

PART 7

The Sevenfold Veil

KABIR was a Perfect Master as well as a poet. *Kabirwani*, his book of poems, is therefore the more unique because of his lucid expositions on God, love for God, the divine path and illusory Creation. Being a Perfect Master, Kabir has said things as much for the man in the street as for the initiate. He does not hesitate to disclose, both allegorically as well as in plain words, some of the spiritual secrets which, though within the grasp of ordinary man, are yet known only to the spiritually illumined ones who alone truly understand the deeper meaning underlying most of his sayings.

There are yogis (those who practice a systematic course of esoteric knowledge) who can of themselves suspend their physical bodies in mid-air during the time they are in a temporary *samadhi* (trance). There are some who can bodily walk on water or fly in the air without the aid of external means, and yet all this is no sign or proof of their having experienced divine love. Weighed on spiritual scales these miracles have no value whatsoever. In fact, miracle mongering by the average yogi is not only poles apart from the spiritual path, but is actually a hindrance to the individual's evolution towards spiritual progress.^{11,12} The following incident in the life of a Hindu Master shows the disregard in which it is held by Perfect Masters, who are Truth personified: The Master was one day by the river's edge waiting for one of the little ferry boats that take passengers across the stream for the diminutive fare of one *anna*. A yogi seeing him thus waiting, came up to him, literally walked across the river and back, and said, "That was much easier, was it not?" The Master smilingly replied, "Yes, and had less value than that of the boat fare—one *anna*."

The ability to exercise constant control over one's low desires is no mean achievement. Success in establishing a lasting sublimation of all desires is indeed a greater one. But the greatest is the burning away of all one's desires once and for all, which divine love alone can do. As there is never any show about divine love, this "burning" in love is always without "smoke," i.e., without show. There are times when an outward expression of God-love may amount to heroism, but to make at any time a mere show of one's love for God, for the sake of show, amounts to an insult to God. That is why Kabir says that in the act of meditation^{13,14} when one assumes an *asan* (posture) to meditate upon God, one should at that time learn to avoid making any display such as the swaying motion of one's body, even if it is only for one's own gratification.

As compared with dreams, the physical life is indeed a reality. Similarly, compared with the reality of the path, the world and all worldly life is vacant dreaming on the part of man. But as the world and all of its experiences are illusory, so is the spiritual path that leads to Reality. The former may be termed false illusion and the latter real illusion. Nevertheless, despite the vast difference between them, they are both illusions, for God alone is the only Reality.

When Knowledge* is gained ignorance is banished, but for ignorance to go, Knowledge must be gained. On the one hand, God, and the capacity of man to see and become one with God, are always there. On the other hand, Truth remains hidden from man until he actually arrives upon the path or realizes God. This apparent anomaly is due to two different factors: man's ignorance of Truth, and the fact that Truth is beyond the faculty of reason and far, far above the sphere of intellect. The fact remains that man has become God and man can become God for the simple reason that, knowingly or unknowingly, man is God. Only so long as man's ignorance lasts will there seem to be no end to the plural diversity of illusory things. When divine knowledge is gained he realizes that there is no end to the indivisible oneness of God. Under the illusion of cosmic duality the apparent separation between man and God is invariably referred to by masters in terms of the

* [In the sense of "wisdom" rather than of worldly knowledge. Ed.]

intervenient “veil” and “curtain.” Hafiz, who was a Perfect Master as well as a great poet, says:

*Miyānah 'ashiq o m'ashuq hic ḥayal nist
Tu Kvud hijab-i Kvudi, Hafiz, az miyān barKiz.*

“There is no barrier between the lover and Beloved; Hafiz, lift yourself aside, you are yourself the covering over Self.”

Kabir, referring to the removal of the seven folds of the veil, says:

Tere ghukghata ke pata khola tujhe Rama milega.

“Open the folds of your veil, and you shall find God.”

The *ghunghat* literally means the covering that a woman extends over her head and face in a number of folds; in spiritual parlance it represents the heavy folds of ignorance that keep man hidden from his real identity. The lifting of it, fold by fold, corresponds to the stage-by-stage journey of a pilgrim from the first through the fifth plane of the divine path.

The veil that separates a man-in-ignorance from God Who is All Knowledge is so subtle that even the highest and finest thought cannot pierce through it. This veil consists of seven folds of seven different, deep colours. Each fold is tied with a separate knot; thus there are seven knots to the seven folds. The seven colours represent the seven root desires, corresponding to the seven fundamental impressions, *i.e.*, lust, greed, anger, etc., connected with the seven openings of sensation in the face, *viz.*, (1) mouth, (2) right nostril, (3) left nostril, (4) right ear, (5) left ear, (6) right eye, (7) left eye.

In Reality and as the only Reality, the soul is **always** God without beginning and without end. False illusion begins with the descent of the soul in seven material stages and real illusion ends with the ascent of the soul to the seventh spiritual plane.

God is a macrocosm, God is a microcosm and God is also **always** beyond both. Knowingly man is body and man is mind, but unknowingly, as in deep sleep, man is also beyond both.

Analogically it is true that man is made in the image of God. The top of his head represents the *vidnyan bhumika, arsh-e-ala*, the highest spiritual state, or the seat of *Brahman*. The forehead corresponds

to the entrance to divinity. The centre of the forehead, just above the two external eyes, is the seat of the inner or third eye. When the veil with all its seven folds is finally removed, man is then able, through the third eye, to see God face to face and sees Him more actually and naturally than what he is ordinarily able to see of his body and the world through the two external eyes. In order to arrive at the divine entrance situated in the forehead, man has to pass through the seven doors as represented by the seven physical openings in the face.

When an initiate succeeds in actually entering the divine path it is for him a single seven-in-one achievement, and it applies to the first of the seven folds of the veil, viz., (1) unfastening of the first knot, (2) disappearance of the first fold, (3) crushing out of the first root desires, (4) wiping out of the relative fundamental impressions, (5) doing away with the first of the seven deep, dark colours, (6) entrance through the first door (as represented by the mouth), and (7) arriving on the first plane in the subtle sphere, the *pran bhuvan* or the *alam-e-malakut*.¹⁵

In dreams, an ordinary man is able to make partial use of his subtle body with subtle consciousness, but only in respect to gross experience and concerning only gross objects. Just as he experiences the gross world with full gross consciousness through his gross body, so the initiate on the first plane begins to experience the subtle world with subtle consciousness through his subtle body.

If the initiate is able to proceed further and manages to maintain progress, he continues in the subtle sphere up to the fourth plane. This progress involves the second and third successive single seven-in-one achievements that parallel the sevenfold results achieved in the first. This passing through the second and third doors (represented by the right and left nostrils) brings a still greater intensification of the real illusion, i.e., higher consciousness of the path. After going through the second door, the initiate realizes even more the wonderful things of the subtle world and at the same time begins to run the risk of being lost in the maze of wonderment. The mystical enchantments of the path beyond the third door are still greater, and so also are the chances of becoming spellbound by

them. Just as those with gross consciousness take the gross sphere and its illusory experiences to be real, so the pilgrims in the subtle sphere, while absorbed in the wonder of the plane on which they are, may mistake it for the ultimate Reality. Hence a pilgrim often gets stuck on a plane, deluded by its raptures into accepting it as the Goal, until a Perfect Master or even mental-conscious souls help him by pushing him on to the next plane.

The fourth seven-in-one achievement is a double achievement because at one and the same time (1) the fourth and fifth knots are unfastened, (2) the fourth and fifth folds disappear, (3) the fourth and fifth root desires are crushed, (4) the fourth and fifth deep, dark colours vanish, (5) the fourth and fifth relative fundamental impressions are wiped out, (6) the fourth and fifth doors (as represented by the right and left ears) are passed through, and (7) the pilgrim arrives on the highest plane of the subtle sphere, the fourth plane.

As said before, the fourth plane is the plane of spiritual splendour and of divine powers (*anwar-o-tajalliyat* or *siddhis*). Pilgrims advanced this far can, among many other things, even raise the dead. They run a very grave risk of misusing these powers, thereby inviting disaster, and only a very few can independently cross these dizzy heights safely without the aid of a Perfect Master. It is of them that Hafiz says:

*Dar asitan-i janan asman biyandish
Kaz auj-i sar bulandi ufti biKak-i pasti.*

“On the threshold of the Beloved, beware of the allurements of the heavens, lest you bring about your fall from the heights of progress and greatness to the depths of degradation and ruin.”

In such case, a man is not only deprived of the spiritual progress he has made on the path, but is thrown back from the position that he had achieved through physiological evolution to the state of the stone-form.

Just as anything may happen to a man travelling over an unknown path in the pitch blackness of the night, so anything may happen to one who must pass through the fourth plane without the

guiding hand of a Perfect Master. That is why, for all its dazzling splendour and power, the period of going through the fourth plane is termed in Christian mysticism, "the dark night of the soul."*

If the advanced pilgrim is at all able to resist the allurements and treacheries of the dark night of the soul, he enters the mental sphere (*mano bhuvan* or the *alam-e-jabrut*) by the fifth and final double seven-in-one achievement which occurs on the same lines as the fourth. All the folds of the veil are removed together with the relative knots, desires, colours and impressions; the sixth and seventh doors (as represented by the right and left eyes) are crossed and the fifth plane of light and love is reached.

Those who have safely arrived on the fifth plane are the *wali Allah* (literally meaning "friends of God"). Their inner sight, or the third eye, is now fully developed, but even though all the seven folds of the veil have disappeared, the veil itself is still there. The pilgrim is therefore not yet face to face with God and cannot see the Beloved.

Because of their pure love for God, unadulterated by the false ego, the position of these pilgrims on the fifth plane is secure, and there is no possibility of retrogression. Without any harm to themselves they can and do give, consciously or unconsciously, immense help to others in the subtle and gross spheres.

With rare exceptions further progress on one's own is now impossible. By the help or grace of a Perfect Master one is able to remove the veil entirely and thereby arrive on the sixth plane, the highest plane of the mental sphere, the plane of "divine sight," the entrance to divinity (as represented by the forehead) where one is able actually to see God face to face, everywhere and in everything. This is known as conviction by sight.

* For those on the Path the powers of the fourth plane are like the "Devil" who is popularly believed to lead people astray. But for the timely help of the *Sadguru* Dnyaneshwar, the great yogi Chang Deva would have come to grief on this very plane. Similarly, when Baba Farid Ganje-Shakar reached this stage he could not help testing his powers by making birds on the wing fall down dead and trying to raise them to life again. He, too, was saved in time by an aged woman who was a saint of the fifth plane. It was after this incident that Baba Farid came into close contact with his Master, who finally led him to *qutubiyat* or Perfect Masterhood.

Those on the gross sphere who believe in the existence of God have their conviction (*yaqin*) based on their pure and simple faith and belief. This conviction is *ilm-ul-yaqin* (intellectual conviction), and is different from the distinctive convictions that follow:

1. conviction by intuitive perception (*yaqin-ul-yaqin*);
2. conviction by sight (*ain-ul-yaqin*);
3. conviction by actual experience (*Haqq-ul-yaqin*).¹⁶

Those on the path, up through the fifth plane, know there is God, with a definite intuitive certainty (*yaqin-ul-yaqin*); their conviction is based on sure knowledge. Those on the sixth plane see God everywhere; theirs is conviction by actual sight. Those on the seventh plane, having become one with God, have conviction by actual experience.

The highly advanced pilgrim on the sixth plane is still within the domain of duality. Although face to face with God, the “see-er” and the “seen” remain separated by a deep, fathomless valley which can be spanned only by the touch of a Perfect Master. Whereas the first five achievements are possible for man to obtain independently, the actual removal of the veil on the fifth plane is usually accomplished by the grace of a Perfect Master’s guidance. The jump from illusion of the sixth plane to Reality on the seventh plane is, however, impossible on one’s own and entirely dependent upon the direct touch of a Perfect One or a Perfect Master (*Sadguru*).

On the seventh plane, the plane of infinite knowledge, power and bliss, the individual merges into God and becomes God, a Perfect One for all time and beyond all time. It is then immaterial whether the physical body remains or drops. As a rule, the gross shell falls within a short time after realization, but in some cases the physical body holds on for a long time. These God-realized Ones are known as *Majzoobs* or *Brahmi Bhoots*.

Again, only by the direct and personal help of a Perfect Master does one from among those God-realized Ones return to the level of ordinary man, regaining consciousness of all the spheres (gross, subtle and mental) yet retaining at the same time full God-consciousness. He is then the Man-God, the Perfect Master, *Sadguru* or *Qutub*.

Where there is light, darkness is no more. Where there is Knowledge, ignorance is absent. And, as the folds, the veil and the valley of separation are all in the domain of ignorance, a Perfect Master—who is the “Sun” of all Knowledge—can, in the twinkling of an eye, impart God-realization to anyone he chooses.*

God alone is real, and as we are permanently lodged in the Divine Beloved, we are all one.

* [See also Meher Baba, “The Fabric of the Universe,” *Beams from Meher Baba on the Spiritual Panorama*, 13–15.

And also see Meher Baba, “The Ways to the Path and Its States and Stages,” *Listen, Humanity*, narr. and ed. D. E. Stevens (St. Helier, Jersey, Channel Islands: Companion Books, 1989), 160–162. Ed.]