gaze
there are millions of lights within
pushing darkness into extreme recesses
the eternal lamp
burns for ever
to worship the Lord of the universe
the little bird, cuckoo, the being is thirsty
longing to drink the nectar of the Guru
Nānak prays for universal peace and prosperity ...

from Jagannāth the wanderers reached
a deserted place on the shore of the ocean
in the southern country
far from all habitation
from all nature and culture
Mardānā was forlorn
he was thirsty
he could stand no more
but there was no water in sight
there was nothing but the vast spaces of sand ...

suddenly a jackal appeared on the scene
and bowed before the Bābā
the Guru was happy
there was no water
but there was the insignia of water
of all that quenches thirst and hunger
the travellers followed the mysterious jackal
as they reached the other side of the desert
they saw a small lake
full of the purest water

Mardānā drank to his fill
he had never tasted such a sweet
and invigorating drink
his greed overtook him
he went to the other side of the lake
to drink more water
to quench his unending thirst
as he tasted the sparkling water
he fell down

the water was poisonous
the Bābā came to his rescue
he explained to him the secret of the divine jackal
who was sent by the Lord Himself ...

then as usual Mardānā was hungry
the Bābā told him to wait on the bank
as he takes a dip in the lake
it took him long in the depths of the mysterious lake
Mardānā was anxious
he was worried
he started crying for his Guru

after a long interval the Bābā reappeared
resplendent in heavenly robes
with the divine food in his hands
as Mardānā had his fill
he was overjoyed
he was transported to the heavenly bliss ...

the two travellers continued their pilgrimage
of the wonderful universe of the Lord
they walked for days, for months
and reached an absolute wilderness
for miles there was nothing but sand dunes
there was no vegetation, no culture
there was no life, no movement ...

Mardānā was frightened
in this vast land with no end in sight
he cried, O dear Bābā
where have you brought me
there is nothing to see
none to talk to
there is not even a tree, a bush
that he could embrace and cry

there is no country, no company
the Bābā counselled patience
we have travelled so far
to be one with the Master of the universe
away from all hassle
from all that disturbs your attention
your meditation
there is nothing but sand dunes to walk on
and the stars to gaze
the great canopy of the vast blue sky is above us
the air is pure
the atmosphere is beyond all worldly impurities
this is the right place for peaceful reflection
for meditation and prayer
for days and months we have walked
to reach this heavenly abode of the Master
to breathe this purest of the breezes
to think of none but our dear Lord
tune your Rabāb and play the divine rhythm
the divine music
that vibrates in this spiritual domain
in this sphere of absolute sublimity
of Truth and Love
of Trance and Tranquillity ...

the eternal travellers continued their journey
from the sand dunes of the vast deserts
they turned to the North
to the snow clad mountains of the great Himalayas
it took them several months
through wilderness
through jungles and woods
infested with the bandits of the midlands
the Bābā continued to preach and pray
for their physical and spiritual health ...

when finally they reached the summit
of Sumer Parbat, the snow clad golden hills
which were famous for their diamonds
their gold and silver
their yogīs and siddhās

they saw the yogīs lying in trance
since ages they had not moved
the Bābā uttered the divine Shabad, the heavenly Word
to wake the sleeping sādhus

the yogīs moved to the strange voice
that came from the depths of nowhere
for they had forgotten even the human voice
for centuries they were oblivious of the affairs of the world
they had gone into slumber
never to wake
never to bother about this mundane world

the Bābā reminded them of their duties
of their Dharma
of their mission to spread the love of the Lord
to declare the sublime Word of the Master
the yogīs had lived in a dream world
they had forgotten the vast suffering humanity
it was the Age of Kaliyug
the Bābā reminded the careless yogīs
they should not enjoy their spiritual bliss
while the populace in the underworld
in the vast lands of Bhārat
their sacred land
was suffering
caught in the most illusory snares of the world
the Kaliyug, the Dark Ages had engulfed their countrymen
how can they be oblivious of their lot
of their pains and passions

they must descend to the world below
and work for their uplift
to preach Truth and Love
to spread the Word of God
of honesty and humility

the spiritual powers, the miracles
are of no use
declared the Bābā
the sādhus, the saints
the siddhās, the yogīs
must not renounce this world
to remain in their ignorant bliss
it is the duty of the pure and the sublime
to help others
to alleviate suffering and pain
to share their burden
the divine beings must not be egoist
they must partake in the general penance
in the problems and prayers of the meek and the humble
of those who know not what they lack
what they suffer
the Truth and Love of the Master
is the precious gift for all

there is no high
no low
in the eyes of the Lord
there is absolute equality
the lowly must not be ignored
they deserve the most from the divine grace
God loves those who love the others
the forlorn and the poor
the needy and the wretched
there are no chosen people
there is absolute equality
there is no class, no creed
no high, no low
all must be treated equally
all must benefit from the grace of the Guru...

from the inaccessible mountains to the plains of Kāmrūp
it was a long way
but Mardānā and the Bābā were made of tough clay
they continued to walk, to trek
through thick and then
through all the hardships of the routes of the Middle Ages

the Bābā had a mission
 it had to be performed
 it had to be followed

the land of Kāmṛūp was known for its beauty
 for the most fair damsels of Hindustān
 many a man had lost his heart
 in search of love and lust
 in search of false infatuation
 the most beautiful girls of Bhārat
 had ensnared many a prince
 nobody had ever resisted their charm

as Mardānā was always anxious
 always in trouble
 he left for the city of pleasure while the Bābā was asleep
 when the Bābā woke up
 he realised the misadventure
 that Mardānā was about to get into
 when after a long time the disciple did not return
 the Bābā left for the net of passion and pleasure
 as he entered the House of the Queen of the fairies
 Her Majesty fell at the feet of the Bābā
 she immediately recognised the great divine Master
 and pleaded for prayer and providence

for the Bābā
every being
whatever her state and standing
was the creature of his Master
she deserved all care and credence
all the divine gifts of truth and love
she was duly blessed
but was forbidden to trade in evil deeds
in evil snares ...

after the boon
the Bābā saw his disciple, Mardānā
who had fallen to the charms of the fair maidens
who had been transformed into a sheep
who had been subdued and humbled
who had surrendered all his body and soul
to the most beautiful girls he had ever seen
it was not his fault
after all he was a simple human being
what could he do before those most enchanting fairies
he was forgiven

the slave girls
the maidens of the Queen of Kāmrūp
had turned a young man into the most humble and meek lover
the Bābā was graceful
the Queen was humble
she asked for forgiveness
and brought the innocent Mardānā to his original state
the Bābā blessed all the denizens of Kāmrūp
the House of Pleasure was transformed into the House of God
of worship and prayers
the Queen and her girls became the young disciples
of the eternal Guru
the great Bābā
the divine Master ...

from Kāmṛūp the travellers
moved to the Muslim lands
it was a hazardous journey
it took long, very long
several months
to reach
the holiest of the holies
the most sacred Kaba
as they had been tired
they went to sleep ...

a Mullah passed by
and saw the Bābā with his feet towards the great Kaba
he was furious
how could a mortal, an infidel
dare rest with his feet
towards the holiest of the shrines
it was the greatest sacrilege
he moved the feet to the east
in the opposite direction to where the Kaba was

the miracle of the miracles
as the feet moved
so did the Kaba
the Mullah was astonished
what had happened
the House of God
the House of Allah
was following this infidel, this pagan ...

as the Bābā awoke
he realised the predicament of the poor Mullah

do not worry, my dear Mullah
nothing has happened
the Kaba is where it was
only the curtain of your ignorance has been removed
the Kaba is the House of worship
but God is everywhere, Allah is everywhere
the greatest miracle is His omnipresence
you want to confine the greatest of the powers
to one small place
to one narrow quarter
it cannot be done

Allah's presence must be felt in all corners
in all directions
east and west, north and south
all directions are sacred
they all belong to the same Almighty Lord
rituals and superstitions are of no avail
there are not only five prayers
and certain periods of fasting
one must pray all the time
one must remember his Master at all moments
one must fast every day
fasting on certain days or months
and then eating like animals on other days
is no prayer
is no sacred worship

Allah's Truth and Love surcharge the whole universe
all humanity
all classes and creeds
all people, rich and poor
all men, all women
His dispensation is for all
without any discrepancy
without any distinction
without any differentiation ...

and so it went on
the Udāsīs
the journeys of the indefatigable travellers
they encountered sādhus and faqīrs
they discussed the affairs of this and the other world
they dwelt deep into the mysteries of life
of divine creation
of spiritual flights
of intellectual incisions ...

off and on there were miracles
to prove a point
to change the hardened minds of the stubborn
to show the Truth of the True Lord
to remove the darkness of ignorance ...

Truth and Love
were always the ultimate refrain
of their mission

of their message ...

Mardānā was always curious
my dear Bābā, the Sage, the Great Master !
you have been critical
of temples, of mosques
of Hindus, of Muslims
of sādhus, of siddhās ...

are you sure
your followers will listen to what you preach
what you discern and describe ?

no, my dear Mardānā
I have no illusions
humanity is like the tail of a dog
it can never be straightened
my followers will also be caught in the snares of māyā
in the mire of classes and castes
they will fight for the gaddīs, for the ḍērās

replete with rites and rituals
their houses of worship will be
no different from the temples and the mosques
they will bother more about dress and diet
than Truth and Love
they will worship the Granth
and will never reflect on
what is written in it
they will have no time
for meditation and introspection
for honest and true deeds ...

but what can I do ?
what can we do ?

I follow my mission
I proclaim the Word of the Lord
I live in His will
in His truth and love
in His rhythm and reason ...

what has to happen will happen
one must follow His order
His dictates, His dispensation ...

Mardānā continued with his doubts
O wise and sage Bābā !
we have travelled so many years
east and west, north and south
mountains and seas
deserts and depressions
met so many sādhus, yogīs, faqīrs
learned men of all religions and sects
when we started
we were young and strong
now we are old and tired
and yet I am not sure
I understand this life, this universe

O Bābā, please tell me
what is a Shabad ? what is a Sikh ?

my dear Mardānā
you always ask questions
which do not have any answers
any explanations ...

a Sikh is a shishya
a disciple, a student, a seeker
who wants to know, to comprehend
the infinite, the incomprehensible ...

you see these trees around us
they all have different forms
different trunks, different branches
different leaves, different flowers
even on one tree, all leaves, all flowers
are different from each other
how these forms are born, grow, blossom
who knows ? ...
who knows ? ...

the Lord of humanity
has created this mysterious universe
we have met
so many wise men and women
with so many concepts and ideas
of truth and justice
of good and evil
of nature and culture

of body and soul
they are infinite
created by the Infinite

a Sikh is a student
who is always in search of the Truth
this infinite and incomprehensible Truth
for more he knows
more he realises
there is more to know
knowledge has no frontiers
no finite forms
no definitive answers ...

the Sikh follows his Guru's Shabad
his Guru's discourse
Shabad is the first sound
the first utterance
that created the universe
that was created with the universe
it is the discourse of the Guru
it explains and discerns
it articulates and animates
the eternal, transcendental Truth
of forms and concepts
of sublime ideas

of infinite horizons
of hearts and hearths
of men and women
of young and old
of this marvellous nature ...

thus O dear Mardānā
the Shabad is both the creator and the created
the forms created lead to new forms
the ideas created lead to new ideas
there is no end to this creation
the trees, the flowers
will continue to have ever new forms
the ideas and concepts
will continue to discern and discourse ...

a Sikh will always be a Sikh
a student, a seeker
the Shabad of the Guru
will always enlighten his Sikh
to the sublimity of life
to the infinity of forms
to the eternity of Truth ...

the manmukh, the fool thinks, he knows
what is tree, what is leaf, what is flower
what is man, what is woman
what is life, what is death

the gurmukh, the wise man, the philosopher
the artist, the student, the Sikh
knows that he does not know

all his life he spends in search of the Truth
of tree, of leaf, of flower
of man, of woman
of life, of death
of this absolute mysterious universe

he discerns and discourses
he articulates in forms and ideas
he creates incisive texts
he continues his search
inspiring others
the following generations
to conceptualise and create
more and more incisive texts and forms

to articulate and animate
the evolutionary process
the creative process
that began with the first Shabad
the first music, the first rhythm, the first nād

the object of knowledge
is not this tree, this leaf, this flower
this man, this woman
this life, this death
it is the concept or the idea
of tree, of leaf, of flower
of man, of woman
of life, of death
that is responsible
for the infinity and continuity of each of these

we move from the concrete to the abstract
and from the abstract to the concrete
we reflect and meditate
on the eternal nature, on the eternal evolution
we feel, we imagine, we analyse
we constitute incisive discourses
of this most mysterious universe
of concepts and ideas

which engender other concepts and ideas ...

the Guru's Shabad
discerns and discourses
the ultimate Truth and Verity
the ultimate Mystery

when the mind is steady
and the body is balanced
we reflect without deception
we meditate without distraction
we comprehend concepts and ideas
we understand the true nature
without fear or faction
without hurdles or hindrance

to grasp the knowledge of the Infinite
one has to merge with the Infinite
one has to meditate in absolute isolation
away from all prejudice
away from all consideration
what we see is māyā, an illusion
what we perceive is Truth, the Verity

the eternal Shabad
the eternal concept
is the cause of all creation
of all trees, of all leaves, of all flowers
of all men, of all women
of all life, of all death
all that is created
is consumed
all that is constructed
is destroyed
all that is born
dies
where they come from
where they go
nobody knows
what is
is not
what may be
may be
this whole universe
is just a dream
just a concept
just an idea
of the Lord of the Universe ...

those who meditate and reflect
to understand this concept
live in His will
in His comprehension
they acquire the ultimate Knowledge
in the domain of non-knowledge
where truth, beauty, justice
are conceptual constructs
where cultures and traditions
are in eternal flux
where images and incisions
ideas and instincts
enlighten the student, the Sikh
of ultimate Truth
of ultimate Verity

where the being realises
his Being
and the Being of the Other
of every being who is his Other
in His conceptual domain
in His universe of imagination
in His transcendental horizon
in His Union
in His Love !

and thus the disciple and the Guru
continued their endless journeys
through jungles and mountains
through deserts and depressions
they discussed and discerned
the ways of the world
the ways of the sublime
of loves and longings
of unions and separations

blessed are those
who live in love
in the harmony of body and spirit
in the rhythm of their heart
in the music of their soul
to love is to give
to surrender
to be one with the other
in thought and deed
in meditation and reflection

the sublime moments of love
the rhythmic movements of the heart
the pangs of separation
the mysterious depths of the unknown
the anxieties, the hesitations
the moments of faith and fortitude
the horizons of dark clouds
of despair and depression
of the mysterious rhythms of desires
of the absolute
of the One Eternal Unity
where life and death dissolve in the everlasting Being
where one knows not where one is
where one is ever lonely
where Time and Space
lose their identity
where one cannot differentiate
between the cosmic union
and the cosmic dissolution

life and death are inseparable
my dear Mardānā
to live is to die
to die is to live
one who carries his death on his shoulder
lives for ever
one who is afraid of death
dies every moment
where there is fear
there is death
where there is faith
there is life
love and separation
life and death
dissolve into each other

on the horizon of life is death
on the horizon of love is separation
on the horizon of anguish is bliss

in this vast universe
under the canopy of the sky and the stars
in this endless wilderness of mind and body
we reflect on the destiny of the beings
lost in the search of the self
of the unknown
of the other
of love and hate
of life and death
of rise and fall
of heart and hearth

in these moments of reflection
in these rhythms of sublime music
there is no life
no death
no love
no separation
there is eternal union
there is eternal serenity

to love is to transcend
the being and the other
to live is to be eternally engaged
in the endless struggle
of evil and good
of truth and falsity

within one's own self
within one's own dimensions
there is absolute restlessness
there are unknown dangers
there are dark depressions
there is no peace for the brave
there is no tranquillity for the lover
every moment is surcharged with anxiety
with the sword of death and destruction
with the pangs of separation

this is the lot of those
who dare
to live
to love
who reflect on the ways of the world

who meditate on the mysteries of the universe

my dear Mardānā
 there is no easy path
 no rituals
 no prayers can help you cross this fierce ocean
 you must plunge deep into these fathomless waters
 you must risk all
 lovers and warriors
 must never look back
 their journey is endless
 none has ever seen the other side
 there is nothing beyond the horizon
 there are no thresholds to cross
 no dimensions to measure
 one must go on and on
 one must experience the most excruciating pains of love
 one must suffer the most anxious moments
 in absolute anguish
 in absolute agony ...

jo to prēm khēlaṅ ka chāo
sir dhar talī galī mērī āo
it mārag per dhrījē
sir dījē kāṅ na kījē

my dear Mardānā
all this confusion
all this discord
is due to human nature
man and woman
are independent but interrelated complexities

they are created in the image of God
and like God they are mysterious

they have bodies and souls
the worlds within and the worlds without
are engulfed in eternal struggle
in eternal strife
there are desires and delusions
there are hopes and despairs
there are loves and longings
there are beautiful moments
there are periods of anguish and pain

sublimity and serenity
are tainted by absolute cruelty and craving
there are moments of extreme victimisation
there are times of extreme tyranny

the devil and the deity
belong to the same being

there are complexes of absolute chastity
there are moments of horrid rapes
men and women
are destined to live this eternal curse
they are thrown in a sea of tribulations
without any horizon
without any shore

men and women
must face this terrible onslaught
of extreme emotions and extreme anxieties
peace belongs only to the dead
to the living dead
but one must live
one must fulfil God's mysterious designs
one must follow His dictates

in age after age
seers and saints
priests and prophets
have tried to solve this riddle
to simplify what is complex

to systematise what is sensuous

my dear Mardānā
it is a futile exercise
it is an attempt to dehumanise the human
to ignore the mysterious nature
of the most complex construct
human mind is an infinite ocean
with multiple currents
of unknown urges
of undiscovered emotions
men and women
must live their lives
their tribulations and temptations
their caresses and cruelties
their loves and hates
their hopes and despairs
their affections and affronts

they cannot be chained to this material world
this physical, concrete surrounding
they must continue to constitute their lives
in the domain of imagination
in the domain of conceptual constructs

their fancies and fears
go beyond the real
they live in the surreal
in the universe beyond any constraints
beyond any deliberate dictates
ideas and instincts must mingle with the unknown
with the innermost desires of the mysterious depths

my dear Mardānā
men and women are independent
but interrelated complexities
their individual universes are sacred
their existential experiences are holy
but there is also a relation
also an interaction
in the dialectics of the being and the other
there is a respectable space
but often there is also a collusion
conflict and concord are the two sides
of the same spectacle

mercies and murders are the order of the day
we go from one extreme to the other
from one temptation to another snare

but that is how it is to be
His Will must be done
none dare spoil this sport
this riddle must remain a riddle forever
this complexity cannot be simplified
one must face life
in all its intricacies
in all its ruptures
loves and longings
delusions and deceptions
must follow their course
must reach their climax ...

kām, krodh
lobh, moh, ahankār
cannot be wished away
these five basic human instincts
of passion, anger
greed, lust, pride
fight in the battlefield of life
to the annihilation of every protagonist
to the extinction of every being

it is Kaliyug
the temptress and
the goddess of fury and revenge
the tyrant and the god of destruction and devastation
are ever engaged in their nefarious designs

in this mad world
men and women
the being and the other
all have lost their balance
love has ceded to lust
affection has given way to affront

the world within
and the world without
do not find their equilibrium
they have lost their rhythm
sex, hunger and anger
rule the roost
the muse and the music of the soul
are drowned in the noise of animosities

off and on
 there are moments of reflection
 moments of wisdom and vision
 which herald
 the hope of humanity
 the hope of sublimity and serenity

my dear Mardānā
 Nānak lives for those moments
 of peace and prosperity
 of harmony and happiness
 of rhythm and reason ...

*bikh bohithā lādiā diā samund manjhār
 kandhī dis na āwāī na urwār na pār
 wanjhī hāth na khēwtū jal sāgar asrāl
 bābā jag phāthā mahā jāl*

... ..

*koi ākhē bhūtnā ko kahē betālā
 koi ākhē ādmī Nānak wechārā
 bheā diwānā sāh kā Nānak baurānā
 hau har bin awar na jānā*

... ..

