

## SHABDAS OF GURU KABIR

शब्द १

सन्तो भक्ति सतगुरु आनी.  
नारी एक पुरुष दुई जाया, बूझो पण्डित ज्ञानी.  
पाहन फोरि गंग एक निकरी, चहुँदिसि पानी पानी.  
तेहि पानी दुइ पर्वत बूडे, दरिया लहर समानी.  
उडि माखी तरवर को लागी, बोलै एक बानी.  
वहि माखी के माखा नाही, गर्भ रहा बिनु पानी.  
नारी सकल पुरुष वै खायो, ताते रहै अकेला.  
कहहिं कबीर जो अबकी बूझै, सोई गुरु हम चेला.

*shabda 1*

*santo! bhakti satguru ānī!*  
*nārī ek purush duī jāyā, bujho pandit gyānī.*  
*pāhan phori gang ek nikarī, chahudisi pānī pānī.*  
*tehi pānī dui parvat būde, dariyā lahar samānī.*  
*udi mākhī tarvar ko lāgī, bolai ekai bānī.*  
*vahi mākhī ke mākhā nāhīn, garbh rahā binu pānī.*  
*nārī sakal purush vai khāyo, tāte rahai akelā.*  
*kahahin kabīr jo abkī bujhai, soī guru ham chelā.*

Meaning:

O Saints! *Sat guru* has brought devotion to the world!  
There is one woman who produced two males. O learned pandits! Explain this to me!  
Breaking the stone (mind) a river (meditation) came forth, and there was only water -  
water (God Consciousness) all around.  
Two mountains (ego and ignorance) drowned in that water. Its waves (souls) then merged  
into the ocean (God).  
A fly (Maya) flew and sat on the tree (world), and spoke only one word (delusion).  
That fly had no male, but she became pregnant without semen.  
That female (Maya) ate up all the males (people), and only God escaped.  
Kabir says that whoever can explain this, will be his guru and he will be the disciple.

Commentary:

The shabdās in the Bijak are meant to be sung as any bhajan (hymn).  
This shabda is very allegorical and paradoxical. It can be said to be a parable and,  
therefore, can be subject to varying interpretations by different people. Saints often use  
this technique to get people to think in some depth about spiritual life. In this shabda  
Guru Kabir states, "O Saint, devotion has been brought by Satguru." Satguru here means

God. It also means any saint who has realized God in his or her own life. The woman referred to is Maya that is the creative aspect of God, and emanates from Him. Without Maya no creation can take place, because creation means a differentiation from the unitary being of God. It is Maya that has this ability to allow God to manifest 'creation'. The two males created here are *Jiwa* and *Ishwar*. Jiwa is the soul that has taken on *gunas* or qualities in order to manifest life. Ishwar is God with attributes who can be thought of as the creative aspect of God. Combined with Maya, Ishwar produces the multiform universe. Guru Kabir is asking the learned pandits to explain this parable.

The stone that is broken is the mind, and the river that flows from it is meditation. The mind has to be broken, or subdued, in order for meditation to flow, in an unbroken stream, to God. The soul in meditation then finds itself surrounded by God Consciousness i.e. water everywhere. The two mountains that drown in this water are ego and ignorance, both of which must be overcome in order to meditate. During meditation the wave, or the soul, becomes merged in the ocean or God.

The fly here refers to Maya which has flown unto a tree that is the world. In other words, Maya manifests itself in the whole world as illusion, which keeps people away from direct knowledge of God. People see the material world, but fail to see the divine power manifesting behind 'creation'. Maya has only one language, and that is to create delusion. Spiritual realization, or God realization, occurs only after Maya has been subdued. Maya needs no male or husband in order to procreate the world. Maya, being the creative energy of God, has brought forth everything in the universe. This Maya has, figuratively, eaten up all the males which refer to humanity. Therefore, in order to escape being eaten up by Maya, or delusion, it is necessary to stay away from her and to merge into God through meditation. (Maya has two powers, 1. to project into being and 2. to veil Reality from sensory perception.)

Because this Shabda has such lofty teachings, and is given in allegorical form, Guru Kabir has stated that whoever can explain this satisfactorily, will be considered by him to be the Guru and he will become the disciple.

This shabda is meant for us to give deep thought to spirituality - the meaning of God, Maya, soul, creation and meditation. It is the only way by which we can obtain divine knowledge and obtain liberation.

शब्द २

सन्तो जागत नींद न कीजै.

काल न खाय कल्प नहिं व्यापै, देह जरा नहिं छीजै.

उलटी गंग समुद्रहि सोखै, शशि औ सूरहि गासे.

नौग्रह मारि रोगिया बैठे, जल में बिम्ब प्रकासै.

बिन चरणन को दहुँदिश धावै, बिन लोचन जग सूझै.

ससै उलटि सिंह को गासे, ई अचरज कोई बूझै.

औंधे घडा नहीं जल बूडै, सूधे सो जल भरिया.  
 जेहि कारण नर भिन्न भिन्न करें, सो गुरु प्रसादै तरिया.  
 बैठि गुफा में सब जग देखै, बाहर किछु न सूझै.  
 उलटा बाण पारधिहिं लागै, शूरा होय सो बूझै.  
 गायन कहै कबहुँ नहिं गावै, अनबोला नित गावै.  
 नटवट बाजा पेखनी पेखै, अनहद हेत बढ़ावै.  
 कथनी बदनी निजु कै जोवै, ई सब अकथ कहानी.  
 धरती उलटि अकाशहिं बेधै, ई पुरुषन की बानी.  
 बिना पियाला अमृत अँचवै, नदी नीर भरि राखै.  
 कहहिं कबीर सो युग युग जीवै, जो राम सुधारस चाखै.

*shabda 2*

*santo jāgat nīnd na kījai.*

*kāl na khāi kalp nahin byāpai, dehh jarā nahin chhījai.*

*nowgrah māri rogiyā baithe, jal me bimb prakāsai.*

*bin charnan ko dahudish dhāwai, bin lochan jag sūjhai.*

*sasai ulati singh ko grāse, ī acharaj koi būjhai.*

*owndhe gharā nahīn jal būdai, sūdhe so jal bhariyā.*

*jehi kāran nar bhinn bhinn kare, so gur prasādai tariyā.*

*baithi guphā mein sab jag dekhai, bāhar kichhu na sūjhai.*

*ultā bān pārddihin lāgai, sūrā hoi so būjhai.*

*gāyan kahai kabahun nahin gāwai, anbolā nit gāwai.*

*natwat bājā pekhanī pekhai, anahad het badāvai.*

*kathanī badanī niyu kai jowai, ī sab akath kahānī.*

*dhartī ulati akāsahin bedhai, ī purshan kī bānī.*

*binā piyālā amrit anchawai, nadī nīr bhari rākhai.*

*kahahin kabīr so yug yug jīvai, jo rām sudhāras chākhai.*

Meaning:

O Saints! Being awake, do not fall asleep!

Death does not destroy you, nor age affect you. The body is not weakened with old age.

The river (meditation) turns and dries up the ocean. It controls both the moon and the sun.

The sick mind blocks the nine gates (of the body), and sees its reflection in the water (of the heart).

Without feet, the mind can run in all ten directions and, without eyes, it sees the whole world.

The rabbit (doubts), in turn, devours the lion (knowledge). Some rare person may understand this wonder.

The overturned pitcher cannot be drowned in water but, if upright, it can be filled (drowned).

That cause that has kept man separated from God, can be removed by the Grace of the Guru.

The devotee, sitting in the cave of his mind, sees the whole world, and remains unconcerned with the external things.

The arrow turns back and hits the hunter (mind). Only the brave can understand this.

The singer (self-realized) says that he will never sing, but without words he continuously sings.

When the puppet (man) sees God manifested in all, he increases his love for the *anahad* shabda (divine melody).

Giving up speaking and explaining, he realizes himself. These are all difficult things to explain.

The earth (meditation) turns around and pierces the sky (soul). This is explained by the realized souls.

The soul then drinks nectar without a cup, and he keeps his mind (stream) full of the water of love for God.

Kabir says that he who tastes the nectar of the Name of God lives age after age.

Commentary:

This shabda of Guru Kabir is a very mystical one. He is using concrete examples to represent abstract ideas and achievements. For example, river means meditation, and ocean refers to all the passions that can drown us in this world. Meditation can control the sun and the moon. The sun and the moon are the right and left nostrils, as explained in the yoga philosophy. The breath must be controlled in order for meditation to be achieved.

Guru Kabir is telling the saints that while they are awake, realizing their own connection with God, that they should not fall asleep. This means that they should not become subject to ignorance, and to the trap of Maya. In meditation, the mind must be controlled, but the mind that is sick, and affected by all the passions and negative thoughts, actually blocks the nine gates (body), and prevents the body from progressing towards God realization. The water is the heart. The mind sees the reflection of its own achievements in the water of the heart. But when the mind attains realization and its unity with God, then it escapes the limitations of time and space. It can thus travel in all directions without feet, and without eyes it can see everything in the world.

When the mind is obstructed with doubts (rabbits), it destroys the lion (knowledge). Guru Kabir is observing that these things are difficult for people to understand.

When the pitcher is held up side down, it cannot be drowned. That pitcher represents the empty mind free of passions and doubts. It cannot be affected. But when the mind is right side up, it becomes full of desires and passions, and therefore it can be drowned.

Man, because of his attachment to his desires and worldly things, remains separated from God, but if he obtains the grace of *Satguru*, then he can overcome all obstacles. In meditation, the mind enters, figuratively, into a cave from which it can see the whole world with its spiritual eyes, and remains unattached to it.

The arrow is meditation, and it turns back and hits the hunter, which is the mind. In meditation the mind must be overcome just as a hunter overcomes an animal with his arrow. Similarly, the person who is self-realized does not need words to sing, because silently he is ever singing with the bliss of God in his own heart. Such a person is like a puppet in God's hands, and he sees God manifested everywhere. His love for God becomes intensified. When a person obtains such realization he, figuratively, drinks the nectar of God without having a cup, for this is all done intuitively within. In meditation the soul realizes its union with God, and so realizes its own eternity.

In this very mystical shabda, Guru Kabir is saying that we must be ever alert and remain awake, so that we may not be overtaken by the material passions and worldly desires. We must use meditation to control the mind, and allow the soul to realize its union with God. On obtaining such a realization, man frees himself from the clutches of Maya and birth and death.

शब्द ३

सन्तो घर में झगरा भारी.

राति दिवस मिलि उठि उठि लागें, पाँच ढोटा एक नारी.

न्यारो न्यारो भोजन चाहैं, पाँचों अधिक सवादी.

कोइ काहू का हटा न मानै, आपुहि आपु मुरादी.

दुर्मति केर दोहागिन मेटै, ढोटहि चाँप चपेरे.

कहहिं कबीर सोई जन मेरा, जो घर की रारि निबेरे.

*shabda 3*

*santo ghar mein jhagrā bhārī.*

*rāti diwas mili uthi uthi lāge, pānch dhotā ek nārī.*

*nyāro nyāro bhojan chāhain, pānchon adhik sawādī.*

*koi kāhū kā hatā na mānai, āpuhin āpu murādī.*

*durmati ker dohāgin metai, dhotahi chāmp chapere.*

*kahain kabīr soi jan merā, jo ghar kī rāri nibere.*

Meaning:

O saints! There is great turmoil in the house.

Night and day the five young men (senses) get up and start to quarrel with one woman (intellect).

Each desires its separate type of food and, in their own tastes, they are exceedingly fond (connoisseurs).

None of them listens to the others, and each one wishes to fulfill his own desires.

The one who controls the evil thinking, and the young men, is a real devotee.

Kabir says, "He is my devotee who abolishes the quarrel in the house."

## Commentary:

In this allegorical shabda Guru Kabir is comparing the body to a house. People of different temperaments and desires may live in a house, and constantly bicker and quarrel with each other, because they have their own needs, and do not care about the needs of the others. Similarly, the five senses of the body are like five young men, and each one has its separate type of "food" that satisfies it. Broadly speaking, the eyes need color and form, the ears need sound, the nose needs smell, the skin needs touch, and the tongue, needs taste. The eyes cannot deal with sound, nor can the ears with smell, etc. Thus they each need their separate type of "food", and none cares about the needs of the others. Each one is a connoisseur in the food it wants. The one woman is the intellect that needs to exercise control over all the senses. We can also say that the woman is the mind. If the five senses are not controlled, then the person is dragged hither and yon to try to satisfy the cravings of all the senses. This creates a great deal of suffering and disharmony in the mind. The intellect then needs to exercise control, because it can use its power of discrimination to decide which is right and which is wrong, and which needs to be cultivated, and which not. The soul is a witness to this quarrel that goes on, day and night, in the individual. Guru Kabir is stating that the five senses must be brought under control for a person to be a devotee. He thus observes that such a person is a true devotee to him.

One of the great obstacles in spiritual life are desires for satisfaction of the various senses. These need to be controlled by constant vigilance and discipline. Only then can one progress on a spiritual path.

## शब्द ४

सन्तो देखत जग बौराना.  
साँच कहौं तो मारन धावै, झूठे जग पतियाना.  
नेमी देखा धर्मी देखा, प्रात करे अस्नाना.  
आतम मारि पषाणहिं पूजे, उनमें किछड न ज्ञाना.  
बहुतक देखा पीर औलिया, पढे कितेब कुराना.  
कै मुरीद तदबीर बतावै, उनमें उहैं जो ज्ञाना.  
आसन मारि डिम्भ धरि बैठे, मन में बहुत गुमाना.  
पीतर पाथर पूजन लागे, तीरथ गरब भुलाना.  
टोपी पहिरे माला पहिरे, छाप तिलक अनुमाना.  
साखी शब्दै गावत भुले, आतम खबरि न जाना.  
हिन्दू कहैं मोहिं राम पियारा, तुरुक कहै रहिमाना.  
आपुस में दोउ लरि-लरि मुये, मर्म काहू नहिं जाना.  
घर-घर मन्तर देत फिरत हैं, महिमा के अभिमाना.  
गुरु सहित शिष्य सब बूडे, अन्त काल पछिताना.

कहहिं कबीर सुनो हो सन्तो, ई सब भरम भुलाना.  
केतिक कहौं कहा नहिं माने, सहजे सहज समाना.

*shabda 4*

*santo dekhāt jag bowrānā.*

*sānch kahown to māran dhāwai, jhūthe jag patiyānā.*

*nemī dekhā dharmū dekhā, prāt kare asnānā.*

*ātam māri pashānhin pūje, un mein kichhau na gyānā.*

*bahutak dekhā pīr awliyā, padhe kiteb kurānā.*

*kai murīd tadbīr batāwai, un mein uhain jo gyānā.*

*āsan māri dīmbhdhari baithe, man men bahut gumānā.*

*pītar pāthar pūjan lāge, tīrath garab bhulānā.*

*topī pahire mālā pahire, chhāp tilak anumānā.*

*sākhī shadai gāwat bhūle, ātam khabari na jānā.*

*hindū kahain mohin rām piyārā, turak kahain rahimānā.*

*āpus mein dou lari-lari muye, marm kāhu nahin jānā.*

*ghar-ghar mantar det phirat hain, mahimā ke abhimānā.*

*guru sahit shisya sab būde, ant kāl pachhitānā.*

*kahain kabīr suno ho santo, ī sab bharam bhulānā.*

*ketik kahown kahā nahin māne, sahaḡe sahaḡ samānā.*

Meaning:

O Saints! I see the world is going mad!

When I tell the truth, they rush to beat me, but they believe in falsehood.

I have seen people practicing their religious disciplines, and bathing in the morning.

They kill living beings and worship the stones. They appear not to have any wisdom.

I have seen many Muslim priests and holy men reading their Koran and holy books.

They make disciples and teach them the way of sacrificing, according to their knowledge.

The Hindu priests sit in various postures and pretend to meditate, but their minds are full of pride.

They worship images made of brass and stones, and they pride themselves on their pilgrimages.

The priests wear their particular caps and garlands, and wear their distinctive sandal paste marks on their bodies and forehead.

They sing the sakhis and shabdās but are lost, as they do not know the secret of the soul.

The Hindu says that Ram is dear to him, and the Muslim says that it is Rahiman.

They both fight among themselves and die, and neither of them know the secret of God.

They wander from house to house giving mantras (making disciples), and they pride themselves on their greatness.

Along with their gurus, the disciples drowned and, in the end, they suffer great regrets.

Kabir says listen, O saintly people! All of them are lost in doubts.

How much can I say, when they do not accept that those who follow the easy path unite with God easily?

## Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is pointing out the general spiritual condition of the people of the world. The majority follows the superficialities of spiritual life and, leaving the kernel, they grasp at the chaff. When the real truth about spiritual life and their soul are explained to them, they do not follow that, but will pay lip service to it. They follow the more convenient and easy way of observing their religious disciplines and ceremonies, and wearing their distinctive types of clothing, and sandal paste marks, or saffron marks, on their bodies and faces. Guru Kabir observes that in doing these things, and not realizing the Ultimate Reality, the world appears to be mad.

He declares that he has seen what these people are doing. They kill living animals and then worship dead images made of brass or stones. How can they kill the living and worship the non-living? He has observed that the priests and holy men of both Hindus and Muslims practice similar religious activities. They make many disciples and teach them the same knowledge and activities they, themselves, practice. Although outwardly they practice religious disciplines, they are often full of pride and ego. They do not know the secret of their own souls.

Many of these 'holy' people will instruct their disciples, and sing various couplets and hymns (*bhajans*) but they do not understand the truth of their own souls. In India, where there is a large population of Muslims among the majority Hindus, there are frequent religious quarrels. In Ayodhya, the Hindus and Muslims were fighting and killing each other. Hindus say that Ram is dear to them, and the Muslims say that it is Rahiman. Both of them fight among themselves and die, but neither of them realizes the truth about God, that Ram and Rahim are the same.

These holy men wander from house to house, propagating their teachings and making disciples, but along with them, their disciples drown in the false teachings, without realizing the true spiritual knowledge. In the end, they are full of regrets, but then it is too late, as they have to endure the effects of their own karmas. Guru Kabir is saying to all those who are wise that people, who follow the above practices, are still living in doubts. He observes that hardly does anyone listen to the truth, as he explains that when you simplify your spiritual life, and live truthfully in *sahaj samadhi*, you easily unite with God.

It is important to distinguish between the teaching of the great mystic saints, and that of the average religious priests, whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian, etc. The saints teach an easy path, uncomplicated by all kinds of rites, rituals, pilgrimages and dogmas. They teach that you need only to develop knowledge of the union that exists between the soul and God. With such a knowledge you are, automatically, following and even surpassing, all the religious practices. For those who do not obtain spiritual awakening and knowledge of their own soul, they continue to suffer in the bondage of materialism and ignorance. They long for liberation, but they follow the path prompted by their desires and passions.

शब्द ५

सन्तो अचरज एक भौ भारी, कहौं तो को पतियाई.  
एकै पुरुष एक है नारी, ताकर करहु विचारा.  
एकै अण्ड सकल चौरासी, भरम भुला संसारा.  
एकै नारी जाल पसारा, जग में भया अन्देशा.  
खोजत खोजत अन्त न पाया, ब्रह्मा विष्णु महेसा.  
नाग फाँस लिये घट भीतर, मूसेनी सब जग झारी.  
ज्ञान खड्ग बिनु सब जग जूझे, पकरि काहू नहिं पाई.  
आपुहि मूल फूल फुलवारी, आपुहि चुनि-चुनि खाई.  
कहहिं कबीर तेहिं जन उबरे, जेहि गुरु लियो जगाई.

*shabda 5*

*santo acharaj ek bhow bhārī, kahown to ko patiyāī.  
ekai purush ek hai nāri, tākar karahu vichārā.  
ekai and sakal chowrāsī, bharam bhūlā sansārā.  
ekai nārī jāl pasārā, jag mein bhayā andeshā.  
khojat khojat ant na pāyā, bramhā vishnu mahesā.  
nāg phāns liye ghat bhītar, mūsenī sab jag jhārī.  
gyān khadag binu sab jag jūjhe, pakri kāhū nahin pāī.  
āpuhi mūl phūl phulwārī, āpuhi chuni-chuni khāī.  
kahahin kabīr tehin jan ubare, jehi guru liyo jagāī.*

Meaning:

O saints! A very surprising thing has happened. If I tell the truth who will believe it? There is only one sentient *Purush* (God) and one woman (Maya). You should think about them.

All the 8.4 million species came from the one universal egg (*prakriti* - undifferentiated matter). All the worldly people are lost in doubts.

This one woman has spread her trap everywhere, and the world has become afraid of her. People have searched and searched but could not fathom her secrets. Even Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh could not fathom her secrets.

With the noose of the three qualities, she has entered the heart, and she is plundering the whole world completely.

The people fight with her without the sword of knowledge, and they are not able to subdue her.

She is verily the root, the flower and the garden, and she is the one who selects and eats up all.

Kabir says only those who have obtained enlightenment from the guru will obtain liberation from the illusion (Maya).

Commentary:

In this shabda, Guru Kabir is talking about the power of Maya, figuratively, represented as a woman. Maya is feminine. He also speaks of God as the one sentient Male (Purush). The female is Maya which means the creative energy of God that existed in the 'beginning'. It is because of Maya that all things came into existence, and are manifesting in their respective ways, both animate and inanimate. This Maya is also spoken of as the deceiver or the delusive power. This concept is mystical and somewhat difficult for some people to understand. It must be understood in the following way: If God alone existed in the 'beginning' and everything came from the being of God, then even Maya and all matter came from God. If we confine our knowledge to the manifested material things in the universe, and do not perceive God, then we are deluded. The reason that we are deluded, is that all the manifested forms are really the various aspects of God, since they all arose from God. God thus encompasses all manifested things in the universe. We can, perhaps, say that the sum total of all things in the universe is God. Everything which occurs in the world, therefore, is because of Maya that is the energy that God projected from His own being, in order to make all the various 'things' in the universe manifest in their myriad forms.

Since Maya has all this power, and since there are so many types of suffering in the world, people do develop fear and doubts in their own heart, about themselves, and their relationship to God. People of all types, and even god's and demi-gods, have tried to understand the power of Maya, but they fail to fathom her secret. This secret is hidden in the mind of God. But this Maya, figuratively, spreads her net everywhere in the world, creating various types of races and religions, cultures, ignorance, attachments, and all manner of evil. But people do not see themselves rising above all of Maya's entanglements, because they have not obtained the proper spiritual instruction from a qualified guru.

We cannot fight with Maya, except if we use the sword of knowledge. This knowledge is that God, or Purush (Satpurush), is the only existence. Maya is a projection from God resulting in the myriad manifestations in this world, and in the universe. That which is within us as the soul, is the only Reality, as it is eternal. Unless we can grasp the knowledge of the soul's unity with God, we will continue to live in doubt, fear and spiritual darkness, without obtaining liberation.

शब्द ६

सन्तो अचरज एक भौ भारी, पुत्र धइल महतारी.  
पिता के संग भई बावरी, कन्या रहल कुँवारी.  
खसमहिं छाडि ससुर संग गौनी, सो किन लेहु विचारी.  
भाई के संग सासुर गौनी, सासुहि सावत दीन्हा.  
ननद भौजि परपंच रचो है, मोर नाम कहि लीन्हा.  
समधी के संग नाहिं आई, सहज भई घरबारी.  
कहहि कबीर सुनो हो सन्तो, पुरूष जनम भौ नारी.

*shabda 6*

*santo achraj ek bhow bhārī, putra dhail mahhtārī.*

*pītā ke sang bhāī bāwarī, kanyā rahal kunwārī.*

*khasamhin chhādi sasur sang gownī, so kin lehu vichārī.*

*bhāī ke sang sāsuri gownī, sāsuri sāvāt dīnhā.*

*nanad bhowji parpanch racho hai, mor nām kahi līnhā.*

*samdhī ke sang nāhin āi, sahaj bhāī gharbārī.*

*kahāin kabīr suno ho santo, purush janm bhow nārī*

Meaning:

O saints! A great surprise has happened - a son took his mother as wife.

The daughter became deluded by her father, but remained a virgin.

Giving up her own husband, she went to the father-in-law. Who can understand this?

With her brother she went to the home of her husband's parents, and became a step wife beside her mother-in-law.

Her sister-in-law and her brother's wife create a conspiracy in the world, and they blame me for it.

She did not come with her parents-in-law, but easily she became the housewife.

Kabir says listen, O saints! The male has given birth to the females.

Commentary:

This shabda appears to contain various contradictory and silly statements. But they are allegorical statements, using the family as a means of explaining spiritual truths. In this family things are not normal, as we would understand a family. In order to understand the meaning of this shabda, it is important to keep the following relationships in mind: The son is the mind; the mother is Maya. The father is ego; the daughter is intellect; the husband is the soul. The father-in-law is ignorance. The brother is knowledge; the husband's parents is the world; the mother-in-law is attachment; sister-in-law is evil thinking. The parents-in-law are saints, the male is the soul, and the females are desires.

All of the relationships mentioned in this shabda really deal with various conditions within the person. Maya is the creative principle or energy of God and is the source of all creation. Thus, Maya is the mother of the man. The mind is the son. Maya is also the illusory power of the world. The mind thus enjoys the worldly things, as a husband enjoys his wife, and so it is said to take the mother as wife. The daughter is intellect and her father is the ego. The ego causes the differentiation from which the intellect arises. But the intellect, because of ego, cannot function wisely, as it should. It is thus said to be deluded or confounded by the father. The intellect, being the daughter, gives up her own husband, which is the soul, and partakes in ignorance. Instead of pursuing knowledge of itself and reality, and its connection with the soul and God, she becomes attracted to all the material things of the world, and so she remains ignorant. There is hardly any person who pays attention to this sort of relationship that exists within him.

The intellect has a brother we call knowledge, with whom she went into the world. In the world she becomes preoccupied with attachment, which is her mother-in-law. At the home of her in-laws, there is a sister-in-law which is evil thinking, with which the intellect often associates. Her brother's wife is illusion, or wrong perceptions and thinking. Together they cause a great deal of confusion and conspiracy, and blame each other.

The intellect did not go to the saints, in order to obtain pure knowledge but, instead, remained in the world as a co-wife with attachments.

Kabir said to all seekers who wish to obtain true knowledge, that they need to pay attention to the inner turmoil that is raging between all these family members that are within. He states that the male has given birth to the females. In this the Purush is a male that is the same as the soul that gave birth to desires, that are the females.

The lesson taught in this shabda is that we do not properly use our intellect, and it becomes entangled with passions, and creates a host of problems. This results in the soul losing its way to its Divine home.

शब्द ७

सन्तो कहौं तो को पतियाई, झूठ कहत साँच बनि आई.  
लौके रतन अबेध अमोलिक, नहिं गाहक नहिं साँई.  
चिमिक-चिमिक चिमकै दृग दहुँ दिशि, अर्ब रहा छिरियाई.  
आपै गुरु कृपा कछु किन्हा, निर्गुण अलख लखाई.  
सहज समाधि उन्मनि जागे, सहज मिलै रघुराई.  
जहँ-जहँ देखो तहँ-तहँ सोई, मन मानिक बेधो हीरा.  
परम तत्त्व गुरु ते पावै, कहैं उपदेश कबीरा.

*shabda 7*

*santo kahown toh ko patiyāi, jhūth kahat sānch bani āi.  
lowke ratan abedh amolak, nahin gāhak nahin sāinī.  
chimik-chimik chimikai drig dahudishi, arb rahā chhiriyāi.  
āpai guru kripā kachhu kinhā, nirgun alakh lakhāi.  
sahaj samādhi unmani jāge, sahaj mile raghurāi.  
Jahan-jahan dekho tahan-tahan soī; man mānik bedho hīrā.  
param tattva guru te pāwai, kahain updesch kabīrā.*

Meaning:

O Saints! If I speak the truth who will believe me? In the world lies appear to become the truth.

The precious, flawless, and priceless jewel is shining, but there is no buyer and no owner.

This priceless jewel is shining in all directions, and its brilliance spreads everywhere. When Satguru showered his grace on me, I was able to see the invisible and attributeless God.

In *sahaj samadhi* (natural union) enlightenment dawned, and easily I found union with God.

Now, wherever I look, there I see Him, as my gem-like mind has pierced (seen) the perfect diamond.

You can obtain the Eternal Essence from the Satguru. This is the advice of Kabir.

Commentary:

The essence of spiritual teaching and practice is to realize divinity within. The soul is spoken of as being a precious diamond that is beyond price, and is flawless. This precious diamond does not really have a buyer, and it has no owner. This is so because nobody can sell or buy the soul, and the soul has no owner because the soul is the gift from God, and it accepts a physical body in order to live in a material world. God is also not the owner of the soul because the soul is a part of God. So, in a spiritual or mystical sense, the soul does not belong to God but the soul is a manifestation of God Himself. This type of truth is hardly taught in the various religions of the world. So Guru Kabir asks the question that who will believe him if he speaks what he knows to be the Truth or the Reality. He has observed, as we continue to observe, that in the world, a great deal of falsehood is passed on to be the truth. People often gullibly accept all the false paraphernalia of religion to be the Truth and the Essence. They literally become bogged down with the practice of religion, but do not arrive at the realization or knowledge of this peerless Essence of God dwelling within.

Guru Kabir is saying that the brilliance of this Eternal Divine Light that is within is shining in all directions, and has spread everywhere. God is not hidden in any corner of the world, but is manifested everywhere. That is why He is said to be Omnipresent. It is the lack of spiritual vision, on our part, that causes us not to 'see' God. In one of his *bhajans* Guru Kabir said, "With open eyes, I joyously behold the beautiful form of God everywhere." He wants us to have the same experience. But as long as we accept as truth the teachings going around, then we will not have that realization.

He states that with the grace of the Satguru he was able to see the invisible Lord who is beyond all qualities or attributes. How many of us can understand such Divinity? God truly has no qualities, but we ascribe qualities to Him. God is neither male, nor female, nor neuter gender. God is neither good nor bad. He is beyond the dualities of the material world. God is the power that 'just is'. How can we realize such a being? Guru Kabir states that in an easy way, he gained unity with this Being (God), and he became enlightened. Now he states that wherever he looked, he saw this Divinity. His mind was pure as a gem, and it was able to pierce the priceless diamond of God that dwells within as the soul. He advises us that we can also obtain this Eternal Essence if we follow the teachings given by the Satguru.

The lesson here is that we must seek the Reality through purity of the heart, and not to accept all the falsehood perpetrated in the name of religion.

शब्द ८

सन्तो आवै जाय सो माया.  
है प्रतिपाल काल नहिं वाके, ना कहूँ गया न आया.  
का मकसूद मच्छ-कछ न होई, शंखासुर न संहारा.  
है दयाल द्रोह नहिं वाके, कहहु कौन को मारा.  
वै कर्ता नहिं बराह कहाये, धरणि धर्यो नहिं भारा.  
ई सब काम साहेब के नाहिं, झूठ कहै संसारा.  
खम्भ फोरि जो बाहर होई, ताहि पतिजे सब कोई.  
हिरणाकुश नख वोद्र बिदारा, सो कर्ता नहिं होई.  
बावन रूप न बलि को जाँचे, जो जाँचे सो माया.  
बिना विवेक सकल जग भरमे, माया जग भरमाया.  
परशुराम क्षत्री नहिं मारे, ई छल माया कीन्हा.  
सतगुरु भेद भक्ति नहिं जाने, जीवहिं मिथ्या दीन्हा.  
सिर्जनहार न ब्याही सीता, जल पषाण नहिं बन्धा.  
वै रघुनाथ एक कै सुमिरै, जो सुमिरै सो अन्धा.  
गोपी ग्वाल न गोकुल आया, कर्ते कंस न मारा.  
है मेहरबान सबहिन को साहब, नहिं जीता नहिं हारा.  
वै कर्ता नहिं बौद्ध कहाये, नहीं असुर संहारा.  
ज्ञान हीन कर्ता के भरमें, माया जग भरमाया.  
वै कर्ता नहिं भये निकलंकी, नहिं कालिंगहिं मारा.  
ई छल बल सब माया कीन्हा, जत्त-सत्त सब टारा.  
दश अवतार ईश्वरी माया, कर्ता कै जिन पूजा.  
कहहिं कबीर सुनो हो सन्तो, उपजै खपै सो दूजा.

*shabda 8*

*santo āwai jāi so māyā.  
hai pratipāl kāl nahin vāko, nā kahun gayā na āyā.  
kā maksūd machh kachh na hoī, shankhāshur na sanghārā.  
hai dayāl droha nahin vāke, kahahu kown ko mārā.  
wai kartā nahin varāha kahāye, dharani dharyo nahin bhārā.  
ī sab kām sāheb ke nāhin, jhūth kahai sansārā.  
khambh phori jo bāhar hoi, tāhi patije sab koi.  
hirnakush nakh bodra bidārā, so kartā nahin hoi.  
bāwan rūp na bali ko jānche, jo jānche so māyā.  
binā vivek sakal jag bharme, māyā jag bharmāyā.*

*parsurām kshatrī nahin māre, ī chhal māyā kīnhā.  
satguru bhed bhakti nahin jāne, jīvahin mithya dīnhā.  
sirjanhār na byāhi sītā, jal pashān nahin bandhā.  
wai raghunāth ek kai sumirai, jo sumirai so andhā.  
gopī gwāl na gokul āyā, karte kans na mārā.  
hai meharbān sabahin ko sāheb, nahin jītā nahin hārā.  
wai kartā nahin bowdh kahāye, nahin asur sanghārā.  
gyān hīn kartā ke bharme, māyā jag bharmāyā.  
wai kartā nahin bhaye niklankī, nahin kalīngahi mārā.  
ī chhal bal sab māyā kīnhā, jat-sat sab tārā.  
das avtār ishwari māyā, kartā kai jin pūjā.  
kahahin kabīr suno ho santo, upjai khapai so dūjā.*

Meaning:

O saints! Whatever appears and disappears is Maya.

God is the sustainer of all, and is not affected by time. He neither goes to, nor comes from anywhere.

What purpose did He have to appear as a fish or tortoise, or to kill the demon Shankhasur?

He is all-merciful, and has no enmity. Tell me, then, how can He kill anyone?

The creator never incarnated as a boar to hold up the earth, nor did He make others hold it up.

These are not the works of God. The world tells lies.

Everyone believes that He tore the pillar and came out as the *Narsingh* form.

They believe that He tore the abdomen of Harnakush with his nails, but God does not do such things.

He who incarnated as the dwarf did not beg King Bali. He who begged was Maya.

Without spiritual discrimination, the whole world is in doubt that is perpetrated by Maya.

The Lord did not come as Parshuram to kill the *Kshatriyas*. This was also the deception of Maya.

Without having the knowledge of *Satguru* and devotion, you accepted Maya as the truth.

God the creator did not marry Sita, and He did not float the stones, nor build a bridge across the ocean.

People, who say that Ragnath and God are one, are lacking in discriminative knowledge.

The creator did not come to Gokul, nor did He live with the cowboys and cowgirls, nor did He kill Kansa.

He is all-merciful and the master of all. He neither wins nor loses.

That creator did not come as Buddha, and He did not kill the demon.

The ignorant people create doubts about the creator by the influence of Maya.

That creator will not come as Kalki, nor will He destroy the demon Kalīngā.

These deceptions are the creations of Maya, and she deludes the *yatis* and *satis*.

The ten incarnations are the Maya of God. Do not worship them as the creator.

Kabir says, "Listen Oh saints! Those who are born and die are others than the Imperishable Lord who is beyond Maya.

Commentary:

God is above Maya. He is eternal and formless. He is Omnipresent i.e. present in the whole world at the same time. He is also present in the whole universe. God is beyond time and space, and every other type of limitation. He is Infinite Being. With these attributes of God, it is not conceivable that He will come to earth in various forms as stated in Hindu mythology. This mythology states that God came in nine different forms already, and will come in a tenth form at the end of this present Iron Age. He came as fish, tortoise, boar, half-man-half-lion, dwarf, Parshuram, Ram, Krishna, and Buddha. He is to come as Kalki who will destroy the demon Kalinga at the end of this Iron Age. People accept these various incarnations of Vishnu - the preserver God. Guru Kabir is saying that God is beyond all of these, and these are only parts of his Maya. He states emphatically that any being that can come or be born, and then disappear or die, cannot be the Eternal Lord. He also emphatically states that God is all-merciful and kind towards all his devotees. He therefore could not perform some of the violent and deceptive actions attributed to Him. Guru Kabir is saying that those people, who accept all of these as factual and true, are not using their spiritual discriminative knowledge in order to arrive at the real truth. If God is formless and Omnipresent, and is in the whole universe, the size of which is unimaginable, how can he come to one little speck of earth for the benefit of a few here and there, or for the destruction of a puny demon here and there. He is saying that people, who believe these, actually believe the lies. But a person on a spiritual path must have an open mind, and realize that God is spirit and dwells in the hearts of all beings, including that of the demons. It is thus a fallacy to think that God will appear in one form to destroy another form, in which he is also present. God is *sarvavyapak* or Omnipresent. It is illogical for God to attack and destroy God. This is what it amounts to, if you accept the mythologies. Proper discriminative knowledge will say that God is beyond these things, which are machinations of the human mind. This being so, it is Maya, the illusive power, that has kept on deluding the whole world. The world is thus in doubts according to Guru Kabir. If we open our spiritual eyes and examine the truth, then we will inevitably come to the conclusion that God does not partake in these petty things of the world. His purpose is much grander. He bestows mercy, love, and bounty on all beings. He has set his Law of Karma in motion. This law will automatically take care of all the demons in the world. People are the creators of demons. Imagine wiping your mind clean of all demons that you have ever imagined or heard about, and just realize that there are you, as the soul, and God. Wouldn't that make life much simpler, and keep it on the true spiritual path? That is what Guru Kabir teaches us. Let us have open minds, and accept that God dwells in all of us, and that we create our own sufferings according to our karmas. There is no evil force anywhere in the universe, unless we have created them. Let us free ourselves from doubts and delusions, and accept the beauty and the love of God, and set our minds free.

शब्द ९

सन्तो बोले ते जग मारे.

अनबोले ते कैसेक बनि है, शब्दहिं कोई न विचारे.

पहले जन्म पुत्र का भयऊ, बाप जन्मिया पाछे.  
बाप पुत की एकै नारी, ई अचरज कोई काछे.  
दुन्दुर राजा टीका बैटे, विषहर करै खवासी.  
श्वान बापुरा धरनि ढाकनो, बिल्ली घर में दासी.  
कागदहार कारकुड आगे, बैल करे पटवारी.  
कहहिं कबीर सुनो हो सन्तो, भैसे न्याव निबेरी.

*shabda 9*

*santo bole te jag māre.*

*anbole te kaisek bani hai, shabdahi koi na bichāre.*

*pahale janm putra kā bhayau, bāp janmiyā pāchhe.*

*bāp pūt kī ekai nārī, ī acharaj koi kāchhe.*

*dundur rājā tīkā baithe, vishahar karai khawāsī.*

*swān bāpurā dharni dhākno, billī ghar mein dāsī.*

*kāgadhār kārkud āge, bail kare patwārī.*

*kahahin kabīr suno ho santo, bhainse nyāv niberī.*

Meaning:

O Saints! If I tell the truth people want to beat me.

If I remain silent, how can people obtain true knowledge?

No one gives due thought to my words.

First of all, the son (soul) was born, then the father (God) was born.

Both the father and the son have the same wife (Maya). Who can understand this astonishment?

The frog (ignorant person) sits as a king on the throne, and the snake (mind) is his attendant.

The poor dog (passions, lust) is owner of the house (body), and the cat (attachment) is the wife in the house.

The court clerk (preacher) carries his files (scriptures), and the bull (ignorance) acts as the accountant.

Kabir says, "Listen O saints! The buffalo (ego) acts as the judge."

Commentary:

This is one of the contrary sayings of Guru Kabir. Yet, it is full of deep, mystical meaning. First of all, he admits that when he tells the truth, people do not care to listen to it, and they often would turn against him to beat him. This has been the story of many saints throughout history. Yet, saints have to speak, because if they do not, people will not obtain true knowledge. Having said that, he then enters into the mystical explanation of the condition in which people find themselves.

He says that first the son was born, and then the father. It is important to understand that the son is likened to the soul, and the father to God. It appears contrary that the soul

should be born before the father. But, mystically speaking, it is a true statement, because if the soul were not present, the question of God does not arise. There must first be sentient beings - humans - who can think about a Superior Being called God. If there were no people then there would be no one to talk about God. Again, Guru Kabir says that both the father and the son have one wife. The wife here is Maya that is the energy of God, used to project into the manifold existence all things in the universe. It is Maya then, acting as the 'wife' of God to create the soul, that is the son. As the sentient son then created God as explained above, he used Maya as the wife, figuratively, to produce God. It is thus that the son and the father have the same wife.

The frog spoken of here is likened to an ignorant person who sits on his throne, and his attendant is the snake that is poisonous. The snake here is the mind. The mind has the power to poison the intellect and consciousness of man, and reduce him to spiritual ignorance, instead of spiritual enlightenment. The poor dog (passion), has taken up abode in the house that is the body, and the cat, that is attachment, is the wife in this house. Attachment to sensory objects finds the fire of the passions in which the poor house, the person, burns. This is why, in spiritual teaching, it is said that attachments must be controlled. When attachment is controlled, the passions are controlled.

Guru Kabir says that the clerk carries his files with him. This represents the preacher who carries his scriptures, and he can read and quote the scriptures to others. But the bull, his ego, remains ignorant because he has not achieved God realization, or enlightenment. When ignorance acts as the accountant to keep track of one's spiritual bank account, then one is really in trouble. Preachers of religion need to become enlightened, and not merely quote the scriptures. They must have inner realization of the truth.

Guru Kabir says that when the buffalo, that is the ego, sits as a judge, how can any proper justice be done.

In this very interesting shabda, Guru Kabir explains that how can the person, acting out of ignorance, think that what is not good for him, is really good for him. His passions and senses, his desires and ego, etc, blind him. The right path is not possible unless one is attuned to the Truth.

शब्द १०

सन्तो राह दुनो हम दीठा.

हिन्दू तुरुक हटा नहिं माने, स्वाद सबन को मीठा.

हिन्दू बरत एकादशी साथे, दूध सिंघारा सेती.

अन को त्यागे मनको न हटके, पारन करे सगौती.

तुरुक रोजा-निमाज गुजारे, बिसमिल बाँग पुकार.

इनकी बिहिस्त कहाँ से होवे, साँझें मुरगी मार.

हिन्दु की दया मेहर तुरकन की, दोनों घट से त्यागी.

ई हलाल वे झटका मारे, आग दुनो घर लागी.

हिन्दू तुरुक की एक राह है, सतगुरु इहै बताई.  
कहहि कबीर सुनो हो सन्तो, राम न कहेउ खुदाई.

*shabda 10*

*santo rāha dunon ham dīthā.  
hindū turuk hatā nahin mānen, swād saban ko mīthā.  
hindū barat ekādasī sādhe, dūdh singhārā setī.  
ann ko tyāge manko na hatke, pāran kare sagowtī.  
turuk rozā nimāz guzāre, bismil bāng pukāre.  
inkī bihist kahān se howe, sānjhai murgī māre.  
hindū kī dayā mehar turukan kī, dono ghat se tyāgī.  
ī halāl we jhatkā māre, āg dunon ghar lāgī.  
hindū turuk kī ek rāha hai, satguru ihai batāī.  
kahahin kabīr suno ho santo, rām na kaheu khudāī.*

Meaning:

O Saints! I have seen the ways of both (Hindus and Muslims).  
Both Hindus and Muslims do not listen to my instructions. Both are very fond of satisfying their tastes.  
Hindus observe the fast of *Ekadasi*, and eat water chestnuts with milk.  
They give up regular food, but do not control the mind. When they break the fast they indulge in meat eating.  
The Muslims observe the fast of Roza and offer Namaz. They shout ‘*bismillah*’.  
How can they obtain heaven when at night they kill the chickens?  
Both Hindus and Muslims have given up mercy from their hearts.  
The Muslim kills the goat by *halal*, and the Hindu by a sudden chop. Fire burns in both their homes.  
Both Hindus and Muslims follow the same path of violence. Satguru has demonstrated this.  
Kabir says, "Listen, O saints! Neither Ram nor Khuda instructed them to kill."

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is talking about the hypocrisy he has been seeing practiced by both Hindus and Muslims. They have been practicing violence, although they say that they are religious, and are supposed to have mercy in their hearts. First of all, he speaks about fasting which the Hindus observe on the *Ekadasi*, or the 11th day of the lunar half-month. They may partake of milk and certain fruits or water chestnuts, but they avoid grain and other regular types of food. But after breaking their fast, they often revert to killing the chicken and feasting. The Muslims, on the other hand, fast during the month of Ramadan. The fasting is called Roza. In the name of their religion, the Mullah will go on to the minaret and loudly shout "*bismillah*". The Muslims hope to go to heaven, but Guru Kabir is asking how can they go to heaven when they practice violence at night, killing the animals? He observes that both the Hindus and the Muslims have given up

compassion and mercy from their hearts. If they had mercy in their hearts, they would not sacrifice the life of any of God's innocent creatures. They do that only to satisfy their own tastes and, sadly, they do it in the name of religion.

Among the Muslims the animal must be sacrificed by *halal*, which means a slow cutting of the throat to allow the blood to drain out. The Jewish people call this Kosher. If the animal is not killed in this way, then it is said to be *haram* or unclean. The Hindus, on the other hand, kill by a sudden chop severing the head of the animal. Both forms are violent, and are not becoming of people who are supposed to have mercy in their hearts. Both their homes are burning with the fire of violence. (The fire is also burning to cook the meat). Guru Kabir observes that both the Hindus and the Muslims are really practicing the same thing, as far as following certain religious observances, and then practicing violence. This is hypocritical for one who is on a religious path. Religion really means to have compassion and mercy for all life. God is merciful and loves all His creatures. It is not right or ethical for human beings to kill animals to satisfy their tastes. Humans can live healthier and happier lives by being vegetarians. Guru Kabir observes that God, whether you call him Ram or Allah, or anything else, does not instruct anyone to be violent.

From this shabda it is important for us to learn that hypocrisy and violence are not part of a spiritual life. Let us have compassion and love instead, and follow a non-violent way of sustaining ourselves.

शब्द ११

सन्तो पांडे निपुन कसाई.

बकरा मारि भैंसा पर धावै, दिल में दर्द न आई.

करि अस्नान तिलक दै बैठे, विधि सो देवी पुजाई.

आतमराम पलक में बिनसे, रुधिर की नदी बहाई.

अति पुनीत ऊँचे कुल कहिये, सभा माहिं अधिकाई.

इनते दीक्षा सब कोई माँगे, हँसी आवे मोहि भाई.

पाप कटन को कथा सुनावै, कर्म करावै नीचा.

हम तो दूनों परस्पर देखा, यम लाये है धोखा.

गाय बधे ते तुरुक कहिये, इनते वै क्या छोटे.

कहहिं कबीर सुनो हो सन्तो, कलिमा ब्राह्मण खोटे.

*shabda 11*

*santo pānde nipun kasāi*

*bakrā māri bhaisā par dhāwai, dil mein dard na āi.*

*kari asnān tilak dai baithe, vidhi so devi pujaī.*

*ātamrām palak mein binse, rudhir ke nadī bahāi.*

*ati punīt unche kul kahiye, sabhā māhi adhikāi.*

*inte dikshā sab koi mānge, hansī āve mohi bhāi.*

*pāp katan ko kathā sunāwai, karm karāwai nīchā.  
ham toh dūno paraspar dekhā, yam lāye hai dhokhā.  
gāi badhe te turuk kahiye, inte wai kyā chhote.  
kahahin kabīr suno ho santo, kalimā brāhman khote.*

Meaning:

Oh saints! The *pandes* are skillful butchers.  
They kill the goat and rush upon the buffalo. They feel no pain in their hearts.  
They bathe and apply *tilak* to their foreheads, and sit to systematically perform worship to the Goddess.  
They destroy the soul in a moment, and cause a stream of blood to flow.  
They are thought to be holy and of high caste, and they are honoured in congregations.  
All the people seek initiation from them. O brother! I laugh at seeing such behaviour.  
They preach how to get rid of sins, yet make others perform lowly actions. I have seen the behaviour of both of them. They are both deceived by Yama.  
Those who kill cows are called Muslims. Are the *pandes* any less than they are?  
Kabir says, “Listen O saints! In *Kaliyug* the Brahmin is impious.”

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir strongly condemns the practice of sacrificing animals for any reason whatsoever, but most importantly in the worship of any deity. Guru Kabir was ever compassionate towards all living beings. He taught that God gave life to all the creatures, and they wish to live just as much as we do. It is thus unethical and immoral for us to deprive them of their lives. Killing is indeed a violent action and, because of the law of karma, everyone who kills must ultimately face the consequences.

It is common practice that the priests and their followers who worship the goddess (Kali, Durga, Bhairavi etc.) practice slaughtering animals in her worship. The question then arises, “Are we to worship a loving and benevolent God, or are we to worship a goddess that needs a blood sacrifice? Which worship is noble and worthy to be cultivated? God has given us intelligence and the power to discriminate between right and wrong. How can any divinity be happy when a life is destroyed? There are sufficient numbers of animals all over the world that any divine being can take if he or she wishes. But such is not the case. People make the un-religious rules and follow them, and then teach them to their disciples. To the Muslims the pig is unclean, and to the Hindus the cow is holy. Both animals have the same life force in them. God made the animals, and people made them holy or unholy, clean or unclean. The priests who practice and condone such behaviour ought to have compassion in their hearts. Yet these people have disciples and they are honoured. They are often thought to be of high caste, even when they perform lowly actions. Are people spiritually blind?

What constitutes true religious or spiritual life? It is love for God and all of his creation, including all the innocent animals. It is compassion in our hearts for all creatures. It is kindness to all beings. It is to use our *vivek* (spiritual discrimination), to know right from

wrong actions. Let us not get fooled and be dragged away from the true spiritual path into the labyrinth that makes us become lost, so that we cannot find our way back to our goal.

शब्द १२

सन्तो मते मातु जन रंगी.

पियत पियाला प्रेम सुधारस, मतवाले सत्संगी.

अर्धे अर्धे भाठी रोपिनि, ले कसाब रस गारी.

मूँदे मदन काटि कर्म कस्मल, सन्तत चुवत अगारी.

गोरख दत्त वशिष्ठ व्यास कपि, नारद सुख मनि जोरी.

बैठे सभा शंभु सनकादिक, तहाँ फिरै अधर कटोरी.

अम्बरीष औ याज्ञ जनक जड, शेष सहस मुख फाना.

कहाँ लौ गनौ अनन्त कोति लौ, अमहल महल दिवाना.

ध्रुव प्रहलाद विभीषण माते, माती शिव की नारी.

सगुन ब्रह्म माते वृन्दावन, अजहूँ लागी खुमारी.

सुर नर मुनि यति पीर औलिया, जिन रे पिया तिन जाना.

कहँ कबीर गूँगे की शक्कर, क्यों कर करे बखाना.

*shabda 12*

*santo mate mātu jan rangī.*

*piyat piyālā prem sudhāras, matwāle satsangī.*

*ardhe urdhe bhāthi ropini, le kasāu ras gārī.*

*munde madan kāti karm kasmal, santat chuwat agārī.*

*gorakh datt vashisth vyās kapi, nārad sukh muni jorī.*

*baithe sabhā sambhu sankādik, tahān phirai adhar katorī.*

*ambarīsh ow yāga janak jad, shesh sahas mukh phānā.*

*kahān lou ganow anant koti lou, amhal mahal diwānā.*

*dhruv, prahalād vibhīshan māte, mātī shiv kī nārī.*

*sagun brahm māte vrindāvan, ajahūn lāgī khumārī.*

*sur nar muni yati pīr owlīyā, jin re piyā tin jānā.*

*kahain kabīr gūnge kī shakkar, kyon kar kare bakhānā.*

Meaning:

O saints! People absorbed in His colour are intoxicated (with love).

The *satsangis* are intoxicated with it, as they drink cupsfull of nectarine love.

They fix the still in the midst of the sky, and there they extract the pungent drink.

They have overcome lust and evil actions, and partake of the drops of love, falling continuously.

Gorakh, Dattatreya, Vashisth, Vyas, Hanuman, Narad and Sukh Muni, all enjoyed it.

Sitting in the assembly Shiva, Sanak and others passed the cup around.

Even Ambarish and Yajnavalkya, Janak and Jadbharat, and Shesh with its thousand mouths enjoyed it.

How long can I count the endless numbers who enjoyed it. Even those in palaces and wanderers have been intoxicated with it.

Dhruv, Prahalad, Bhishishan were intoxicated, as was Shiva's wife (Parvati).

The incarnation of Brahman (Krishna) was intoxicated in Vrindavan, and even today that intoxication is felt.

Gods, men, *munis*, *yatis*, *pirs* and saints, all who drank it know of it.

Kabir says, if a dumb person tastes sugar, how can he explain the taste?

Commentary:

In this very interesting shabda, Guru Kabir explains the state of intoxication felt by those who have become absorbed in God. They have God realization. Just as a person can become drunk with alcohol, just so a person becomes drunk with the love of God. The difference is that the alcoholic person will do foolish things, and may be obnoxious, whereas the person absorbed in the love of God sings of the glories of God, oblivious to his surroundings. He may not verbalize his singing, but he experiences that state which is beyond description.

The still is used for making wine. In this shabda Guru Kabir uses the still to symbolize the making of the wine of love, but this still is in the midst of the sky. This means that the God-intoxicated people have gone into meditation, and the midst of the sky is really a high state of consciousness. That is where they distill their wine of love. Once they have reached this stage, they have overcome lust and evil actions, and are drinking the nectar of love that is flowing continuously by God's grace.

Guru Kabir lists a number of great sages of India mentioned in scriptures and mythology, who have attained such a state. All of these personalities were great in many ways and, perhaps, you can read about them in other books, such as the Ramayan, Gita, Puranas, or other scriptures of India.

Guru Kabir is saying that those people who have attained this state are countless, considering that he is relating events of many ages in the past. Most people are familiar with Krishna, hailed as an incarnation of God. Even he was intoxicated with this Divine Nectar. His influence is even in the world today. The gods, men and munis (philosophers), *yatis* (ascetics) and *pir* and *awliya* (Muslim holy people), have also tasted of this nectar and became intoxicated. Guru Kabir instructs that this state of intoxication is difficult to explain to other people. It is like a dumb person who has tasted sugar, and enjoys it, but cannot explain the sweetness to others.

शब्द १३

राम तेरी माया दुन्द बजावै.

गति मति वाकी समुझि परै नहिं, सुर नर मुनिहि नचावै.

क्या सेमर तेरी शाखा बढाये, फूल अनुपम बानी.

केतेक चात्रिक लागि रहे है, देखत रुवा उडानी.

काह खजूर बडाई तेरी, फल कोई नहिं पावै.  
ग्रीषम ऋतु जब आनि तुलानी, छाया काम न आवै.  
आपन चतुर और को सिखवै, कनक कामिनी सयानी.  
कहाँहि कबीर सुनो हो सन्तो, राम चरण रति मानी.

*shabda 13*

*rām terī māyā dund bajāwai.  
gati mati vāki samujhi parai nahin, sur nar munihī nachāvai.  
kyā semar teri shākhā badhāye, phūl anupam bānī.  
ketek chātrik lāgi rahe hain, dekhat ruwā urānī.  
kāhh khajūr badāī terī, phal koi nahin pāvai.  
grīsham ritu jab āni tulānī, chhāyā kām na āvāi.  
āpan chatur ovr ko sikhvai, kanak kāmīnī sayānī.  
kahahin kabīr suno ho santo, rām charan rati mānī.*

Meaning:

Oh Ram! Your Maya is the cause of duality (pairs of opposites).  
Maya's condition and whereabouts are difficult to understand. She makes the gods, men and munis dance to her tune.  
Oh semar tree! Of what use are your huge branches and beautiful flowers?  
Many birds await your ripe fruit, and, as they watch, your cotton flies away.  
Oh date palm! Of what use is your great height, when no one can reach your fruit?  
When the hot weather of summer arrives, your scanty shade is not of much use to anyone.  
Some people are clever in the subject of gold and women, and they teach their cleverness to others.  
Kabir says: Listen, Oh saints! Offer your love at the feet of Ram.

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is again talking about the power of Maya. Maya is illusory, and she fools many people. The semar tree (silk cotton) produces lovely pods that are like beautiful fruits. Parrots wait for the fruit to ripen, but even while they wait, the pod ripens, bursts, and the cotton flies away. The parrot is left disappointed. Similarly, people having hopes of satisfying their material desires, find that there is no end to them for material things. People are often disappointed. The attractions of the world are fascinating but, in the end, disappointing.

Another example Guru Kabir uses is the tall date palm that grows mostly in deserts. A traveler in the desert cannot pluck the fruits, as they are very high. The scanty branches also do not provide adequate shade. People in the world often behave like the date palm being full of pride and ego about their greatness. But their pride is not of any use to other people.

Guru Kabir also talks about the people who are very cunning in terms of obtaining wealth, and favours of women. They teach their cunningness to others. In the end, this cleverness is not of much use to them, as old age and death consume them, and they leave everything behind.

Guru Kabir teaches that it is difficult to understand the power of Maya that has fascinated the whole world. She has different beings in her grip, such as gods and angels, ordinary human beings, and the sages and philosophers. He advises everyone to give up the fascination with transitory and illusory Maya, and to offer love at the 'feet' of God. Spiritual life is for liberation and not bondage. Maya creates bondage, but the 'feet' of the Lord gives liberation.

शब्द १४

रामुरा संशय गाँठि न छुटै, ताते पकरि-पकरि यम लुटै.  
होय मिस्कीन कुलीन कहावै, तुम योगी संन्यासी.  
ज्ञानी गुनी सुर कवि दाता, ई मति किनहु न नासी.  
सुमृति वेद पुरान पढे सब, अनुभव भाव न दरसे.  
लोह हिरन्य होय धौं कैसे, जो नहिं पारस परसे.  
जियत न तरेउ मुये का तरिहो, जियतहि जो न तरै.  
गहि परतीत कीन्ह जिन जासो, सोई तहाँ अमरे.  
जो कछु कियत ज्ञान अज्ञाना, सोई समुझ सयाना.  
कहहिं कबीर तासों का कहिये, जो देखत दृष्टि भुलाना.

*shabda 14*

*rāmura sansai gān̄thi na chhutai, tāte pakari pakari yam lutai.  
hoi miskīn kulīn kahāvai, tum yogī sanyāsī.  
gyānī gunī sur kavi dātā, ī mati kinahu na nāsī.  
sumriti ved purān padhe sab, anubhav bhāv na darse.  
lohh hiranya hoi dhown kaise, jo nahi pāras parse.  
jiyat na tareu muye kā tariho, jiyatahi jo na tarai.  
gahi partīt kīnhh jin jāson, soi tahān amare.  
jo kachhu kiyau gyān agyānā, soi samujh sayānā.  
kahahi kabīr tāson kā kahiye, jo dekhat drishti bhulānā.*

Meaning:

Oh soul, since you do not give up your knot of doubts, Yama repeatedly attacks and robs you.

You speak of your humility and your noble birth, that you are a yogi and *sanyasi*.

You speak of your wisdom, virtue, bravery, poetry and giving, and you cannot get rid of this type of thinking.

You have read the *Smritis*, Vedas and Puranas, but you have not experienced the reality.

How can iron turn to gold when it is not touched by the touchstone?

If you cannot liberate yourself while alive, how can you do it after death?

Whatever you deeply believe, and to which you are attached, that is what you will become after death.

Oh wise man! Try to understand that whatever you did through knowledge or ignorance, that is what you will reap.

Kabir says, "What can I say to him who, while seeing, is still lost?"

Commentary:

There are many people in the world who feel that they are living a religious life, yet they are full of spiritual doubts. They perform all the external religious activities, but their own hearts are not enlightened with Divine knowledge. Guru Kabir is talking about such people. These people feel themselves to be of noble birth, or full of wisdom. They pride themselves about virtuous deeds and their learning and charity. They read the scriptures and say their prayers. But in the depth of their hearts they have not experienced the Ultimate Reality. Guru Kabir asks how can iron become gold when not touched by the touchstone? This is a popular mythological story. Guru Kabir here means how can a person become divine if he is not touched by the grace of a spiritual master? In another place he said that just as the touchstone converts iron to gold, just so the Guru imparts, through his grace, spiritual teachings, and converts the disciple into a Guru.

Many people feel that they are liberated because they say they are "born again". Some feel that they are liberated because they perform their religious duties regularly. But when they do not have direct perception of God in their own lives, how can they obtain liberation? Many people are taught that liberation is obtained after death. Guru Kabir points out that it is only while a person has consciousness can he ever hope to attain liberation. The dead cannot perform anything. Whatever the person strongly adheres to, and desires while alive, that is what he will become after death. He has to continue on an onward journey before he can obtain liberation. The law of karma assures that whatever one does in thought, word and deed, that is what he will reap in this life, or in another life.

In spiritual life one cannot fool himself, or God, by taking part in the various paraphernalia of religion. He may fool people but his actions are recorded in the 'Cosmic Computer', and that is what he will reap. Guru Kabir asks what can he say to that person who has eyes but he is not seeing. In fact he refuses to see. Such a person is spiritually in the dark. When he perceives properly, then he will start his spiritual journey.

शब्द १५

रामुरा चली बिनावन मा हो, घर छोडे जात जोलाहा हो.

गज नौ गज दश गज उनइस की, पुरिया एक तनाई.

सात सूत नौ गण्ड बहत्तर, पाट लागु अधिकाई.

ता पट तुलना (तुलै) गज न अमाई, पैसन सेर अढाई.

तामै घटै बढै रतियो नहिं, करकच करे गहराई.  
नित उठि बैठि खसम सो बरबस, तापर लागु तिहाई.  
भींगी पुरीया काम न आवै, जोलहा चला रिसाई.  
कहहिं कबीर सुनो हो सन्तो, जिन यह सृष्टि बनाई.  
छाड पसार राम भजु बौरे, भवसागर कठिनाई.

*shabda 15*

*rāmurā chali bināvan mā ho, ghar chhode jāt jolāhā ho.  
gaj now gaj das gaj unis kī, puriyā ek tanāī.  
sāt sūt now gand bahatar, pāt lāgu adhikāī.  
tā pat tulnā (tulai) gaj na amāī, paisan ser adhāī.  
tāmai ghatai badhai ratiyo nahin, karkach kare gaharāī.  
nit uthi baithi khasam so barbas, tāpar lāgu tihāī.  
bhingī puriyā kām na āvai, jolahā chalā risāī.  
kahahin kabīr suno go santo, jin yaha shrishhti banāī.  
chhād pasār rām bhaju bowre, bhowsāgar kathināī.*

Meaning:

The weaver is leaving his house, but the Maya of Ram goes and makes him create a new house.

One yard, nine yards, ten yards and nineteen yards, Maya made him weave the cloth. She wove seven different threads, nine cords and seventy-two strands, and the cloth became very valuable.

This cloth is so great that none other is equal to it, but people, not knowing its value, reduce its value to almost nothing.

They decrease its value, and cannot increase it, though they struggle very much.

When the weaver tries to make good cloth, his wife always rushes on him quarrelling.

When the bundle of yarn becomes wet it is useless, and the weaver departs disappointed.

Kabir says, "Listen all saints! Give up all the paraphernalia and sing the glories of him who made this creation. Oh foolish people! The crossing of this worldly ocean is difficult."

Commentary:

This is a very mystical and allegorical shabda in which Guru Kabir talks about the soul, the body, Maya, illusions, desires, God and liberation. The weaver is the soul and the house is the body. One yard is the mind and nine yards is the body with its nine apertures. The ten yards are the five organs of sense and five of actions. The nineteen yards are the five organs of sense, five organs of action, five subtle elements, and the mind, intellect, consciousness and ego. This body is made up of all of these various elements. The seven threads are components of the body, which are the skin, blood, flesh, sinews, bone, marrow, and semen. The nine 'cords' (apertures) are two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, one mouth, one anus and one genital organ. The seventy-two strands are seventy-two different nerve currents that are thought to make up the body. Once this body is made, it

is really very valuable, but people do not use the body effectively to enhance its progress towards God and liberation. The wife is illusion which confounds the mind, and makes the weaver (the soul) restless and confused. The power of Maya creates this illusion, and also fills the mind with the water of desires. This, figuratively, makes the body wet and therefore useless, just as wet yarn cannot be used to make a piece of cloth. In the end Guru Kabir says to give up all these paraphernalia about Maya and illusion and discussing the technicalities of the formation of the body etc. He said to free the mind, and sing the glories of God who has created this whole world. Unless we are clear-sighted about our devotion and connection with God, then the crossing of this worldly ocean is indeed very difficult.

From this shabda we need to learn that this body is very wonderfully made, and that it must be used wisely to obtain knowledge and freedom. It is not to be subjected to illusion and ignorance, that create bondage, resulting in karmic effects and rebirths. Unless liberation is obtained through knowledge, one is doomed to keep on suffering in this worldly ocean.

शब्द १६

रामुरा झीझी जन्तर बाजै, कर चरण बिहूना नाचै.  
 कर बिनु बाजै सुनै श्रवण बिनु, श्रवण श्रोता सोई.  
 पाटन सुबस सभा बिनु अवसर, बुझहु मुनि जन लोई.  
 इन्द्रि बिनु भोग स्वाद जिभ्या बिनु, अक्षय पिण्ड बिहूना.  
 जागत चोर मन्दिर तहाँ मूसै, खसम अछत घर सूना.  
 बीज बिनु अंकुर पेड बिनु तरिवर, बिनु फूले फल फरिया.  
 बाँझ की कोख पुत्र अवतरिया, बिनु पग तरिवर चढिया.  
 मसि बिनु द्वात कलम बिनु कागद, बिनु अक्षर सुधि होई.  
 सुधि बिनु सहज ज्ञान बिनु ज्ञाता, कहहि कबीर जन सोई.

*shabda 16*

*rāmūrā jhījhī jantar bājai, kar charan bihūnā nāchai.  
 kar bihūna bājai sunai shravan binu, shravan shrotā soī.  
 pātan subas sabhā binu awsar, bujhahu muni jan loī.  
 indri binu bhog svād jibhyā binu, akshai pind bihūnā.  
 jāgat chor mandir tahān mūsai, khasam achhat ghar sūnā.  
 bīj binu ankur ped binu tariwar, binu phūle phal phariyā.  
 bāñjh kī kokh putra avtariyā, binu pag tariwar chadhiyā.  
 masi binu dvāt kalam binu kāgad, binu akshar sudhi hoī.  
 sudhi binu sahaj gyān binu gyātā, kahahin kabīr jan soī.*

Meaning:

O Soul! The musical instrument plays softly, and (the mind) dances without hands and feet.

The music is played without hands, and is heard without ears. The listener and the listening merge into one.

The mind is controlled, and listens to the Divine melody always playing in the master's court. O intelligent people! Try to understand this.

In that state, there is enjoyment without the senses, tasting without the tongue, and immortality without the body.

The thieves (Maya) plunder the temple (body), and though the master is immortal, the house is empty.

In that state there is shoot without seed, and tree without stem, and fruit bears without flowers.

In the barren womb (empty mind) a son (meditation) is born, and without feet it climbs the tree (God realization).

The inkpot is full without ink, and the paper is written without pen. Without any writing, all is known.

Without recollection there is intuitive knowledge in the soul, and it knows all without pursuing knowledge. Kabir says that he is the real devotee who understands this.

Commentary:

This shabda is full of incompatibilities when seen superficially. How can there be dancing without hands and feet, and enjoyment without any sense organ. Who does it mean when the listener and the listening merge into one? What is the thief that plunders the house when the master is right there, and the house is empty? How can the shoot grow without seed, or a tree without stem, and fruit without flowers. In order to understand this shabda, it is important to realize that when the knowledge of God is obtained, all incompatibilities disappear.

The soft music is the divine melody which is heard when one is in meditation. There is no need for hands and feet that make the mind dance in ecstasy. There is no need for hands to play such music, for the Divine Melody resounds eternally. In that exalted state of unity, there is no listener or listening. In that state there is no need for any of the sense organs, in order to enjoy the bliss that is obtained in God realization. The soul is immortal, and that immortality is realized, knowing that the body itself is mortal.

Ordinarily, there is a thief that is called Maya (illusion) which plunders the temple of this body. It creates various desires and attachments, and robs the mind of its tranquility that is needed for meditation. The immortal soul resides there, but because of the illusive power of Maya, the house or the body appears to be abandoned.

In that state of God realization, there is only consciousness in which there is no direction such as up and down, front or back, good or bad, etc. Such an 'empty mind' occupied in God realization is called meditation. In meditation, Divine knowledge dawns in the

consciousness, and divine knowledge encompasses every other type of knowledge available to man. Guru Kabir thus states that the inkpot has ink and the paper is written, though no ink or pen are used. There is no language, yet all is known. Without learning and remembering anything, intuitive knowledge appears. This knowledge is supreme, and supersedes all other knowledge. Guru Kabir is stating that the person who understands this is a true devotee of God.

शब्द १७

रामहिं गावै औरहिं समझावै, हरि जाने बिनु बिकल फिरे.  
जेहि मुख वेद गायत्री उचरे, जाके वचन संसार तरे.  
जाके पाँव जगत उठि लागे, सो ब्राह्मण जीव वध करे.  
आपन ऊँच नीच घर भोजन, घीन कर्म हठि बोद्र भरे.  
ग्रहण-अमावस दुकि दुकि माँगे, कर दीपक लिये कूप परे.  
एकादशी व्रत नहिं जाने, भूत-प्रेत हठि हृदय धरे.  
तजि कपूर गाँठि विष बाँधे, ज्ञान गँवाये मुग्ध फिरे.  
छीजै साहु चोर प्रतिपाले, सन्त जना की कूटि करे.  
कहहिं कबीर जिभ्या के लंपट, यहि बिधि प्राणी नर्क परे.

*shabda 17*

*rāmahi gāwai owharin samjhāwai, hari jāne binu bikal phire.  
jehi mukh ved gāyatri uchare, jāke bachan sansār tare.  
jāke pānw jagat utthi lāge, so brāhman jīv badh kare.  
āpan unch nīch ghar bhojan, ghīn karm hathi bodra bhare.  
grahan amāwas dhuki dhuki mānge, kar dīpak liye kūp pare.  
ekādashi vrat nahi jāne, bhūt pret hathi hridai dhare.  
taji kapūr gānhi vish bāndhe, gyān ganwāye mugdh phire.  
chhījai sāhu chor pratipāle, sant janā kī kūti kare.  
kahahin kabīr jibhyā ke lampat, yehi bidhi prānī nark pare.*

Meaning:

There are some priests who sing of Ram and explain him to others, but without knowing God they wander restlessly.

They recite the Vedas and the *Gayatri*, and the ignorant people think that with those words they will obtain liberation.

The Brahmins at whose feet the people bow down, kill living creatures.

They think themselves high but eat at the homes of the low caste, and they fill their bellies by doing evil actions.

When there is an eclipse and the night is dark, they go house to house begging. With light (Vedas) in their hands they fall into the well (ignorance).

They do not know the secret of the *Ekadasi* fast, and their minds are filled with the stories of demons and ghosts.

They give up camphor (truth) and accept a knot of poison (ignorance). Wasting knowledge, they wander foolishly.

They destroy nobility and nurture thieves. They even tease the saints.

Kabir says that these people are lustful of taste, and they become victims of hell.

Commentary:

There are many false teachers of religion who are themselves bound up with evils and passions. The Brahmins think of themselves as belonging to the high caste, and others of lower castes. But they do not realize the truth that the soul in all people is the same. They do not know the secret of God, so they wander around with a restless mind. They recite the Vedas and the *Gayatri*, and the ignorant people who follow them, feel that they will obtain liberation by listening to the words of these unenlightened preachers.

Because people have accepted the Brahmins as belonging to a high caste, they will often bow down at their feet and do devotion to them. But many of these Brahmins kill animals in sacrifice, having no real compassion in their hearts towards innocent creatures. When it comes to filling their bellies, they will eat at the home of a low caste person, and at other times they will hypocritically say they do not want to be touched by the 'untouchables'. Yet some deceptively, in the dark nights, go from house to house begging, that is a lowly action for a high caste person. They have the light (Vedas-scriptures) in their hands, but they fall into the well of ignorance. They observe the fast of *Ekadasi* i.e. the eleventh day of each fortnight, but they do not know the real secret of the fasting. Instead, their minds are full of stories of spirits, ghosts, demons and devils.

These people give up the camphor of true knowledge and, instead, tie a knot of ignorance in their hearts, and they wander foolishly from place to place. They think of themselves highly, but their actions betray their lack of nobility. Instead, they nurture thieves of lust, anger, greed, attachments and ego. They are scornful of the true saints of God. Guru Kabir is saying that these preachers are lustful for the tastes of the tongue, as many are meat eaters or drink intoxicating beverages. Such people are laying their path to hell.

Guru Kabir is telling us that there are many hypocritical priests who pretend to have the knowledge of God, and try to instruct people. In turn, people accept them, believe their teachings, and worship them. In such situations, both the teachers and the students fall into the 'well', as both are ignorant of the knowledge of God.

शब्द १८

राम गुण न्यारो न्यारो न्यारो.

अबुझा लोग कहाँ लौ बूझै, बूझनिहार विचारो.

केतेहि रामचन्द्र तपसी से, जिन्ह यह जग बिटमाया.

केतेहि कान्ह भये मुरलीधर, तिन्ह भी अन्त न पाया.

मच्छ कच्छ बराह स्वरूपी, बामन नाम धराया.  
केतेहि बौद्ध निकलंकी कहिये, तिन्ह भी अन्त न पाया.  
केतेहि सिद्ध साधक संन्यासी, जिन्ह बनवास बसाया.  
केतेहि मुनिजन गोरख कहिये, तिन्ह भी अन्त न पाया.  
जाकी गति ब्रह्मे नहिं जानी, शिव सनकादिक हारे.  
ताके गुण नर कैसेक पैहौ, कहहिं कबीर पुकारे.

*shabda 18*

*rām gun nyāro nyāro nyāro.  
abujhā log kahān lown bījhe, būjhanihār bichāro.  
ketehi rāmchandra tapsī se, jinh yaha jag bitmāyā.  
ketehi kānh bhaye murlīdhar, tinh bhī ant na pāyā.  
machh kachh varāha swarūpī, vāman nām dharāyā.  
ketehi bowdh niklanki kahiye, tinh bhī ant na pāyā.  
ketehi sidh sādhak sanyāsi, jinh banbās basāyā.  
ketehi munijan gorakh kahiye, tinh bhī ant na pāyā.  
jākī gati brahmai nahi jānī, shiv sankādik hāre.  
tāke gun nar kaisek paihow, kahahin kabīr pukāre.*

Meaning:

The attributes of God are different from the three qualities of *satogun*, *rajogun* and *tamogun* (goodness, activity and inertia)

How much can unthinking people understand of this, but knowledgeable people may understand it.

Many great souls like Ramchandra, who did great austerities, have confused this world.

Many like Krishna have come into this world, but they also could not fathom God's mystery.

They came in the form of fish, tortoise and boar, and were also given the name of the Dwarf.

Many like Buddha and Kalki, who are said to be incarnations of Vishnu, did not fathom the mystery of God. (Kalki is yet to incarnate)

How many perfection seekers and *sanyasis* came, and many dwelt in the forests. How many munis and yogis like Gorakhnath came, and they also did not fathom the mystery of God.

He, whose attributes even Brahma could not know, and Shiva and Sanak and others were defeated in the search -

How can the ordinary mortal know His attributes? asks Kabir of all the people.

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is making it clear that God is beyond all qualities and limitations. He is beyond space, time, and causation. He cannot be categorized as either good or evil, or as having form or no form. Whatever description we give of God, is of

our own making, for God is beyond our thinking. We can only form our personal conceptions of what God is. Guru Kabir, however, states that God is that Mysterious Being beyond all qualities and limitations, and He dwells intimately in the hearts of all, and that He is universal. That is why God is said to be omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. Those who are deep thinkers on this type of subject, can form some opinion about what God is. God is not subject to perceptive knowledge, but only to a subjective intuitive experience. Guru Kabir lists many famous personalities of the past who are often worshipped as manifestations of God. These are Ramchandra of Ayodhya who did great austerities and lived in the jungle for fourteen years. He never claimed himself to be God, nor was he thought of as God initially. Later on, people made him an incarnation of God, and so Guru Kabir is saying that he has confused the world. Similarly, personalities like Krishna have come with the qualities of human beings, and subject to birth and death. Guru Kabir is saying that God is beyond these limitations. The mythology of India states that God even came in the form of a fish, a tortoise, a boar, and a dwarf to save the people from the various calamities which they were facing. Similarly, many great personalities like Lord Buddha, and Kalki who is to come, have not really fathomed the mystery of God. Actually Lord Buddha steered clear of any discussion about God, but he stressed goodness and compassion, and sought liberation from the bondage of karmas. Many holy people called munis, and many yogis, like the famous Gorakhnath, have practiced their austerities and yoga, but they have not found the secret of God. Even Brahma who is supposed to be the creative aspect of God, and Shiva the destructive aspect of God, and the sons of Brahma, have all accepted defeat in not knowing the Eternal Being. Guru Kabir then asks the question that if such great personalities came and went without fathoming the secret of God, how can we who are mere mortals, understand the glory and the mystery of God.

We need to understand what Guru Kabir is telling us in this shabda. God is eternal, formless and omnipresent. He is the embodiment of all knowledge and all power. He cannot be limited to a human or animal body, even if that is called an incarnation of God. For God represents power, intelligence and consciousness, that are diffuse and pervasive throughout the whole universe. What qualities can we ascribe to such a power? In meditation, we try to have some concept of what that Great Power is, but we cannot, through logical reasoning, arrive at any conclusion about this "Mysterious Being".

शब्द १९

ये तत्तु राम जपहु हो प्रानी, तुम बूझहु अकथ कहानी.  
जाके भाव होत हरि ऊपर, जागत रैन बिहानी.  
डाइन डारे स्वनहा डारे, सिंह रहै बन घेरे.  
पाँच कुटुम मिलि जूझन लागे, बाजन बाजु घनेरे.  
रोहु मृगा संसै बन हाँके, पारथ बाणा मेलै.  
सायर जरे सकल बन डाहे, मच्छ अहेरा खेलै.  
कहहिं कबीर सुनो हो सन्तो, जो यह पद अर्थावै.  
जोयह पद को गाय विचारे, आप तरे औ तारे.

*shabda 19*

*ye tattv rām japahu ho prānī, tum būjhahu akath kahānī.*

*jāke bhāw hot hari upar, jāgat rain bihānī.*

*dāin dāre swanhā dore, singh rahai ban ghere.*

*pānch kutum mili jūjhan lāge, bājan bāju ghanere.*

*rohu mrigā sansai ban hānke, pārath bānā melai.*

*sāyar jare saKal ban dāhe, machh aherā khele.*

*kahāin kabīr suno ho santo, jo yaha pad arthāwai.*

*jo yaha pad ko gāi bichāre, āp tare ow tāre.*

Meaning:

Oh soul! Recite the glory of God - that glory which is beyond description.

He who is devoted to God, awakens from the night of ignorance to the dawn of knowledge.

The witch (Maya) tries to control the dog (mind), and the lion (ego) surrounds the forest (world).

The five relatives (senses) engage in a fight, and battle music (desires) is in abundance.

The deer (mind) drives all the doubts from the forest (heart), as the hunter (guru) aims and shoots the arrow of the Word.

The ocean of desires is burnt, as does the forest of passions. The fish (soul) enjoys the game of hunting (removing doubts).

Kabir says, "Listen, O seekers! He who can explain this verse,

And he who can sing it meaningfully, will gain liberation, and will liberate others."

Commentary:

This again is one of the famous allegorical teachings of Guru Kabir, in which he challenges people to explain the intricacies of the soul, the mind, the ego, the senses and the passions. He starts off by saying to sing the glories of God, but that glory is beyond description. It then necessitates an explanation of how to sing the glories of that which is indescribable. God is beyond description, and Guru Kabir has always taught that we cannot describe God, but we have to realize God. Elsewhere, he stated that if reciting the name of God can give you liberation, then uttering the word sugar will make your mouth sweet. Similarly, saying water will quench your thirst, and saying food will appease your hunger. Obviously this is impossible. Thus, to sing the glories of God means to go on an inner journey, developing deep love for God Who dwells within the heart of all beings. He states that if you are truly devoted to God, then all your ignorance or darkness (night) will be removed, and knowledge will dawn in your consciousness.

He states that the witch (Maya) is always trying to control the dog that, here, is the mind. Maya really means false perceptions of the material world as being the Ultimate Reality. It also means the attractions that allure the senses, and keep them trapped. Similarly, ego remains in the hearts of all people. He also talks about the five relatives which are the five senses, or the five passions, all of which keep the mind restless in trying to find their particular satisfactions. These are driven, figuratively, by the battle music of desires

which are plenty. The deer is the mind that can drive out all the doubts from the forest which here is the hearts of all the people, if they will submit to the arrows (Words) of the Guru. These arrows are the divine words and teachings imparted by a spiritual master to his disciple. Once this happens, Guru Kabir is saying that the whole ocean of desires is burnt, as is the forest of passions. The fish which here is the soul, then enjoys the game of hunting (removing doubts and passions from the heart).

Guru Kabir, in his usual manner, challenges the audience here described as '*santo*' or saints, to explain this shabda. He said that he who is able to explain it, and to understand it, will himself find liberation, and will be able to liberate others from the bondage of Maya.

The Bijak of Guru Kabir means exactly that, i.e. a Bijak or a secret map which shows the way to the hidden treasure. The hidden treasure here is God dwelling in the hearts of all people. But to realize this requires devotion and dedication. It requires the understanding of Maya, and the various sense objects and passions, the desires and the ego, that drive all people. These must be brought under control. Only then can the soul enjoy liberation and bliss, that are its eternal and essential nature.

शब्द २०

कोइ राम रसिक रस पीयहुगे, पीयहुगे सुख जीयहुगे .  
फल लंकृत बीज नहिं बकला, शुक पंछी (तहाँ) रस खाई.  
चुवै न बुंद अंग नहिं भीजै, दास भँवर सब सँग लाई.  
निगम रसाल चारि फल लागे, तामें तीनि समाई.  
एक दूरि चाहे सब कोई, जतन जतन (काहु) बिरले पाई.  
गये बसन्त ग्रीष्म ऋतु आई, बहुरि न तरिवर तर आवै.  
कहैं कबीर स्वामी सुखसागर, राम मगन(होय) सो पावै.

*shabda 20*

*koi rām rasik ras pīyahuge, pīyahuge sukh jīyahuge,  
phal lankrit bīj nahin baklā, shuk panchhī (tahān) ras khāī,  
chuwai na bund anga nahi bhījai, dās bhanwar sab sanga lāī,  
nigam rasāl chāri phal lāge, tāmen tīni samāī,  
ek dūri chāhe sab koī, jatan jatan (kāhu) birle pāī,  
gaye basant grīsham ritu āī, bahuri na tariwar tar āwai,  
kahain kabīr swāmī sukh sāgar, rām magan (hoi) so pāwai*

Meaning:

Only very few people drink the nectar of God's love and obtain a blissful life. This bliss is like a juicy fruit but without seed or skin. The parrot enjoys its nectarine juice.

This nectar does not fall in drops, nor does it wet any part of the body of those devotees who swarm like bees to obtain it.

The Vedas are like a fruit tree bearing four fruits, of which three are close and perishable. The fourth is far away, yet desired by all, but rarely obtained with great effort.

Spring has vanished and summer has arrived, and the soul unfortunately cannot again reach that tree of salvation.

Kabir says that the master is the ocean of bliss, and those absorbed in Him will obtain that bliss.

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir discusses the differences between those few fortunate devotees who will drink the bliss of God's love and obtain salvation, and those who swarm like bees to obtain nectar but cannot obtain it. The nectar here is bliss that is obtained by realizing God as the indweller. This is also salvation. Guru Kabir states that those who drink the nectar of God's love will obtain this bliss. Figuratively, this bliss has no seed and no skin that are parts that are thrown away. Once this is obtained, then there is no part, such as any negative things to be thrown away. Bliss is complete in itself. The parrot is the fortunate soul who drinks the nectar of bliss. The word *shuk* means parrot. It is allegorically used to refer to Shukacharya who was a sage said to have realized God in the mother's womb. He had given up Maya and attained bliss before birth.

Guru Kabir is saying that many devotees swarm to religious and spiritual places, but not even a drop of the bliss falls on them to wet them i.e. to give them realization. He states that the scriptures have outlined four fruits - *dharm*, *arth*, *kām*, *moksh* - righteousness, wealth, fulfillment of desires, and liberation. The first three are really materialistic and perishable, but the fourth, liberation, is difficult to obtain even after great effort.

Guru Kabir states that the spring season (youth) has departed and summer (old age and death) has arrived. The soul will not again have the opportunity to attain that state of bliss unless it is reborn, and struggles upward to obtain liberation. In conclusion Guru Kabir states the master (God) is really the ocean of bliss and only those who are absorbed in Him will obtain that bliss.

God is said to be "Existence, Consciousness and Bliss Absolute". The soul is of the essence of God and therefore partakes of the same attributes. These attributes, however, are hidden from human consciousness because of ego, passions and ignorance. Maya deludes them. A few people, through intense devotion and longing for God realization, will taste the bliss of that realization.

शब्द २१

राम न रमसि कवन दंड लागा, मरि जै बै का करिबे अभागा.

कोई तीरथ कोई मुण्डित केसा, पाखण्ड मंत्र भ्रम उपदेसा.

विद्या वेद पढि करे हंकारा, अंतकाल मुख फाँके छारा.

दुःखित सुखित होय कुटुम जेवावै, मरणवार एक सर दुख पावै.  
कहहिं कबीर यह कलि है खोटी, जो रहै करवा, सो निकरै टोटी.

*shabda 21*

*rām na ramsi kawan dand lāgā, mari jaibai kā karibe abhāgā.  
koī tīrath koī mundit kesā, pākhand mantra bharam updeshā.  
vidyā ved padhi kare hankārā, antkal mukh phānke chhārā.  
dukhit sukhit hoi kutum jewāwai, maranbār eksar dukh pāwai.  
kahahin kabīr yaha kali hai khotī, jo rahai karwā so nikrai totī.*

Meaning:

You do not dwell in God! Unfortunately, what will you do when you die?  
Some people go to pilgrimages and some shave their heads. Some give false mantras and doubtful instructions.  
They study the Vedas and are full of ego. In the end they bite the dust.  
Through suffering and happiness you raise your family, but at the time of death you suffer alone.  
Kabir says that this is Kaliyug, and it is full of evil. Whatever is inside the pitcher will come out from the spout.

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is explaining to us that if we do not live in the love of God, we will die not having known the secret of life. God is our source and also our destination. If we do not know our destination then we are truly lost in this world. He mentions that in an effort to live a religious life, many people go to places of pilgrimages, and many shave their heads. Many of them give out doubtful instructions that do not give liberation to the seekers.

Guru Kabir explains that many study the Vedas but are full of ego. At the time of death they bite the dust, which means they have died defeated. He further states that people, whether they are happy or suffering, raise their families, but in the end they die suffering alone, for no one can help them. Kabir says this is the Kaliyug (Iron Age), and that it is full of evils. He, figuratively, explains that what is in the pitcher that is what will come out from the sprout. He really means to say that what people are deep within themselves that is what they will be at the time of death, and that is what will pursue them beyond death into another life. In this shabda Guru Kabir is explaining that in life we must practice simplicity, sincerity and purity. We must not be proud about what we are, nor should we follow practices that are of no practical value in terms of spiritual development. Realize that God dwells within, and go within to find God. All external practices can be great obstacles towards reaching that spiritual goal which all religious people seek.

शब्द २२

अवधू छांडहु मन विस्तारा.  
सो पद गहो जाहि ते सदगति, पारब्रह्म सो न्यारा.  
नहिं महादेव नहिं महम्मद, हरि हजरत कछु नाहीं.  
आदम ब्रह्मा नहिं तब होते, नहिं धूप नहिं छाही.  
असी सहस पैगम्बर नाहीं, सहस अठासी मूनी.  
चन्द्र सूर्य तारागण नाहीं, मच्छ कच्छ नहिं दूनी.  
वेद कितेब सुमृति नहिं संजम, नहिं जवन परसाई.  
बांग निमाज कलमा नहिं होते, रामहु नहिं खुदाई.  
आदि अन्त मन मध्य न होते, आतश पवन न पानी.  
लख चौरासी जीव जन्तु नहिं, साखी शब्द न बानी.  
कहहिं कबीर सुनो हो अवधू, आगे करहु विचारा.  
पूरण ब्रह्म कहाँ ते प्रगटे, कृत्रिम किन्ह उपराजा.

*shabda 22*

*avadhū chhādahu man vistārā.  
so pad gaho jāhi te sadgati, pārbrahm so nyārā.  
nahin mahādev nahin mahammad, hari hazrat kachhu nāhīn.  
ādam brahmā nahin tab hote, nahīn dhūp nahīn chhāhīn.  
asī sahas paigambar nāhīn, sahas athāsī mūnī.  
chandra sūrya tārāgan nāhīn, machh kachh nahin dūnī.  
ved kiteb sumriti nahin sanjam, nahin javan parsāī.  
bānga nimāz kalmā nahin hote, rāmahu nāhin khudāī.  
ādi ant man madhya na hote, ātash pavan na pānī.  
lakh chowrāsī jīv jantu nahin, sākhī shabda na bānī.  
kahahin kabīr suno ho avadhū, āge karahu bichārā.  
pūran brahm kahān te pragate, kritrim kinha uprājā.*

Meaning:

O ascetic, give up the imaginations in your mind!

Attain that state of perfect self-realization (liberation), that Parabrahm realization is different from other states.

In that state when the Atma alone existed, there was no Mahadev and Mohammad, nor was there Hari or Hazrat.

Then there was no Adam and Brahma, and there was neither sunlight nor shade.

Moreover, eighty thousand prophets and eighty eight thousand sages did not exist then.

There was no existence of the moon, the sun or the stars, nor the two manifestations of the fish and the turtle.

There were no Vedas and Koran, no books of social laws, nor the principles of control, and there was no emperorship of the Muslims.

Then there was no existence of the Muslim prayers and the turrets, the Namaz, and the Kalma.

There was no incarnation of Ram, nor did Khuda live in the seventh heaven.

There was no concept of beginning, end or middle, and there was no fire, air, or water.

There was no existence of the 8.4 million forms of life, nor was there poetry, words, nor speech.

Kabir says, listen to me, O ascetics! Try to think about that state of existence that was prior to what is now called creation.

From where did the Supreme Bhrahm appear, and who created this artificial world?

Commentary:

In this very mystical shabda (poem) Guru Kabir is talking about that original state before any manifestation of creation existed. This is the state in which the Soul or God existed in the very 'beginning', but we must understand there was no beginning as we ordinarily think of it. It was a state of consciousness. He is exhorting the ascetics to attain that state of consciousness that gives liberation, and which is different from all the other states of consciousness we see in the manifested world.

He further instructs the ascetics that prior to all that have come about in the world, there was no Mohammed or Mahadeva, nor the Muslim Prophet nor the Hindu Deity (son of Shiva). There was no God of the Hindu or of the Muslim as ordinarily understood. There was no Adam, the first man created by God in Christianity, nor of Brahma the Hindu God of creation. There was also no existence of sunshine or shade. Guru Kabir also states that there was no existence of the countless messengers and prophets, or of the sages. There was no sun, moon, stars, nor the incarnations as the fish and the tortoise of Hindu mythology. In that original state, there were no scriptures such as the Vedas, Koran, and the *Srutis* (social laws). There was no emperorship of the Muslims. There was also no existence of the prayers recited by the Muslims neither from the turrets, nor the five daily prayers towards Mecca, nor the assertion of the Kalma that "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed was his prophet." Similarly, on the Hindu side, there was no manifestation of Ram as an incarnation of God, and on the Muslim side no Khuda who is supposed to live in the 'seventh heaven'. In that state also there was no beginning, end, or middle, nor fire, air, and water. There were no manifestations of the various forms of living things, neither were there words, no speech or poetry.

What Guru Kabir is saying to the ascetics is that they must try to realize that original unmanifested state (*avyakta*) of the Soul which was one with Parabrahm, the Eternal Self-existent Lord of the Universe. In that state there was no Maya - the power of projection into various forms. It was because of Maya that God has 'projected' Himself into the various manifestations Guru Kabir has just described. He is asking from where that original Supreme Power called Brahm appear, and how did this created world by the power of Maya come into existence?

Guru Kabir was ever a mystic attuned to God in a state of supreme consciousness. In that consciousness which is the consciousness of God, there was no concept of place, time, or

space. There was no duality, but only unity in the Divine Being. He is teaching that only realization of this original state of consciousness can free us from the illusions of Maya and material bondage. It is that state of attainment that will give us perfect bliss.

शब्द २३

अवधू कुदरत की गति न्यारी.  
रंक निवाज करे वै राजा, भूपति करे भिखारी.  
याते लवंग हरफ नहिं लागे, चन्दन फूलन फूला.  
मच्छ शिकारी रमे जंगल में, सिंह समुद्रहिं झूला.  
रेंड रूख भये मलयागिर, चहुँ दिशि फूटी बासा.  
तीन लोक ब्रह्मण्ड खण्ड में, देखै अन्ध तमाशा.  
पंगा मेरु सुमेरु उलंघै, त्रिभुवन मुक्ता डोलै.  
गूंगा ज्ञान विज्ञान प्रकाशै, अनहद बानी बोलै.  
अकाशहिं बाँधि पताल पठावै, शेष स्वर्ग पर राजै.  
कहहिं कबीर राम है राजा, जो कछु करै सो छाजै.

*shabda 23*

*avadhū kudrat kī gati nyārī..  
rank niwāj kare wai rājā, bhūpati kare bhikhārī.  
yāte lawang haraph nahin lāge, chandan phūlan phūlā.  
machh shikārī rame jangal mein, singh samudrahin jhūlā.  
rend rūkh bhaye malyāgir, chahun dishi phūtī bāsā.  
tīn lok brahmand khand mein, dekhai andh tamāshā.  
pangā meru sumeru ulanghai, tribhuvan muktā dolai.  
gūngā gyān vigyān prakāshai, anahad bānī bolai.  
akāshahin bāndhi patāl pathāwai, shesh swarg par rājai.  
kahahin kabīr rām hai rājā, jo kachhu karai so chhājai.*

Meaning:

O Devotee! The ways of God's Maya are strange!

Its kindness can make a poor person into a king, but it can also reduce a king to a beggar.

It is strange that a clove tree bears no fruit, and that a sandalwood bears no flowers.

The fish (Maya) hunts in the forest (world), and the lion (soul) swings in the ocean (of desires).

The castor oil plant (devotee) can become a mountain of sandalwood (realized soul), and spread its fragrance all around.

One who is blind to desires can see this strange sport in the three worlds, the universe and the earth.

The lame person (man) climbs the Meru and Sumeru mountains and, achieving liberation, moves in the three worlds.

The self-realized person speaks of worldly and spiritual knowledge, and of the divine melody of God.

God's Maya can tie the firmament and send it to hell, and place the hell-dwelling serpent, Sheshnag, to rule in heaven.

Kabir says that God is the supreme ruler, and whatever he does is right.

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is talking about the power of Maya which has strange powers according to our human perception. All things and events that take place in the world are the products of Maya. Maya arises from the power of God that allows God to manifest in all forms. But Maya, at the same time, also deludes us into thinking that what is apparent to our physical senses is also the reality. There are many contradictory situations in the world that can be reconciled only if we invoke the power of Maya. Guru Kabir gives the example of the clove tree which bears a flower but has no fruit, because the clove itself is the flower. Similarly, the sandalwood tree gives neither flowers nor fruit, but gives a beautiful fragrance.

He explains that Maya that he describes as a fish, actually roams around in the forest of this world. The soul is rocking back and forth according to the desires which rise up in the mind. Maya can also transform the raw disciple into one who has attained spiritual heights, here compared to the mountain of sandalwood. The person who is blind to the desires i.e. has control over his passions and senses can, figuratively, sit back and watch the play of Maya that keeps the world in its clutches.

Guru Kabir says that the lame person can climb the mountain, which means that the mind previously undeveloped, can develop to reach great heights and obtain liberation. He can then move about freely everywhere. Similarly, the person who is self-realized does not speak much, but is full of spiritual wisdom, and hears the divine melody of God within. For God nothing is impossible. That which we may say to be heaven, or the skies, can be sent to the nether world, and the mythological serpent, Sheshnag, that is supporting the earth, and thus, figuratively, is in hell, can be made to dwell in heaven. Guru Kabir summarizes that God is actually the Supreme Ruler of the universe, and everything happens because of His Maya, and it's also appropriate. It is His will that manifests in the universe.

In this shabda Guru Kabir teaches us that Maya that manifests in strange ways can fool us. We must develop spiritually and realize the true knowledge of the Self that will give us liberation from the bondage of desires, cravings and materialism.

शब्द २४

अवधू सो योगी गुरु मेरा, जो यह पद का करे निबेरा.

तरिवर एक मूल बिनु ठाढा, बिनु फूले फल लागा.

शाखा पत्र किछू नहिं वाके, अष्ट गगन मुख गाजा.

पौ बिनु पत्र करह बिनु तुम्बा, बिनु जिभ्या गुण गावै.  
गावनहार के रूप न रेखा, सतगुरू होय लखावै.  
पंछिक खोज मीन को मारग, कहैं कबीर दोउ भारी.  
अपरम पार पार पुरूसोत्तम, मूरति की बलिहारी.

*shabda 24*

*avadhū so yogī guru merā, jo yaha pad kā kare niberā.  
tariwar ek mūl binu thādhā, binu phūle phal lāgā.  
shākhā patra kichchū nahin wāke, asht gagan mukh gājā.  
pow binu patra karaha binu tumbā, binu jibhyā gunn gāwai.  
gāwanhār ke rūp na rekhā, satguru hoi lakhāwai.  
panchhik khoj mīn ko mārag, kahain kabīr dou bhārī.  
aparam pār pār purushotam, mūrati kī balihārī.*

Meaning:

O Seeker! That yogi will be my Guru who can explain the mystery of this poem.  
There is a tree standing without roots, and without producing flowers it bears fruits.  
It has no branches and no leaves, but reaching the 'eighth sky' it thunders.  
The petals have no form, and the gourd is produced without flower, and without having a tongue there is the song of God's glory.  
The singer has no form and no outline, but if there is a *Satguru* then he can make Him visible.  
There are two ways of approaching the Supreme - the path of the bird, or of the fish, and Kabir says that both are difficult.  
The Supreme Lord is fathomless, but for that Supreme Being, I sacrifice everything.

Commentary:

This shabda is one of the frequent allegorical teachings of Guru Kabir. In order to understand it, we will need to understand the meaning of the things to which he refers. The tree is that of meditation that has no roots. And this tree bears the fruit of bliss, but there is no necessity for flowers to precede the fruit. This tree has no branches or leaves, but it reaches the eighth sky. The eighth sky is the eighth *chakra*, being one above the seven of the traditional yoga teachings. This eighth *chakra* is called *surati chakra* or *unmuni chakra*. The thundering is the *anahad nad* or divine melody that the devotee hears when he reaches this highest state in meditation.

The *chakras* are represented as lotus flowers. But Guru Kabir says that the petals of this eighth chakra have no form, and is realized as being without flowers. When one is in this meditative state he does not need a tongue with which to sing the glories of God. This is an inner realization, and it is a state of bliss that amounts to singing the glories of God. In that state there is no form or outline of realization, for God has no form. But if there is a true *Satguru* he can help the devotee to realize the formless God.

Guru Kabir is saying that the devotee can approach God realization in two ways. The first is that of the birds flying free in the air. Similarly, the mind can rise above all the material aspects of life, and float into the vast infinity of God Consciousness. The second is the way of the fish. Just as the fish cannot live without water, just so the true devotee cannot live without God, and he has an intense longing for God realization. Guru Kabir is saying that both of these paths are difficult for the average person to follow. A devotee must have dedication and perseverance, and follow the instructions of the Guru in order to reach this highest state of meditation, in which he realizes the formless God that is manifesting in the whole universe. He states that the mystery of this most exalted Supreme Being is fathomless, and cannot be understood by any rational or intellectual exercise. But for the realization of God the true devotee is ready to sacrifice everything.

In this allegorical shabda, Guru Kabir is referring to the tree of meditation. This is achieved when the mind is subdued, and there is no thought in it. There is only a state of pure consciousness. In this state, the devotee hears the divine melody, and realizes the formless Supreme Being within himself and, at the same time, seeing the Supreme Being present in all things in the universe.

शब्द २५

अवधू वो तत्तु रावल राता, नाचै बाजन बाजु बराता.  
 मौर के माथे दुलहा दीन्हा, अकथा जोरि कहाता.  
 मँडव के चारन समधी दीन्हा, पुत्र विवाहल माता.  
 दुलहिन लीपि चौक बैठारी, निर्भय पद परकासा.  
 भातै उलटि बरातिहि खायो, भली बनी कुशलाता.  
 पाणिग्रहण भयो भव मंडन, सुषमनि सुरति समानी.  
 कहहिं कबीर सुनहु हो सन्तो, बूझहु पण्डिय ज्ञानी.

*shabda 25*

*avadhū wo tatttu rāwal rātā, nāchai bājan bāju barātā.  
 mour ke māthe dulhā dīnhā, akathā jori kahātā.  
 mandav ke chāran samdhī dīnhā, putra vivāhal mātā.  
 dulhīn līpi chowk baithārī, nirbhai pad parkāsā.  
 bhātai ulati barātahi khāyo, bhalī banī kushlātā.  
 pānigrahan bhayo bhow mandan, sukhmani surati samānī.  
 kahahin kabīr sunahu ho santo, būjhahu pandit gyānī.*

Meaning:

O ascetic, great personalities have been absorbed in that great Truth. In that state the musical instruments dance, while the wedding party is being played. The bridegroom sits on top of the wedding crown. This union of the soul and God is difficult to explain.

The people sitting in the marriage place attained a balanced intellect, seeing that the son has married the mother.

The bride sits in the polished open space, and there becomes aware of the fearless abode. The rice turns around and eats up the wedding guests. This is a very beneficial achievement.

The handholding ceremony was performed, and birth has become justified, and meditation became absorbed in *sushumna*.

Kabir says, "Listen O Saints, O Pandits! Please consider this teaching."

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir talks in his familiar parable style. This shabda can be interpreted in different ways, but the following explanation is a reasonable one, given the mystic intent of Guru Kabir.

People who practice meditation, and are burning with the desire to realize God are great personalities, once they have realized that union. When they have achieved that union, they are blissful, and the instruments, which are their sense organs, dance for joy, and the wedding guests are the souls which are being played. This means that they are very happy. The bridegroom is the soul and the crown atop his head on which he sits is God realization. Guru Kabir is saying that this union of the soul and God is difficult to explain, because people often think that it is only fanciful thinking.

In any wedding there is a *mandap* or a wedding platform, and the wedding party sits there. The wedding party are the senses, mind, ego and intellect. They all become balanced and are in blissful harmony. The son marries the mother and this means that the son (soul) marries meditation which is, figuratively, the bride. The bride is sitting in the open *chowk*, that means meditation is not hidden, and the person realizing union is fearless, and attains that abode of fearlessness that is union with God. Guru Kabir further states that the rice turns around and eats up the wedding party. Here the rice means meditation and the wedding party again are the souls. Souls lose their identity when they merge with God, and such a state of being is truly a great achievement. When the handholding ceremony takes place indicating that the soul and God are united, then the birth of such realized souls are justified. Here meditation enters into that channel of God realization called *sushumna*. This results in liberation of the soul from karmic bondage. Guru Kabir is challenging the learned pandits to consider what he is saying.

Guru Kabir is speaking in parables because the average person does not understand what God realization is, and what union of the soul and God is. So he describes a few material examples, such as a bride and bridegroom getting married, or that the sense organs are dancing in rapture. He says that one must try to attain this state, so that one can be freed from the bondage of karmas.

शब्द २६

भाई रे बहुत बहुत क्या कहिये, बिरले दोस्त हमारे.  
गढन भंजन सँवारन आपै, ज्यों राम रखे त्यों रहिये.  
आसन पवन योग श्रुति स्मृति, ज्योतिष पढि बैलाना.  
छौं दर्शन पाखण्ड छानबे, ये कल काहु न जाना.  
आलम दुनी सकल फिरि आयो, ये कल उहै न जाना.  
तजि करिगह जगत उचाये, मन महँ मन न समाना.  
कहहिं कबीर योगी औ जंगम, फीकी उनकी आसा.  
रामहिं नाम रटै ज्यों चात्रिक, निश्चय भक्ति निवासा.

*shabda 26*

*bhāī re bahut bahut kyā kahiye, birle dost hamāre.  
gadhan bhanjan samwāran āpai, jyon rām rakhe tyon rahiye.  
āsan pawan yog sruti smriti, jyotish padhi bailānā.  
chhow darshan pākhand chhānabe, ye kal kāhu na jānā.  
ālam dunī sakal phiri āyo, ye kal uhai na jānā.  
taji karigaha jagat uchāye, man mahh man na samānā.  
kahahin kabīr yogī ow jangam, phīkī unkī āsā.  
rāmahin nām ratai jyon chātrik, nischai bhakti niwāsā.*

Meaning:

O Brother, what is the use of much talking! There is hardly anyone who is my friend.  
God is the power that creates, destroys and beautifies, thus remain as God wishes to keep you.

By the practice of asanas, pranayamas, hatha yoga, and study of the *Srutis* and *Smritis*, and astrology, people have become confused.

People have been preoccupied with the six philosophies and the ninety-six hypocrisies. They have not acquired the art of surrendering to God.

They have wandered throughout the world, but they have not obtained the art of self-realization.

They give up their home, and people consider them highly evolved, but their minds cannot be concentrated.

Kabir says that weak is the hope of salvation of such yogis and wandering *sanyasis*.

If you recite the name of God with concentration, as the chatrik bird concentrates on the moon, then definitely you will have devotion in your heart.

Commentary:

It is a common occurrence in the world that people keep talking about spiritual life and religion, but not much is attained from such practice. Attainment results only when the teachings are put into practice. It is thus that Guru Kabir states that what is the point of talking. People do not often like to hear the truth because 'the truth hurts.' For this reason

saints have always been persecuted by the people who did not understand their message. He tells the people that God is responsible for their life - for their creation, destruction, and beautification. In fact, the same applies to the whole universe. The wise instruction is thus to be content, and to live as God wishes, by surrendering to His will.

People believe that they will obtain God realization by practicing various yoga *asanas* (postures) of Hatha Yoga, and by studying the Vedas and social laws and astrology. But these cause confusion, as people do not often practice whatever good is taught in them. The path to God is straightforward, and one need not get into all the forms of argumentative philosophies and hypocrisies often taught by religious people. The secret is to obtain the art of surrendering to God.

People often wander throughout the world for religious purposes, but God realization escapes them. There are many who are held in high respect because they have abandoned their homes, and are wandering as monks, or learned people. But Guru Kabir is saying that their minds have not been concentrated enough to realize the Divinity. He says that their hope for salvation is indeed weak. As a solution for God realization, he states that we must surrender to God in body, mind and wealth, and must concentrate on God. He uses the chatrik bird that mythologically keeps concentrating on the moon. If a devotee concentrates on God intently, then definitely he will have devotion in his heart. All the other religious practices fall short of this ultimate goal.

शब्द २७

भाई रे अद्बुद रूप अनूप कथा है, कहौं तो को पतियाई.  
जहाँ-जहाँ देखो तहाँ-तहाँ सोई, सब घट रहा समाई.  
लक्ष बिनु सुख दरिद्र बिनु दुःख, नींद बिना सुख सौवै.  
जस बिनु ज्योति रूप बिनु आशिक, ऐसो रतन बिहूना रोवै.  
भ्रम बिनु गंजन मणि बिनु नीरख, रूप बिनु बहु रूपा.  
थिति बिनु सुरति रहस बिनु आनन्द, ऐसो चरित अनूपा.  
कहहिं कबीर जगत हरि मानिक, देखहु चित अनुमानी.  
परिहरि लाखौं लोग कुटुम सब, भजहुं न सारंगपानी.

*shabda 27*

*bhāi re adbud rūp anūp kathā hai, kahown toh ko patiāi.  
jahān jahān dekho tahān tahān soī, sab ghat rahā samāi.  
laksh binu sukh daridra binu dukh, nīnd binā sukh sowai.  
jas binu jyoti rūp binu āshik, aiso ratan bihūnā rowai.  
bhram binu ganjan mani binu nīrakh, rūp binu bahu rūpā.  
thīti binu surati rahas binu ānand, aiso charit anūpā.  
kahahin kabīr jagat hari mānik, dekhahu chit anumānī.  
parihari lākhown log kutum sab, bhajahun na saranga pani.*

Meaning:

O Brother! It is said that God's form is matchless and mysterious. If I explain it, who will believe.

Wherever I look I see His form, as He pervades every heart.

He is neither happy with wealth nor unhappy with poverty. He is sleepless but remains happy.

He has fame and beauty without light, and is a lover without form. Without this Jewel, the ignorant people cry sadly.

In self-realization, my doubt disappears, and the testing occurs without jewels. Without form He manifests all forms.

Without concentration He is in meditation, and is all-blissful without mystic experience. He possesses a matchless nature.

Kabir says that in this world God is like a diamond. Think carefully and understand it.

Give up the greed of wealth and attachment to relations, and recite the name of God.

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is talking about the nature of God. God is not limited by time and space, so He is said to be of mysterious and matchless form. No one can truly describe God, yet He manifests in the hearts of all beings. It is thus that Guru Kabir says that if he talks about God who will believe him, because God does not form a direct experience in the lives of most people. He explains that wherever he looks he sees God, because God is Omnipresent. One needs only to develop spiritual vision in order to see Him.

Guru Kabir goes on to say that God is beyond wealth and poverty, or the need for sleep. He needs no light to show His fame or beauty, and He is always blissful. But not having Him as a precious jewel in their lives, the ordinary people suffer a great loss, so they are said to be sadly crying. Once God is realized, there are no doubts or troubles in the mind and, although God has no form, He is said to embody all forms in the universe. God does not need to concentrate in order to go into meditation, as His very nature is one of meditation. His nature is one of bliss and is beyond all description, and is matchless. Guru Kabir is saying that God is like a precious diamond that needs to be coveted and kept securely. He advises that we must consider this carefully, and see God as being this precious diamond that is very valuable. In order to realize this precious Jewel in our own hearts, he says that we need to give up the greed for other wealth, and even attachment to all family relationships, because they create bondage and prevent liberation of the soul. This does not mean not to have love for relationships and for people, but it means a detached, spiritual love. Once we obtain this, then we will indeed feel a sense of freedom. Guru Kabir advises that we must sing the glories of the name of God.

This is a mystical shabda in which Guru Kabir explains that God is indeed a precious Jewel residing in the hearts of all beings. He needs to be realized by giving up attachments to the external paraphernalia of our life. He is said to be self-luminous and

requires no external aid for the manifestation of His greatness. All of these are realized when the mind is stilled, and we enter meditation, and have an intuitive experience of the reality of God.

शब्द २८

(भाई रे) गइया एक विरंचि दियो है,

(गइया) भार अभार भौ भारी.

नौ नारी को पानी पियतु है, तृषा तैयो न बुझाई.

कोठा बहुतरि औ लौ लावै, बज्र केंवार लगाई.

खूँटा गाडि दवरि दूढ बाँधेउ, तैयो तोर पराई.

चारि वृक्ष छौ शाखा वाके, पत्र अठारह भाई.

एतिक लै गम कीहिसि गइया, गइया अति (रे) हरहाई.

ई सातों औरों हैं सातों, नौ औ चौदह भाई.

एतिक ले गइया खाय बढ़ायो, गइया तैयो न अघाई.

पुरता में राती है गइया, सेत सींगि है भाई.

अबरण वरण किछरु नहिं वाके, खद्द अखद्दहि खाई.

ब्रह्मा विष्णु खोजि के आये, शिव सनकादिक भाई.

सिद्ध अनन्त वाके खोज परे हैं, गइया किनुं न पाई.

कहहिं कबीर सुनो हो सन्तो, जो यह पद अर्थावै.

जो यह पद को गाय विचारै, आगे होय निवाहै.

*shabda 28*

*(bhāi re) gaiyā ek biranchi diyō hai, gaiyā bhār abhār bhow bhārī.*

*now nārī ko pānī piyatū hai, trishā taiyo na bujhāi.*

*kothā bahatari ow lau lāwai, bajra kewār lagāi.*

*khūntā gādi dawari dridh bāndheu, taiyon tor parāi.*

*chāri briksh chhow shākhā vāko, patra athārā bhāi.*

*etik lai gam kīhisi gaiyā, gaiyā ati (re) harhāi.*

*ī sātōn owron hain sātōn, now ow chowdaha bhāi.*

*etik le gaiyā khāi badhāyo, gaiyā taiyon na aghāi.*

*puratā mein rātī hai gaiyā, set sīngi hai bhāi.*

*avarān varān kichhau nahin vāke, khadad akhadadahi khāi.*

*brahmā vishnu khoji ke āye, shiv sankādik bhāi.*

*sidh anant wāke khoj pare hai, gaiyā kinahu na pāi.*

*kahahin kabīr suno ho santo, jo yaha pad arthāwe.*

*jo yaha pad ko gāi bichārai, āge hoi nirvāhai.*

Meaning:

Oh brother! Brahma (creator) has produced a cow. Her immense weight is unbearable.

She drinks the water of nine streams (worships), but still her thirst is not quenched.  
She has seventy-two rooms (nerve divisions) at her disposal, and all with strong doors.  
She is tied to a peg with a strong rope, but even then she breaks loose and runs away.  
She has four trees (Vedas), six branches (philosophies), and eighteen leaves (Puranas).  
She has eaten up all these, but remains dissatisfied, and wanders everywhere.  
She has these seven (hells) and seven others (heavens) along with nine and fourteen other parts (nine body portals and fourteen body parts).  
This cow has eaten up everything, even then she remains unsatisfied.  
She is engaged in fulfillment and she has horns of no colour.  
She is neither with caste nor is she casteless. She eats the inedible and the edible.  
Brahma and Vishnu have searched for her, so did Shiva and the sons of Brahma.  
Countless adepts have searched for her, but none of them has found this cow.  
Kabir says, listen dear devotees, who can explain this poem?  
He who sings this, and ponders its meaning will obtain Nirvana.

Commentary:

This shabda is one of Guru Kabir's allegorical poems in which he explains certain mystical teachings using other symbolic images. Brahma is thought to be the creator of the world, and the cow he produced is Maya. It is the power of Maya that has enabled all phenomena in the universe to become differentiated from the primordial undifferentiated Universal Being. Maya thus has the power of 'veiling' under the guise of the apparent, that which is not apparent. For this reason Maya can be said to be, figuratively, very heavy and unbearable, because it lures the world by illusion. The nine streams are the nine types of worships explained in the scriptures. The seventy-two rooms are the seventy-two nerve divisions said to be in the body. The strong door is the mind. The peg is also the mind, and the strong rope is the will. But all of these prove to be useless before the power of Maya.

Maya also is the source of the four trees (Vedas) and the six branches or six philosophies of India. The eighteen leaves are the eighteen Puranas which are also scriptures of India. Through her power, Maya has swallowed all of these, but she remains unsatisfied, and wanders. People have mastered all the scriptures, but because of Maya they are still restless, for they have not found the precious gem for which they are looking.

The sevens spoken of are the seven 'netherworlds' and seven 'heavens' according to mythology. The nine represents the nine portals of the body, and the fourteen are the five organs of senses, five organs of action, the mind, intellect, consciousness, and ego. Maya has, figuratively, eaten up all of these, but remains unsatisfied. All of these are under control of Maya for they are products of Maya. However, Maya is still engaged in fulfillment of all desires. This is the state of affairs of humanity. Maya is said to have horns of no colour that is, figuratively, that Maya has no colour, caste, clan etc. The "edible" and "inedible" that Maya eats represent the fact that Maya does not discriminate between what is right and lawful, and what is wrong and unlawful. Because of the power of Maya, people are engaged in all types of activities, whether negative or positive.

Guru Kabir says that the three Gods - Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva- along with the sons of Brahma, all have searched for the secret of Maya, but they have not been able to fathom her. This is because they themselves are products of Maya, therefore they cannot fathom the cause of their own being. Similarly, countless adepts have searched for the secret of Maya, but they have not been able to find them. Guru Kabir is saying that one should try to understand the meaning of this shabda and, in addition, to contemplate on it, and to sing it. If one understands this shabda and its inner meaning, then he is on his way to Nirvana.

This shabda bears out the name of this book THE BIJAK - which is a “map” of instructions to reach a hidden treasure. The hidden treasure here is to obtain Self-knowledge. The ‘map’ is contained in the teachings of the Bijak.

शब्द २९

भाई रे नयन रसिक जो जागे.  
पारब्रह्म अविगति अविनाशी, कैसहु कै मन लागे.  
अमली लोग खुमारी तृष्णा, कतहुँ सन्तोष न पावै.  
काम-क्रोध दोनों मतवाले, माया भरि-भरि आवै.  
ब्रह्म कलाल चढाइनि भाठी, लै इन्द्री रस चाहै.  
संगहि पौच है ज्ञान पुकारे, चतुरा होय सो पावै.  
संकट सोच-पोच यह कलिमा, बहुतक ब्याधि शरीरा.  
जहाँ धीर गम्भीर अति निश्चल, तहाँ उठि मिलहु कबीरा.

*shabda 29*

*bhāī re nayan rasik jo jāge.*

*pārbrahm avigati avinashī, kaisahu kai man lāge.*

*amalī log khumārī trishnā, katahun santosh na pāwai.*

*kām krodh donon matwāle, māyā bhari bhari āwai.*

*brahm kalāl chadhain bhāthi, lai indrī ras chāhai.*

*sangahi powch hai gyān pukāre, chaturā hoi so pāwai.*

*sankat soch poch yaha kalimā, bahutak vyādhi sharīrā.*

*jahān dhīr gambhīr ati nischal, tahān uthi milahu kabīrā.*

Meaning:

Oh Brother! If the lover truly awakens and opens his eyes,  
Then his mind will become attached to *Parabrahm* - the Unfathomable and Eternal Being.

How can the craving people, intoxicated with thirst for the world, find contentment?

They are intoxicated with lust and anger, and Maya supplies the drink of passions.

Brahma himself is the wine maker who prepared the wine of all the desires and the senses.

They keep the company of the evil, but speak of knowledge. Only the shrewd one will find God.

In this *Kaliyug* there are plenty of miseries and anxieties, and many diseases afflict the body.

Kabir says, "Where a man has patience, depth and steadfastness, go there and meet him."

Commentary:

People in this world appear to be afflicted with 'tons' of cravings and desires for worldly things. They appear to be intoxicated with an unquenchable thirst that keeps them pursuing one thing or another, in an attempt to fulfill their desires and cravings. Once they are caught up in this type of activity, can they find contentment in their lives? Guru Kabir is using the comparison of a person intoxicated with wine. He craves more wine until he becomes addicted, or he loses consciousness. He is not in control of his senses. Similarly, the person who is intoxicated with lust, anger and cravings for worldly things, do not have control over his mind. Guru Kabir states that if the lover of God awakens to his spiritual potential, then his mind will be absorbed in *Parabrahm*, the Supreme Being, who is omnipresent, unfathomable and eternal. That Eternal Being dwells within one's own heart where He must be realized through loving devotion, and development of spiritual wisdom.

In this shabda Brahma represents *rajogun* or the principle of passion and activity that are part of our being, and which need to be controlled. Without control it seeks gratification of all the senses. This makes life restless, and keeps one from realizing the divinity that resides within.

What people do, instead, is that they keep evil and lowly company, and indulge in undesirable activities, but they speak of divine knowledge. They merely use words without any realization of divinity. But the person who is shrewd in spiritual matters, is the one who will realize the indwelling Divinity. Guru Kabir observes that in this Kaliyug (Iron Age), people are afflicted with various types of mental and physical sufferings. They are not able to escape, because they do not have the self-control and proper spiritual direction in their lives. He advises the people that wherever there is a person who has patience, spiritual depth and steadfastness, then one should go and meet such a person in order to emulate these qualities within one's self.

From this shabda we need to understand that all worldly pleasures are transitory and, at best, give us only momentary happiness and, at worst, keep us trapped in a merry-go-round of sense gratifications, frustrations and anxieties. It is only when one is awakened to spiritual life that one attains ever-lasting contentment and happiness.

शब्द ३०

भाई रे दुई जगदीश कहाँ ते आया, कहु कौन बौराया.  
अल्लाह राम करीमा केशव, हरि-हजरत नाम धराया.  
गहना एक कनक ते गहना, यामें भाव न दूजा.  
कहन सुनन को दुइ कर थापै, एक निमाज एक पूजा.  
वही महादेव वही महम्मद, ब्रह्मा आदम कहिये.  
को हिन्दु को तुरुक कहावै, एक जिमी पर रहिये.  
वेद-कितेब पढे वै कुतबा, वै मौलाना वै पांडे.  
बेगर बेगर नाम धराये, एक मटिया के भांडे.  
कहहिं कबीर वे दोनों भूले, रामहिं किनुहु न पाया.  
ये खसी वे गाय कटावै, वादहिं जन्म गमाया.

*shabda 30*

*bhāī re duī jagdīsh kahān te āyā, kahu kown bowrāyā.  
allāhh rām karimā keshav, hari-hazrat nām dharāyā.  
gahanā ek kanak te gahanā, yāmen bhāv na dūjā.  
kahan sunan ko dui kar thāpai, ek nimāz ek pūjā.  
wahī mahādev wahi mahammad, brahmā ādam kahiye.  
ko hindu ko turuk kahāwai, ek jimī par rahiye.  
ved-kiteb padhe wai kutbā, wai mowlānā wai pānde.  
begar begar nām dharāye, ek matiyā ke bhānde.  
kahahin kabīr wai donon bhūle, rāmahi kinahu na pāyā.  
ye khasī wai gai katāwai, bādahin janm gamāyā.*

Meaning:

O my dear brother! Where did the two gods come from? Tell me who has caused this confusion?

Allah, Ram, Karim, Keshav, Hari, and Hazrat are the names given to Him.

Gold is the same in all the jewelry. There is no other element in them.

For the sake of speaking and hearing, they have established two methods, one is the *namaz* and the other is *puja*.

The same one is called Mahadev and Mohammed or Brahma and Adam.

Who can be said to be a Hindu and who a Turk (Muslim)? They both live on the same earth.

These read the book of the Vedas and those read the Koran. These are called *pandes* and those are called *mullahs*.

They variously got different names, but they are all pots of the same clay.

Kabir says that both of them are mistaken, for neither has found God.

These cut the goat and those cut the cow and, in vain, they are wasting their lives.

## Commentary:

Historically, it is known that there was much dissension, intolerance, and misunderstanding in India between the Hindus and the invading Muslims. These had gone on for centuries by the time Guru Kabir came on the scene. Each religion held to its own practices and beliefs, and excluded the others. Guru Kabir was instructing them that God is only one, so who caused this confusion that one calls God by the name of Ram and the other by the name of Allah? Other names are given to God such as Krishna, Mahadev, Vishnu by the Hindus, and Karim and Hazrat by the Muslims. These names are given to the same Supreme Being, for God is without any religion, or, shall we say, beyond religion.

Guru Kabir uses the analogy of various forms of jewelry made from the same gold. They do not have different elements in them. Just so, no matter what names we give to the Supreme Being, He remains the same everywhere, and for all people. Just so, all people are made of the same matter and spirit. He further goes on to say that Mahadev and Mohammed, Brahma and Adam etc. really refer to the same being for the names are different but the spirit dwelling in them all is the same. Therefore, why fight over the differences in names, when in essence they are all the same, just as the gold is the same in every form of jewelry.

Guru Kabir observes what is the use of saying one is a Hindu and the other is a Muslim, when they are both living on, and are nurtured by, the same earth. Their needs are all the same, as they are all human beings, and should not create artificial differences, and then create confusion. He observes that the Hindus read the Vedas and the Muslims read the Koran. The former have become the *pandes* (pandits) and the latter are the *mullahs*.

Another analogy Guru Kabir uses is that though the names are different, they are all pots of the same clay. No matter how many pots of different types are made, the clay in all of them remains the same. Guru Kabir says that both of them are mistaken and are upholding the wrong principles, and that neither of them have obtained God. At the end he adds another practice that keeps them away from God i.e. one cuts the throat of the goat and the other of the cow. He observes that both of them are wasting their lives by committing violent deeds.

On the subject of wasting their lives, we need to bring in the Law of Karma. If people sacrifice the lives of innocent animals, they have to pay for it. They can thus not obtain liberation. Similarly, if they keep on fighting between each other in the name of religion, scripture, doctrine, etc., then of course they are also wasting their lives, and cannot get liberation.

शब्द ३१

हंसा संसै छूरी कुहिया, गइया पीवै बछरुवै दुहिया.  
घर घर सावज खेले अहेरा, पारथ ओटा लेई.  
पानी माहि तलफि गई भुंभरी, धूरि हिलोरा देई.  
धरती बरसे बादर भीजे, भींति भये पौराऊ.  
हंस उडाने ताल सुखाने, चहले बिन्दा पाऊ.  
जौलौं कर डोले पगु चालै, तौलौं आस न कीजै.  
कहहिं कबीर जेहिं चलत न दीसे, तासु वचन का लीजे.

*shabda 31*

*hansā sansai chhūri kuhiyā, gaiyā pīwai bachhruwai duhiyā.  
ghar ghar sāvaj khelai aherā, pāraṭh oṭā leī.  
pānī māhi talaphi gai bhumbharī, dhūri hilorā deī.  
dharṭī barse bādar bhīje, bhīnti bhaye powrāū.  
hansā udāne tāl sukhāne, chahale bindā pāū.  
jowlown kar dole pagu chālai, towlown ās na kījai.  
kahahin kabīr jehi chalat na dīse, tāsu bachan kā līje.*

Meaning:

The swan is cut by the knife of doubts, while the cow milks and drinks the milk of the calf.  
In every house the wild animal hunts, while the hunter takes shelter by hiding.  
The fish is suffering in the water, and dust is creating waves.  
The earth is raining and the clouds are getting wet, while rocks are swimming.  
The swan flies away and the pond dries up, yet it wishes to keep its feet in the mud.  
As long as you have the use of your arms and legs, so long do not have hopes on any one else.  
Kabir says that if you see one not following what he preaches, then do not take his advice.

Commentary:

This shabda is one of Guru Kabir's famous *ulta-bani* which is a contrary type of language that he uses to get people to think about deep spiritual truths. The topic is that when the soul gets under the influence of false gurus, it becomes destroyed by doubts.

The soul, in truth, is always residing in the ocean of God's love, but under the influence of false gurus, it is cut up or destroyed by doubts. The cow is Maya, and the calf is the soul. Maya (illusion) is cheating the soul, figuratively drinking the milk of the calf. The wild animal (mind) is hunting, i.e. destroying good thinking, and the hunter is the soul that takes shelter in various deities. The fish is the soul that, living in the ocean of God's love, is still suffering because the dust (desires), rises up as waves in the ocean. The earth is speech, the cloud is the soul, and the rocks are hypocrisies. The soul actually gets

confused with the words of the false teachers, and this causes hypocrisies to prevail everywhere, figuratively swimming. The soul is bound with desires and wishes to stay in the world, thus keeping the feet in the mud. But the soul must fly away from the pond of the body, and the body then dries up or becomes useless. Guru Kabir advises that as long as you have the use of your arms and legs, do not depend on others. He further states that you should not accept the teachings of those who do not live according to what they preach.

The essential message in this shabda is that there are false teachers and there are hypocrisies. Without obtaining true teachings, the soul gets trapped by waves of desires and remains trapped in this world i.e. has to be reborn over and over according to its desires. It is thus deprived of liberation. One must thus obtain the true teachings and become free.

शब्द ३२

हंसा हो चित चेतु सकेरा, इन्ह परपंच कैल बहुतेरा.  
पाखण्ड रूप रच्यौ इन्ह तिरगुण, तेहि पाखंड भूलल संसारा.  
घरके खसम बधिक वे राजा, परजा क्याथौ करै विचारा.  
भक्ति न जाने भक्त कहावै, तजि अमृत विष कै लिन सारा.  
आगे बडे ऐसेहि बूडे, तिनहुँ न मानल कहा हमारा.  
कहा हमारी गाँठि दूढ बाँधो, निशिवासर रहियो हुशियारा.  
ये कलि गुरु बडे परपंची, डारि ठगौरि सब जग मारा.  
वेद-कितेब दोउ फन्द पसारा, तेहि फन्दे परु आप विचारा.  
कहहिं कबीर ते हंस न बिसरे, जेहिमा मिले छुडावनहारा.

*shabda 32*

*hansā ho chit chetu sakerā, inhh parpanch kail bahuterā.  
pākhand rūp rachiyo inha tirgun, tehi pākhand bhūlal sansārā.  
ghar ke khasam badhik wai rājā, parjā kyādhown karai bichārā.  
bhakti na jāne bhakt kahāwai, taji amrit vish kai lin sārā.  
āge bade aisehi būde, tinahu na mānal kahā hamārā.  
kahā hamārī gānthi dridh bāndhe, nisibāsar rahiyo hushiyārā.  
ye kali guru bade parpanchī, dāri thagowri sab jag mārā.  
ved-kiteb dou phand pasārā, tehi phande paru āp bichārā.  
kahahin kabīr te hans na bisare, jehimā mile chhudāwanhārā.*

Meaning:

You are a pure soul, therefore realize quickly that these (false gurus) have created many hypocrisies.

From the three *gunas* (qualities) they have created hypocrisies, and the whole world drowns in those them.

If the king who is master of the house becomes a butcher, then what can the other poor people do?

Those who do not know devotion are called devotees. They give up the nectar and partake of the poison.

In this way the leaders (false gurus) have drowned. They did not heed my warning.

Accept my advice and tie it in a strong knot. Remain alert day and night.

In this Kaliyug (Iron Age) these gurus are quite hypocritical, and they have cheated the world.

They have created a noose out of the Vedas and other scriptures, and they have themselves become trapped in it.

Kabir says that the soul will not be lost once it obtains a true guru as the liberator.

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is giving a warning to all of us as pure souls, for the souls are innately pure, and they cannot be touched with any impurity. He then goes on to say that there are many false gurus who have created hypocrisies, and have fooled the innocent people of the world. This is common knowledge that many people held in high esteem as leaders of religions, are often betraying their followers. Although it appears that Guru Kabir is being very blunt in stating these hypocrisies, and criticizing these people, we must realize that he was a realized *Satguru* or Eternal Master, and he is speaking from that vantage point to instruct us to be aware of the false gurus.

Many people in the world innocently convey great honour to these false gurus saying that they are great. Many of these false gurus are quite conversant with the Vedas and scriptures, but have not lived and taught the essence of the true spiritual teachings. In fact, they have made a noose of these scriptures. They have not realized the fundamental truth of God as the ever present Master in the hearts of all beings. Many were still caught in the trap of passions and ego. How then can they be said to free others. They have themselves been caught in the noose that they created and, unfortunately, innocent people have become their victims. Guru Kabir is saying that the soul will be liberated from the bondage of passions and illusions of their material existence, if they obtain a true guru who is indeed a liberator.

In this shabda Guru Kabir is instructing us to be aware of false gurus by using our own innate ability to decide right from wrong, true from false etc. Unless we use our intellect properly, we will fall under the sway of false spiritual teachers.

शब्द ३३

सुनु हंसा प्यारे सरवर तजि कहाँ जाय.

जेहि सरवर बिच मोतिया चुगत होते,

बहु विधि केलि कराय.

सूखे ताल पुरइनि जल छाँडे, कमल गये कुम्हिलाय.

कहहिं कबीर जो अबकी बिछुरे, बहुरि मिलहु कब आय.

*shabda 33*

*sunu hansā pyāre, sarwar taji kahān jāi.*

*jehi sarwar bich motiyā chugat hote, bahu vidhi keli karāi.*

*sūkhe tāl purain jal chhānde, kamal gaye kumhilāi.*

*kahahin kabīr jo abkī bichhure, bahuri milahu kab āi.*

Meaning:

O dear soul! Where will you go when you leave this lake (body)?

In this lake you were plucking pearls of knowledge and, in many ways, you have enjoyed your life.

When you depart from this lake it will dry up, and the lotus leaves and flowers will wither.

Kabir says if you become separated from this lake now, when will you get this opportunity again?

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is comparing the body to a lake. Just as the lotus leaves and flowers are in the lake, just so the senses dwell in this body. The lotus represents the senses. While we have this body we are enjoying many things in life. We also enjoy pearls of wisdom if we care to take them. However, we often neglect to take these pearls of wisdom to our own detriment.

When old age creeps up, and the body dies, then along with it all the lotus leaves and flowers dry up. The senses, the mind and all pleasures vanish. If we did not obtain wisdom and liberation in this life, then Guru Kabir is asking when will we have such an opportunity again?

Life is a precious gift and it is meant for spiritual evolution. Our consciousness must evolve to such a state that we can obtain a realization of the divinity dwelling in all beings. We need to use this gift of life wisely, so that we may not squander it and become, figuratively, like a dry lake with dead lotus flowers.

शब्द ३४

हरिजन हंस दशा लिये डोले, निर्मल नाम चुनि-चुनि बोले.

मुक्ताहल लिये चोंच लोभावै, मौन रहे कि हरि यश गावै.

मानसरोवर तटके बासी, राम चरण चित अन्त उदासी.

कागा कुबुधि निकट नहिं आवै, प्रतिदिन हंसा दर्शन पावै.

नीर-क्षीर का करे निबेरा, कहहिं कबीर सोई जन मेरा.

*shabda 34*

*harijan hans dashā liye dole, nirmal nām chuni-chuni bole.  
muktāhal liye chonch lobhāwai, moun rahe ki hari yash gāwai.  
mānsarovar tatke bāsī, rām charan chit ant udāsī.  
kāgā kubudhi nikat nahi āwai, pratidin hansā darshan pāwai.  
nīr-kshīr kā kare niberā, kahahin kabīr soi jan merā.*

Meaning:

Godly people move about in the form of *hansas* (pure, unattached).

They utter the pure name (of God) selecting it from among other words.

They extend their beaks (mind) to pluck the pearls of wisdom. They remain silent or sing the glories of God.

They reside on the bank of the Mansarovar Lake (heart). Their mind is attached to the feet of God, and remains unattached to other places.

Evil thoughts of the crow do not come near them, and day after day they have vision of *hansas* (pure souls).

They can discriminate between water and milk (bad and good). Kabir says, “Such a person is dear to me.”

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is speaking about the pure devotee who moves about in the world unattached to worldly things. Their minds are attached to the name of God and purity. Hansa is the swan, and is used symbolically to portray the pure soul that is on its journey to God. Mythologically, the swan is supposed to be able to pluck pearls from the Mansarovar Lake. Pearls represent pearls of wisdom i.e. spiritual wisdom to awaken to a spiritual consciousness. The beak represents the mind of such devotee that is eager to pluck such spiritual gems. Such devotees tend to remain silent, rather than engage in useless talk, like the average person. Whenever they speak, they utter words of wisdom for the welfare of others.

Such devotees live on the bank of the Mansarovar Lake, as the swans do. The Mansarovar Lake is the heart which means that the mind of such a devotee is turned inward to contemplate the reality of God residing within. It can thus be said that their mind is attached to the feet of God. They remain unattached to things in the world.

The crow is known to eat carrion and make a raucous noise, and people are not attracted to crows as they are to the swan. A devotee of God avoids the evil thoughts of the crow (eating carrion, being noisy) but they keep the company of pure souls. By developing their mind in this way, being close to God, they are able to discriminate between the good and the bad, and they walk on the righteous path. Guru Kabir affirms that such a devotee is dear to him.

It is essential in this life to realize the good from the bad, and to walk on the righteous path with your mind fixed on God, by turning inward and realizing Him in your own heart.

शब्द ३५

हरि मोर पिउ में राम की बहुरिया,  
राम बडो में तन की लहुरिया.  
हरि मोर रहँटा में रतन पिउरिया,  
हरि का नाम ले कातति बहुरिया.  
छौ मास तागा बरस दिन कुकुरी,  
लोग कहैं भल कातल बपुरी.  
कहहिं कबीर सूत भल काता, चरखा न होय मुक्ति का दाता.

*shabda 35*

*hari mor piyu mein rām kī bahuriyā, rām bado mein tan kī lahuriyā.  
hari mor rahantā mein ratan piuriyā, hari kā nām le kātati bahuriyā.  
chhow mās tāgā baras dīn kukurī, log kahain bhal kātal bapurī.  
kahahin kabīr sūt bhal kātā, charkhā na hoi mukti kā dātā.*

Meaning:

God is my husband, and I am his wife. God is the older, and I am the younger.  
God is my spinning wheel, and I am the roll of cotton. Taking the name of God, the beautiful wife spins.  
She spins the thread for six months, and makes a fabric in a year, and the people say that the beautiful wife spins well.  
Kabir says that you have spun a fine thread (of God's name), but the spinning wheel is not the means of salvation.

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is speaking about the people who keep on repeating the name of God. First of all he says that the devotee is the wife of God, because the soul is often thought of as the bride, and God as the husband. The two need to be united as in a marriage. Since God precedes the soul, God is said to be the older and the soul the younger. The soul, having entered a physical body, begins to worship God in some particular religion. In this case the worship is the repetition of God's name. This repetition is similar to the spinning of the spinning wheel that makes the yarn for weaving cloth. You may spin a beautiful thread for six months, and make a fabric in a year, i.e. repetition of God's name or mantras to try to obtain liberation, but this does not give liberation. Observers may say that such a person repeating God's name, is indeed a very noble person, and worthy of adoration. But Guru Kabir is saying that the mere repetition of the name of God is not the means of liberation, as many religious teachers say. If this were so, then repeating the word sugar ought to sweeten the mouth. Life must be purified in every respect, and noble qualities must be developed to go along with the repetition of God's name. Only then can liberation be assured.

शब्द ३६

हरि ठग जगत ठगौरी लाई, हरि वियोग कस जियहु रे भाई.

को काको पुरुष कौन काकि नारी,

अकथ कथा यम दृष्टि पसारी.

को काको पुत्र कौन काको बापा, को रे मरै को सहै संतापा.

ठगि ठगि मूल सबन का लीन्हा, राम ठगौरी काहु न चीन्हा.

कहहिं कबीर ठग सो मनमाना, गई ठगौरी जब ठग पहिचाना.

*shabda 36*

*hari thag jagat thagowrī lāī, hari viyog kas jiyahu re bhāī.*

*ko kāko purush kown kāki nārī, akath kathā yam drishti pasārī.*

*ko kāko putra kown kāko bāpā, ko re marai ko sahai santāpā.*

*thagi thagi mūl saban kā līnhā, rām thagowrī kāhu na chīnhā.*

*kahahin kabīr thag so manmānā, gāī thagowrī jab thag pahichānā.*

Meaning:

The deluded mind uses the name of God to cheat the world. O brother! How will you live with this separation from God?

Who is whose husband, and who is whose wife? The story of Yama (cunning mind) is unexplainable, and it has spread its cruel vision everywhere.

Who is whose son, and who is whose father? Who dies and who suffers?

By cheating and cheating, the mind has robbed the capital (knowledge of the soul) from everyone. No one could recognize the mind cheating one of the wealth of Ram.

Kabir says, understand that the mind is the cheater. This cheating will disappear when one recognizes the cheater.

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir speaks of the network of delusion created by the mind. We all know that the mind plays tricks with everyone of us. When it comes to religious or spiritual practices, the mind becomes more prone to deception, since it is dealing with subjects it has not experienced. It is a rare spiritually developed person who experiences God, and the nature of the soul. The majority of people practice their religious duties, but they do not fathom the secret of God. They thus use the name of God and, without knowing it, are being deprived of the real treasure that the name of God offers. They often delude other people, thus robbing them of the ultimate spiritual knowledge that they could also obtain.

It is well known that people will argue about God and religion, about karma and its effects, about gods and goddesses, about rites and rituals, and about doctrines and dogmas. These are all machinations of the mind. The common denominator is that there

is God called by different names. There is also the soul that is in intimate communion with God, if the veil of ignorance is removed. However, the veil of ignorance exists because of the cunningness, and lack of spiritual enlightenment, of the mind. In other words, people preach their 'half-baked' philosophy to others, and no one becomes enlightened to realize the real treasure lying within themselves.

It looks far-fetched when Guru Kabir asks what appears to be absurd questions about who is whose husband, and who is whose wife, and who is whose son and who is whose father, and who dies and who suffers. These are rhetorical questions. They either deserve an answer based on spiritual insight, or they need no answer. From the spiritual angle the answer is quite simple. The soul is the same whether it is in a husband or a wife, a son or a father, or in any person. The relationships are only external, and have to do with the body, the mind, the intellect etc. It has nothing to do with the soul that is always the spirit dwelling in the hearts of all beings. The soul neither dies nor suffers, but when the soul takes on a body and is 'born', it is the body and mind that suffer. The soul does not.

Guru Kabir is saying it is necessary to introspect and to understand that the mind is a cheater, unless it is controlled and made to meditate on the nature of the soul and divinity. Without this attainment, the mind cheats one of the capital that is the divine knowledge of the soul and God. If one understands that the mind is the cheater, and he is then able to control it, and direct it inwards to the spirit that is indwelling, then one has the opportunity to remove one's self from the clutches of the cunning and cheating mind. Metaphysical teaching is concerned with the mind, the intellect, the consciousness, the soul and God. These are realized through the process of introspection, allowing for an inner realization of their nature, the intimate union that exists between the soul and God. Removal of the veil of ignorance perpetrated by the mind is all that is necessary.

शब्द ३७

हरि ठग ठगत सकल जग डोलै, गौन करत मोसे मुखहु न बोलै.

बालापन के मीत हमारे, हमहिं तजि कहाँ चलेउ सकारे.

तुमहिं पुरुष मैं नारी तुम्हारी, तुम्हरी चाल पाहनहु ते भारी.

माटिक देह पवन के शरीरा, हरिठग ठग से डरें कबीरा.

*shabda 37*

*hari thag thagat sakal jag dolai, gown karat mose mukhahu na bolai.*

*bālāpan ke mīt hamāre, hamahi taji kahān chaleu sakāre.*

*tumahin purush mein nārī tumhārī, tumharī chāl pāhanhu te bhārī.*

*mātik dehh pawan ke sharīrā, harithag thag se daren kabīrā.*

## Meaning:

The mind is a cheater, and it silently moves around the whole world cheating. It does not even tell me of its departure (death).

The mind has been my friend since infancy; giving me up where are you rushing in a hurry.

You are my husband and I am your wife; but your conduct is heavier than stone.

The body is made of clay and the subtle body of air. Kabir says the devotee is afraid of the thief cheating the world.

## Commentary:

As in the previous shabda, Guru Kabir is saying that the mind is the cheater that keeps on cheating the world. But it does so silently. One's ego and evil intentions lurk within one's self. Similarly, hypocrisy is also hidden within one's self. It is thus that the mind works in the world silently. The cheating is that the mind works in devious ways to distract the devotee from his proper path of purity, simplicity, love etc. that is the path that takes him towards enlightenment. Guru Kabir is saying that the mind has been a friend from birth, meaning that the body and the mind go together, but the mind appears to be in a hurry running in one direction or another. Similarly, at the end of life, the mind withdraws from the body leaving a corpse. All its cheating has resulted only in negative karmas.

Guru Kabir is saying that the mind is the husband and the body is the wife because the body obeys the commands of the mind. But the body is saying that the conduct of the mind is heavier than a stone. The helpless body, being personified, realizes that the conduct of the mind is contrary to its well being thus, figuratively, it is heavier than a stone weighing the body down to the world of materialism. Guru Kabir is saying that the gross body is made of clay, but the subtle or astral body is transparent like the air, and that both are subject to the cheating of the mind. The true devotee is truly afraid of the mind which is the cheater. A devotee practices introspection to understand his inner tendencies, and wayward wanderings of the mind, and tries to control them. It is control of the mind that allows discipline and development of positive ideals leading to spirituality.

## शब्द ३८

हरि बिनु भर्म बिगुर्चनि गन्दा.

जहाँ-जहाँ गयो अपनपो खोयो, तेहि फन्दे बहु फन्दा.

योगी कहै योग है नीका, दुतिया और न भाई.

चुंडित मुंडित मौनि जटाधर, तिनहुँ कहाँ सिधि पाई.

ज्ञानी गुणी सूर कवि दाता, ई जो कहंहि बड हमहीं.

जहाँ से उपजे तहाँ समाने, छूटि गये सब तबहीं.

बायें दहिने तजू बिकारा, निजु कै हरिपद गहिया.

कहैं कबीर गूँगे गुर खाया, पूछे सो क्या कहिया.

*shabda 38*

*hari binu bharm bigurchani gandā.*

*jahān jahān gayo apanpow khoyo, tehi phande bahu phandā.*

*yogī kahai yog hai nīkā, dutiyā ovr na bhāī.*

*chundit mundit mouni jatādhar, tinahun kahān sidhi pāī.*

*gyānī gunī sur kavi dātā, ī jo kahanhi bad hamahīn.*

*jahān se upje tahān samāne, chhūti gaye sab tabahīn.*

*bāyen dahine tajū bikārā, niyu kai haripad gahiyā.*

*kahain kabīr gunge gur khāyā, pūchhe so kyā kahiyā.*

Meaning:

O evil man! Without God, doubts have created many difficulties for you.

Wherever you go you lose your self, since doubts have trapped you in its traps.

The yogi says yoga is the best, and there is none to equal it.

The one who plucks the hair, shaves the head, remains silent, or wears matted hair, tell me how are they going to get perfection?

The intellectual, the noble, the brave, the poet and the altruist, each says that he is the greatest.

Wherever they came from (birth) that is where they will go (death). In a moment they leave everything.

Give up the defects of the 'left-handed' and 'right-handed' paths, and obtain realization of God.

Kabir asks, "How can the dumb person, eating sugar, describe its taste?"

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir starts by speaking of doubts which are causing difficulty for people all over the world. Unless a person is clear-sighted about his spiritual course, he is facing difficulties according to various traditions, dogmas, scriptures, rituals, etc. Spiritual life is a simple and straightforward path, free of all doubts. He thus says that people are losing themselves by going here and there, because doubts follow them and keep entrapping them.

Guru Kabir gives a few examples such that the yogi praises yoga and says that there is nothing greater than his path. Similarly, there are some people who pluck their hairs, shave their heads, practice silence, or wear matted hair. He asks how can such practices cause them to reach perfection? The external activities, when not accompanied by purity and discipline of the mind, cannot bring perfection. Similarly, he talks about people who are intellectuals, noble and brave, who are poets and altruists. These are the workings of their ego when they boast. Spiritual teaching is to do these things with humility. How many of such people are really humble?

Guru Kabir is saying that we need to realize that we have been born and we will die, and we leave everything here in an instant. These include all of our misguided activities, ego,

possessions etc. He advises to give up the two paths which are the 'left-hand' path (*vam marga*) and the 'right-handed' path (*dakshin marga*). The former is the Epicurian ideal of indulging the passions, and in eating, drinking and making merry. The second is the Stoic path of self-discipline, and following a religious tradition. The true spiritual path is actually separate from these, for it is an inner growth and realization of the Divinity within. He illustrates this by the example of the dumb person eating sugar and enjoying the taste, but not able to explain it to you. Just so the person who realizes God enjoys immense bliss, but he is not able to explain it to others. It is for this reason that realized saints remain silent or speak very little. Often they speak in parables because there is no language to explain the infinite experience, that is entirely subjective and indescribable.

Guru Kabir is saying to give up all doubts and to follow the true spiritual path that is devoid of all external show and ego. Only then can you reach the abode of God.

शब्द ३९

ऐसो हरि सो जगत लरतु है, पण्डुर कतहूँ गरुड धरतु है.  
मूस-बिलाई कैसन हेतू, जम्बुक करै केहरि सों खेतू.  
अचरज एक देखो संसारा, स्वनहा खेदै कुंजर असवारा.  
कहहिं कबीर सुनो सन्तो भाई, इहै सन्धि काहु बिरलै पाई.

*shabda 39*

*aiso hari so jagat laratu hai, pandur katahūn garud dharatu hai.  
mūs-bilāi kaisan hetū, jambuk karai kehari so khetū.  
achraj ek dekho sansārā, swahanhā khedai kunjar aswārā.  
kahahin kabīr suno santo bhāi, ihai sandhi kāhu birlai pāi.*

Meaning:

The world fights furiously with God. How can the water snake catch hold of the eagle?  
What friendship can there be between the mouse and cat? How can the jackal defeat the lion?

I see a great marvel in the world where the dog is chasing the elephant rider.

Kabir says, "Listen, O brother saints! Rarely does anyone realize this state of union with God."

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is speaking of the spiritually ignorant people as opposed to the devotees of God or the saints. The meaning of the people fighting furiously with God is that they are deluded by the power of Maya. They are deluded by false doctrines, and fall under the sway of hypocritical teachers. When a true saint imparts divine teachings, they are not willing to accept them. On the contrary, they set up obstacles for the saint and will even endeavour to destroy him. Guru Kabir stated in one of his shabdhas that when he spoke the truth, the people rushed to beat him, but they believed the lies.

Guru Kabir uses a few examples of incompatible life forms just as the spiritually ignorant people (*manmukh*) are incompatible with the devotees (*gurmukh*) of God. He says how can the water snake catch hold of the garuda bird (eagle). The garuda is known to kill snakes. Similarly, there can be no friendship between a mouse and a cat, because the mouse represents the foolish people, and the cat the spiritually wise. They have no warm working relationships. Again, he talks about the jackal defeating the lion. The lion, representing the saintly person, can physically be destroyed, but his saintliness goes with him. Again, he speaks of the dog barking and chasing the elephant with its rider. What can the dog do to the elephant rider who is so high up? It is indeed a marvel to see how the foolish people, like the dog barking, try to destroy the saintly people.

Guru Kabir explains to his brother seekers that there is hardly anyone who is able to realize unity with God.

Guru Kabir is giving us a clear instruction that we must not behave like foolish people putting a blindfold over our eyes, and failing to see the truth revealed to us. We must use our intelligence and have an open mind to recognize the truth that is taught to us by the great spiritual teachers. In this lies our salvation from the mundane bondage that is, figuratively, like a noose tightening around our necks.

शन्द ४०

पण्डित बाद बदे सो झूठा.  
 राम कहै जगत गति पावै, खाँड कहै मुख मीठा.  
 पावक कहै पाँव जो डाहै, जल कहै तृषा बुझाई.  
 भोजन कहै भूख जो भाजै, तो दुनिया तरि जाई.  
 नर के संग सूवा हरि बोले, हरि प्रताप न जानै.  
 जो कबहूँ उडि जाय जंगल में, तो हरि सुरति न आनै.  
 बिनु देखे बिनु अर्स-पर्स बिनु, नाम लिये क्या होई.  
 धन के कहे धनिक जो होवै, निर्धन रहै न कोई.  
 साँची प्रीति विषय माया सो, हरि भक्तन की फाँसी.  
 कहहिं कबीर एक राम भजे बिनु, बाँधे यमपुर जासी.

*shabda 40*

*pandit bād bade so jhūthā.  
 rām kahai jagat gati pāwai, khānd kahai mukh mīthā.  
 pāwak kahai pāwn jo dāhai, jal kahai trishā bujhāī.  
 bhojan kahai bhūkh jo bhājai, toh duniyā tari jāī.  
 nar ke sangh suwā hari bole, hari pratāp na jānai.  
 jo kabahūn udi jāi jangal mein, toh hari surati na ānai.  
 binu dekhe binu ars-pars binu, nām liye kyā hoī.  
 dhan ke kahai dhanik jo howai, nirdhan rahai na koī.*

*sānchī prīti vishai māyā so, hari bhaktan kī phānsī.  
kahahin kabīr ek rām bhaje binu, bāndhe yampur jāśī.*

Meaning:

O Pandit! All your rhetoric is false.

If by saying Ram the world gets liberation, then repeating ‘sugar, sugar’ will make the mouth sweet.

If by saying fire your feet get burned, then by saying water your thirst should be quenched.

If by saying food your hunger is satisfied, then the whole world will become free of hunger.

The parrot, in the company of man, may chant the name of God, but it does not understand God’s glory.

If perchance it flies into the jungle, then it will not have any recollection of God. Without realizing God, what can one obtain by empty repetition of His name?

If the repetition of wealth will make one wealthy, then no one will remain poor.

Such people have profound love for passions and Maya, and they hang the true devotees of God.

Kabir says that without realization of God, people go in a bound state to the abode of death.

Commentary:

It is fashionable among religious people to say that the repetition (*sumiran*) of the name of God gives salvation. Many people actually make this their life's goal in order to obtain liberation. But the truth lies in the fact that people must realize God in order to obtain true liberation. Guru Kabir gives many examples to show that the mere repetition of a name does not give the realization of what is named. By repeating the word sugar no one tastes sugar, or by repetition of fire no one gets his foot burned, and by saying water no one gets his thirst quenched. Similarly, repeating the word food does not remove hunger. If they really did, then the mere repetition of the name of God will also give salvation.

Guru Kabir gives the example of the parrot that can be taught to repeat the name of God, but it has no conception of what it is saying. If that same parrot flies into the jungle, it will soon forget to say God. It will be like every other parrot without any knowledge of God. Just so, there are people who repeat the name of God without knowing God. Such repetition does not give people liberation.

Guru Kabir asks the question that if you do not realize God, or see Him with your spiritual eyes, then what will you gain by mere repetition of His name. He goes on to say that if the repetition of the word wealth will make people wealthy, then there will be no one poor in the world. He observes that people who partake in this type of practice, really have passions, are still full of cravings, and are deluded by Maya. They do not understand the true devotees of God, and will often persecute and even kill them. He further states that if one does not realize God within his own heart, then he will go bound to the abode

of death. This means that he will not obtain liberation, and will be subject to the cycle of birth and death (*samsara*) according to his karmas.

In very simple and logical language, Guru Kabir explains the importance of an intuitive realization of God before salvation can be obtained. The mere repetition of His name without concomitant development of spiritual awakening and the destruction of ignorance, one cannot obtain salvation.

शब्द ४१

पण्डित देखहु मन में जानी.

कहु धौं छूति कहाँ से उपजी, तबहिं छूति तुम मानी.

नादे बिन्दे रुधिर के संगे, घटही में घट सपचै.

सष्ट कँवल होय पुहुमी आया, छूति कहाँ ते उपजै.

लख चौरासी नाना (बहु) बासन, सो सब सरि भौ माटी.

एकै पाट सकल बैठाये, छूति लेत धौं काकी.

छूतिहिं जेवन छूतिहिं अचवन, छूतिहिं जगत उपाया.

कहहिं कबीर ते छूति विवर्जित, जाके संग न माया.

*shabda 41*

*pandit dekhahu man men jānī.*

*kahu dhown chhūti kahān se upajī, tabahin chhūti tum mānī.*

*nāde binde rudhir ke sanje, ghathi men ghat sapchai.*

*asht kanwal hoi puhumī āyā, chhūti kahān te upjai.*

*lakh chowrāsī nānā (bahu) bāsan, so sab sari bhow māṭī.*

*akai pāt sakal baithāye, chhūti let dhown kākī.*

*chhūtihi jewan chhūtihi achawan, chhūtihin jagat upāyā.*

*kahahin kabīr te chhūti vivarjit, jāke sanga na māyā.*

Meaning:

O Pandit! See and consider this:

From where did untouchability arise, so that you have accepted the idea of untouchability?

Everyone comes from the ovum, the sperm and blood, and one body develops within another.

Each one is formed of eight lotuses (chakras) and has come to earth. From where then does untouchability arise?

There are 8.4 million forms of life in different bodies, but they all decay and turn to clay.

All are seated (placed) on the same earth. Who should then call another untouchable?

Your type of thinking will make everything untouchable, including food, water and everything that is on the earth.

Kabir says only he is free from the idea of untouchability, who is not tainted by Maya (illusion).

Commentary:

Untouchability has been a big problem in India, and it continues to be so even today. Because the Brahmins felt that they belonged to the high caste, and felt superior to all others, they often subjugated other people in terms of status, liberty, economic opportunities and religious practices. The word Guru Kabir uses is *chhut* which means unclean, untouchable, filthy, etc. The higher classes formulated a system that allowed people to belong either to a high or a low caste according to birth. This was never intended to be so. People were supposed to be divided into castes according to their work and merit, but not by birth. Now it is common to see people who are not deserving of a high title, are still looked upon with a great deal of respect, even if their actions are unworthy. Similarly, people who are called untouchable, even if they are righteous in their behavior, still will not be accepted among the higher castes.

Guru Kabir emphasizes that there is no high caste or low caste, but that there are only human beings. He goes on to appeal to our sense of logic, that we are all produced in the same way, from the ovum of the mother, and the sperm of the father. We are all made of the same blood. Each one of us grows within the womb of the mother, and is born in the same way. We all have body, mind and spirit. He mentions the eight lotuses which are the eight chakras, or vortices of spiritual energy that lie along the spine, from its base to the brain. He further emphasizes that all of us are made, figuratively, of clay and that we return to the earth. Death is a great leveler and no respecter of high or low caste. He tells the people who believe in the caste system that according to their thinking, everything should be defiled and untouchable, including food and water, and all the material manifestation which God has put on earth. In the end, he points out that if one is free from the delusion of Maya, then one can indeed be free of the idea of untouchability.

Guru Kabir teaches that if we have Divine love in our hearts, and if we see Divinity manifesting in the hearts of all beings, then how can we, with a clear conscience, call anyone untouchable. We are all children of God. We are all of one family of humanity. We are all equal before God.

शब्द ४२

पण्डित सोधि कहो समुझाई, जाते आवागवन नसाई.  
अर्थ धर्म औ काम मोक्ष कहु, कौन दिशा बसे भाई.  
उत्तर कि दक्षिन पूरब कि पच्छिम, स्वर्ग पताल कि माहीं.  
बिना गोपाल ठौर नहिं कतहूँ, नर्क जात धौं काहीं.  
अनजाने को स्वर्ग नर्क है, हरि जाने को नाहिं.  
जेहि डर से भव लोग डरतु हैं, सो डर हमरे नाहीं.  
पाप पुण्य की शंका नाहीं, स्वर्ग-नर्क नहिं जाहीं.

कहहिं कबीर सुनो हो सन्तो, जहाँ का पद तहाँ समाई.

*shabda 42*

*pandit sodhi kaho samujhāī, jāte awāgawan nasāī.*

*arth dharm ow moksh kahu, kown dishā base bhāī.*

*utar ki dakshin pūrāb ki pachhim, swarg patāl ki māhīn.*

*binā gopāl thowr nahin katahūn, nark jāt dhown kāhīn.*

*anjāne ko swarg nark hai, hari jāne ko nāhīn.*

*jehi dar se bhow log daratu hain, so dar hamare nāhīn.*

*pāp punya kī shankā nāhīn, swarg nark nahin jāhīn.*

*kahahin kabīr suno ho santo, jahān kā pad tahān samāī.*

Meaning:

O Pandit! Investigate carefully, then explain to me the secret by which birth and death may cease.

O brother! Tell me in which direction do the four goals of life - wealth, religion, fulfillment of desires, and salvation - reside?

Do they reside in the North or South, or the East or West, or perhaps in heaven or hell?

If you say there is no place without Gopal, then how can you go to hell?

Those who do not understand, accept that there is heaven and hell, but those who know God, have no heaven and hell.

That fear of which the worldly people are afraid, does not scare me at all.

I have no fear or doubt about sin and virtue, and I am not subject to going to heaven or hell.

Kabir says, "Listen O brother saints! The God realized person resides in God."

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir talks about what some pandits are teaching the people as ordained in their religion, and then contrasts it with the higher spiritual teaching that surpasses the religious teachings, and establishes a unity with God. First of all he asks the learned pandit of the secret by which birth and death may cease. Every religious person strives for salvation, but as long as they are caught in the wheel of karma, they cannot obtain release from the cycle of birth and death. Therefore one's karmas must be pure and, with the knowledge of God, one has to submit totally to the will of God before liberation can be achieved. The pandits teach that there are four goals in life called *purusharthas*, and these are the acquisition of material wealth, the practice of righteousness (religion), the satisfaction of noble desires, and the attainment of salvation. Guru Kabir asks in which direction do you find them? He then lists the four directions and asks if they are found even in heaven or hell. Then again they teach that God (Gopal) dwells everywhere in the universe. If this is so, then how can there be room for hell, since God must also dwell in hell. And wherever God dwells cannot be called hell. He asserts that those people who do not understand true spiritually are caught up in the idea of heaven and hell. But those who truly know God there is no heaven and hell for them.

The people of the world are afraid of hell, or are afraid when they are not practicing virtues, because the consequences will be suffering. Similarly, people are afraid of death, or suffering that may disable them and render them dependent on others. Or they may lose their mental faculties. But Guru Kabir is stating that he has no fear about sin and virtue because he is not subject to going to either heaven or hell. It must be understood that the idea of heaven and hell dwells in the hearts of people, and are created by man. God is omnipresent, and is unconcerned about whether there is a heaven or a hell, because He himself dwells everywhere. So the God-realized person is unconcerned about them. He is concerned only with being in the presence of God, but then he realizes that God dwells within him. Guru Kabir finally asserts to all his brother seekers that the God-realized person resides in God, for God is truly the dwelling 'place' of all people.

It is essential to understand this shabda correctly in order to remove religious doubts, and the teachings that cause fear in the hearts of people. Once you know God, how can there be fear? Rise above the scriptures, and realize the divinity that already dwells within.

शब्द ४३

पण्डित मिथ्या करहु विचारा,

न वहाँ सृष्टि न सिरजनहारा.

थूल-अस्थूल पौन नहिं पावक, रवि शशि धरणि न नीरा.

ज्योति स्वरुप काल नहिं जहँवा, बचन न आहि शरीरा.

कर्म धर्म किछुवो नहिं उहँवा, ना वहाँ मन्त्र न पूजा.

संजम सहित भाव नहिं जहँवा, सो धौं एक कि दूजा.

गोरख राम एकौ नहिं उहँवा, ना वहाँ वेद विचारा.

हरिहर ब्रह्मा नहिं शिव शक्ति, तीर्थउ नहिं अचारा.

माय बाप गुरु जाके नाहिं, सो धौं दूजा कि अकेला.

कहहिं कबीर जो अबकी बूझै, सोई गुरु हम चेला.

*shabda 43*

*pandit mithyā karahu bichārā, na wahān shrishti na sirjanhārā.*

*thūl-asthūl pown nahin pāwak, ravi shashi dharani na nīrā.*

*jyoti swarup kāl nahin jahanwā, bachan na āhi sharīrā.*

*karm dharm kichhuo nahin uhanwā, nā wahān mantra na pūjā.*

*sanjam sahit bhāw nahin jahanwā, so dhown ek ki dūjā.*

*gorakh rām ekow nahin uhanwā, nā wahān ved bichārā.*

*harihar brahmā nahin shiv shakti, tārthau nahin achārā.*

*māi bāp guru jāke nāhin, so dhown dūjā ki akelā.*

*kahahin kabīr jo abkī būjhai, soī guru ham chelā.*

Meaning:

O Pandit! You are considering the wrong philosophy!

(In *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*) there is no difference between the creation and the creator. There is nothing like gross or subtle, or air or fire. There is no sun, moon, earth, or water. There is nothing such as light, form, time, speech, or body. There is nothing like karmas and religions, and there is no mantra or religious worship. There is no idea of disciplined self-control. Can you say whether there is unity or duality? There is no Gorakh or Ram, and no consideration of the Vedas. There is no Vishnu or Shiva, Brahma or Shiva/Shakti. There is no place of pilgrimage or religious observances. There is no mother, father, or guru. Then can you say whether there are two or one? Kabir says, "Whoever understands this, is my guru, and I am his disciple."

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir talks about that state of unitary consciousness that is realized in deep meditation. This is called *nirvikalpa* samadhi as opposed to *savikalpa* samadhi. In the former there is no duality, such as the meditator and the object of meditation. In the latter there is retention of a difference between the meditator, the process of meditation, and the object of meditation. In other words, there is still some preservation of an ego identity. In the *nirvikalpa* samadhi there's absolute non-duality, and the ego-consciousness ceases to exist, because it merges into the cosmic consciousness. This is the teaching of Advaita Vedanta. Here Guru Kabir asserts that in this state of meditative realization, all differences disappear and merge into the unitary consciousness of God. He thus lists a number of things that cease to manifest in the way we know them in this material or phenomenal world. He exhorts the pandits, who are supposed to be scholars, that when they are dealing with all their religious doctrines and dogmas, that they are actually considering the wrong philosophy, because they do not reach this unitary consciousness or enlightenment. In this state, the differences between what is gross or subtle, and whether there is air, fire, sun, moon, earth, water, etc. cease to exist. Similarly light, form, time, words, body, actions, religions, mantras, worships, self-control, etc. all disappear. Even Gorakh, the great yogi, and Ram are not present in this state of realization. Neither are the three gods Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu, or the goddess Shakti, nor even the places of pilgrimages etc. Similarly mother, father, guru, etc. disappear. Kabir is thus saying that if anyone can truly understand this philosophy, that person will be considered to be the guru, and he will gladly become the disciple.

Guru Kabir was one of the foremost mystic saints of India, and a devotee of *Nirgun Bhakti* or devotion to the formless Being. He is also deeply rooted in the unitary consciousness of God. Thus in one of his sakhis he stated, "The path to divine love is very narrow, and two cannot enter it. When I was, God was not. Now God is, and I am not." In this state of realization the meditator becomes aware that in the 'beginning' nothing but God existed, and God thus projected everything from His Being, whether they are gross, subtle, or any other form of manifestation. When all came from the Being of God, then all are really parts of God and, in essence, are not different from God. Therefore only God exists, and all the phenomenal existence we see is said to be *nitya* or

erroneous perception. This is brought about by the elusive power of Maya. Divine knowledge and enlightenment result from realization of the subject taught in this shabda.

शब्द ४४

बुझ बुझ पण्डित करहु विचारा, पुरुषा है कि नारी.  
ब्राह्मण के घर ब्राह्मणी होती, योगी के घर चेली.  
कलमा पढि-पढि भई तुरुकनी, कलि में रहत अकेली.  
बर नहिं बरे ब्याह नहिं करे, पुत्र जन्मावनहारी.  
कारे मूँड को एकहु न छाँडि, अजहुँ आदि कुमारी.  
मैके रहै जाय नहिं ससुरे, साँई संग न सोवै.  
कहैं कबीर वे युग युग जीवैं, जाँति पाँति कुल खोवैं.

*shabda 44*

*bujh bujh pandit karahu bichārā purushā hai ki nārī.  
brāhman ke ghar brāhamanī hotī, yogī ke ghar chelī.  
kalmā padhi padhi bhāi turukanī, kali men rahat akelī.  
bar nahin bare byāha nahi kare, putra janmāwanhārī.  
kāre mūnd ko ekahu na chhāndi, ajahun ādi kumārī.  
maike rahai jāi nahin sasure, sāin sang na sowai.  
kahain kabīr we yug yug jīwain, jāntin pāntin kul khowain.*

Meaning:

O Pandit! Please consider carefully, then tell me if Maya is a male or a female.  
In the house of the Brahmin she is a Brahmini. In the house of a yogi, she is a female disciple.  
Reading the *Kalma* she becomes a Muslim woman, and in this Kaliyug she remains alone.  
She did not have a bridegroom or a wedding, yet she gave birth to a son.  
She spared not even a single young man, but even today she remains unwed.  
She remains with her parents, not going to her in-laws, and she does not sleep with her husband.  
Kabir says that they live from age to age, who free themselves from the idea of race, caste, and clan.

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is personifying and speaking about Maya which grammatically is feminine gender. Ordinarily, Maya is thought of as the goddess Lakshmi, the wife of Lord Vishnu. Maya is also thought of as wealth, or that which attracts a person. Maya is also delusion. But since Maya is feminine, Guru Kabir is asking the puzzling question whether Maya is male or female. He goes on to give a few examples of Maya as being female, such as the wife of a Brahmin, and is called Brahmini. Similarly, a yogi may have

a female disciple. By reciting the Kalma a Muslim woman is thought to be a Muslim. Just so Hindus, Christians, Buddhists and others have rituals in order to be identified by their religion. But Guru Kabir says that inspite of these, Maya remains alone. Maya never had a bridegroom and never got married, yet she produced a son, and is contrary to the natural order of things. *Kare mund* means those with black hair, therefore youths. Maya did not spare a single youth, yet she has remained unwed, and a virgin. This means that Maya plays a great role in the lives of all people, and young men are often enamoured by the attraction of young women. But she has no need to get married. By remaining with her parents, and not going to her in-laws, it means that Maya remains with the world, and does not have any need to go to her in-laws who represent God-realized people. She does not sleep with her husband because she is unwed and remains freely in the whole world. Guru Kabir is saying that those people will remain from age to age who have gone beyond Maya, or the delusion of separation into race, caste, and clans.

Guru Kabir means to point out that people are under the illusion that Maya is some material thing such as a woman, or wealth or anything that is fascinating, and arrests their attention. But he explains that none of these hold true, because Maya has no gender and is the creative energy of God. The creative principle of God cannot have a gender, thus the rhetorical question he asks is whether Maya is a male or female. According to *Advaita* (non-dualistic) Vedanta, Maya is responsible for all the differentiation we see in the phenomenal world arising from God, the Noumenal Being.

The pandits are supposed to be knowledgeable in the scriptures, and that is why Guru Kabir challenges them with the question about the gender of Maya. People who are enlightened spiritually do not see Maya to be the worldly things which the average person, including the priests, see in the world.

शब्द ४५

को न मुवा कहो पण्डित जना, सो समुझाय कहो मोहि सना.  
मूये ब्रह्मा विष्णु महेशू, पार्वती सुत मुये गणेशू.  
मूये चन्द्र मुये रवि शेषा, मुये हनुमत जिन्ह बाँधल सेता.  
मूये कृष्ण मूये कर्तारा, एक न मुवा जो सिरजनहारा.  
कहहिं कबीर मुवा नहिं सोई, जाको आवागवन न होई.

*shabda 45*

*ko na muwā kaho pandit janā, so samujhāi kaho mohi sanā.  
mūye brahmā vishnu maheshū, parvatī sut mūye ganeshū.  
mūye chandra mūye ravi sheshā, mūye hanumat jinhh bāndhal setā.  
mūye krishna mūye kartārā, ek na muwā jo sirjanhārā.  
kahahin kabīr muwā nahin soī, jāko āwāgawan na hoī.*

Meaning:

O Pandits! Tell me who has not died. Explain this to me carefully.

Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh died, as did Ganesh, son of Parvati.

The moon, the sun, and Sheshnag died, as did Hanuman who bridged the ocean.

Krishna died, as did the doers of actions. Only one, the Creator, did not die.

Kabir says only he will not die, who has risen above the duality of births and deaths.

Commentary:

All things in the world are transitory, and anything that has a beginning will also have an end. Scientists know that stars die, and even our sun will one day die. Our earth and other planets will likewise 'die' one day. What then can be said about beings that inhabit the earth? They must also die. It is thus that Guru Kabir is saying in this shabda that the three aspects of God as the creator Brahma, the sustainer Vishnu, and the destroyer Shiva all died. These three 'personalities' though being gods, are only projections of the different aspects of God. Therefore, in reality, they do not have independent existence, thus death is not beyond their experience. Similarly, Lord Ganesh who was the son of Parvati and Shiva also died. The moon and the sun are mythological personalities as is the mythological serpent Sheshnag which is supposed to support the earth on its head. These have all died, for they are only creations of the mind. Even Hanuman, who bridged the ocean to allow Shri Ram and his army to cross to Lanka, also died. Even Shri Ram died drowning in the Sarju River, and Krishna died being shot by an arrow. Guru Kabir is saying that only one being is not subject to death, and that is the creator of the whole universe, and that is God. He observes that only that being does not die who rises above the dualities of birth and death. In human terms, this means the person who has realized his union with God. The soul does not die for it is co-existent with God, and is a part of God. One who achieves this state of realization does not die, though his body will die.

In this short shabda Guru Kabir is explaining that all the mythological beings of gods and goddesses, and incarnations must die. Death does not come to that which is beyond the physical, which is the soul itself. It is the product of God who is beyond death.

शब्द ४६

पण्डित एक अचरज बड होई.

एक मरि मुये अन्न नहिं खाई, एक मरे सिद्धै रसोई.

करि अस्नान देवन की पूजा, नौ गुण काँध जनेऊ.

हँडिया हाड हाड थरिया मुख, अब षट कर्म बनेऊ.

धर्म करे जहाँ जीव बधतु है, अकर्म करे मोरे भाई.

जो तोहरा को ब्राह्मण कहिये, तो काको कहिये कसाई.

कहहिं कबीर सुनो हो सन्तो, भरम भूलि दुनियाई.

अपरम्पार पार पुरुषोत्तम, या गति विरले पाई.

*shabda 46*

*pandit ek achraj bad hoī.*

*ek mari muye ann nahi khai, ek mare sijhai rasoī.*

*kari asnān devan kī pūjā, now gun kāndh janeo.*

*handiyā hād hād thariyā mukh, ab shat karm baneo.*

*dharm kare jahān jīv badhatu hai, akarm kare more bhāī.*

*jo toharā ko brāhman kahiye, toh kāko kahiye kasāī.*

*kahahin kabīr suno ho santo, bharam bhūli duniyāī.*

*aparampār pār purushotam, yā gati birle pāī.*

Meaning:

O pandits! I see a very great surprise!

When one dies you abstain from food. When another dies you prepare it for food in your kitchen.

You bathe and worship the gods, and you wear the nine-stranded *janeo*.

There is bone in your pot, in your plate, and in your mouth. What dignity is there in the six duties you perform?

You practice righteous actions and then you kill animals. O brother! You are committing evil actions.

If someone calls you a Brahmin then what will they call a butcher?

Kabir says, "Listen, O saints! The whole world is lost in doubts.

The supreme personality is unfathomable. Only a rare person can recognize Him."

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is talking about the hypocrisy committed by those in high religious places. In this case he is talking about the Brahmins, as the setting is in India. The same thing can be said about the priests of other religions. He observes that there is a very strange occurrence indeed. When there is a death, people abstain from food because of grief, or because of ritual reasons. On the other hand, they will kill an animal and carefully prepare it for food. Life is the same in both cases, thus the conduct of the pandits and their teaching to the people, are contrary to spiritual life. He observes that they dutifully bathe and do their worships to the various gods, and they wear the nine-stranded *janeo*. The nine strands represent nine virtues or good qualities.

Guru Kabir makes it quite picturesque by stating that there is bone in the pot, bone in the plate, and bone in the mouth. How can this be consistent with good spiritual life? The Brahmins then go on to perform their six karmas which are to perform ceremonies and to make others perform them; to read the scriptures and to make others read the scriptures; and to receive gifts and to give gifts. On the one hand they try to practice virtuous deeds, but on the other hand, they are killing animals. Can this be right? He then observes that a butcher is called a butcher because he kills animals, but what can the Brahmin be called who performs the same actions? Guru Kabir is saying to the saints that the whole world is caught up in doubts. Why doubts? Because people do not have a clear understanding of what spiritual life is. They worship gods according to their own understanding, and they

do not use their innate wisdom to practice love and compassion towards living creatures. Guru Kabir observes that the Supreme Being is unfathomable, and not many can recognize Him. One has to be pure in thoughts, words and deeds, and must give up all harmful actions such as killing, to be pure in everything, and then meditate soulfully in order to recognize God as the Supreme Being. Only then can people remove doubts from their lives.

शब्द ४७

पाँडे बूझि पियहु तुम पानी.  
जेहि मटिया के घर में बैटे, तामें सृष्टि समानी.  
छप्पन कोटि यादव जहँ भीजे, मुनि जन सहस अठासी.  
पैग-पैग पैगम्बर गाडे, सो सब सरि भौ माटी.  
मच्छ कच्छ धरियार बियाने, रुधिर नीर जल भरिया.  
नदिया नीर नरक बहि आवे, पशु मानुष सब सरिया.  
हाड झरि-झरि गूद गली-गलि, दूध कहाँ ते आया.  
सो लै पाँडे जेवन बैटे, मटियहि छूति लगाया.  
वेद कितेब छाँडि देहु पाँडे, ई सब मन के भरमा.  
कहहिं कबीर सुनो हो पाँडे, ई सब तुम्हरे करमा.

*shabda 47*

*pānde būjhi piyahu tum pānī.  
jehi matiyā ke ghar men baithe, tāmen shrishti samānī.  
chappan koti yādav jahān bhīje, muni jan sahas athāsī.  
paig paig paigambar gāde, so sab sari bhow mātī.  
machh kachh ghariyār biyāne, rudhir nīr jal bhariyā.  
nadiyā nīr narak bahi āwe, pashu mānush sab sariyā.  
hād jharī jharī gūd galī gali, dūdh kahān te āyā.  
so lai pānde jevan baithe, matiyahi chhūti lagāyā.  
ved kiteb chhādi dehu pānde, ī sab man ke bharmā.  
kahahin kabīr suno ho pānde, ī sab tumhare karmā.*

Meaning

O Pande! You ask the caste of the server before you drink water.  
Don't you know that creation is absorbed in the clay of which your house is made, and in which you are sitting?  
Five hundred and sixty million Yadavs (Lord Krishna's clan) were merged in it, along with eighty thousand munis.  
At every step Muslim prophets are buried. They have decomposed and turned into clay.  
Fish, turtle and crocodile are born in the water, and their blood is mixed in it.  
In the water of the river 'hell' is flowing, as animals and people have rotted in it.  
Where does milk come from? The bones and flesh of cows are depleted to produce it.

The pandes take the milk and sit down to a meal, but they point out the uncleanliness of the milk pot.

O pande! Stop quoting the Vedas and other scriptures. Your mind is full of confusion. Kabir says, "Listen, O pande! These are your own creations."

Commentary:

Caste distinctions have been a problem in India, and the high caste (Brahmins) avoids contact with the low caste, considering them to be untouchables. Guru Kabir is pointing out the hypocrisy of the high caste when its adherents fail to realize that the very clay of which their houses are made, contain the decayed bodies of animals, and low caste people, along with those of the high castes. He points out that millions of the Yadav clan (the Mahabharat war) died, and mingled with the earth. So did many sages. Even holy Muslims were buried in many places, and the high caste people do not pay attention to this. The water that is used by the high castes, contains the blood of various animals that are born in it. Guru Kabir thus says that the water of the river is just like the water of hell, containing the rotted bodies of animals and people. If you consider well, you will note that the milk comes from the bones and the flesh of the cow, yet you drink it. Guru Kabir is exhorting them to stop quoting the scriptures to justify their actions, saying that the idea of caste and untouchability are creations of their own minds.

Guru Kabir decried caste distinctions and untouchability, saying that all people have been created by God and are equal. It is because of people's ignorance and hypocritical thinking that caste distinctions have been created.

शब्द ४८

पण्डित देखहु हृदय विचारी, को पुरुषा को नारी.  
सहज समाना घट घट बोले, वाके चरित अनूपा.  
वाको नाम काह कहि लीजै, न वाके वर्ण न रूपा.  
तैं मैं क्या करसी नर बौरे, क्या मेरा क्या तेरा.  
राम खुदाय शक्ति शिव एकै, कहु धौं काहि निहोरा.  
वेद-पुराण कितेब कुराना, नाना भाँति बखाना.  
हिन्दु तुरुक जैनि औ योगी, ये कल काहु न जाना.  
छौ दर्शन में जो परवाना, तासु नाम मनमाना.  
कहहिं कबीर हमहीं पै बौरे, ई सब खलक सयाना.

*shabda 48*

*pandit dekhahu hridai bichārī, ko purushā ko nārī.  
sahaj samānā ghat ghat bole, wāke charit anūpā.  
wāko nām kāhh kahi lījai, na wāko varn na rūpā.  
tain mein kyā karsī nar bowre, kyā merā kyā terā.  
rām khudāi shakti shiv ekai, kahu dhown kāhi nihorā.*

*ved purān kiteb kurānā, nānā bhānti bakhānā.  
hindu turuk jaini ow yogī, ye kal kāhu na jānā.  
chhow darshan men jo parwānā, tāsū nām manmānā.  
kahahin kabīr hamahīn pai bowre, ī sab khalak sayānā.*

Meaning:

O pandit! Think carefully and then tell me if the soul is male or female.

The same soul easily pervades and speaks in all bodies. Its nature is matchless.

What name will you give it when it has neither colour nor form?

O foolish man! Why are you concerned with yours and mine? What are really yours and what are mine?

Ram, Khuda, Shakti, and Shiva are all names of the One, but you separate them, and pray to the different ones for their blessing.

The Vedas, the Puranas, the Koran, and other scriptures, all try to explain religion and God in different ways.

Neither the Hindu nor the Turk, the Jain or the yogi truly understood this secret that God is one.

According to your six philosophies, you accept the names of God according to your own imagination.

Kabir says that we (the speakers of truth) are the foolish ones, while the rest of the world are the wise ones.

Commentary:

Kabir speaks in this shabda about the unity of the soul manifesting as the same 'energy force or field' in all bodies. Since it cannot be differentiated, how can one say whether it is a male or female? Similarly, God is the Absolute, the Supreme Being, manifesting in all forms, and He is beyond colour, form and gender. "He" is used only as a term of convenience. How then can one speak of God as a few, or many according to the various scriptures. The Hindus name God as Ram, the Muslim as Khuda, and the Hindus use the term Shakti for the power of God, often also as the consort of Lord Shiva. He said that all of these are names given to the same Supreme Being according to the imagination of people belonging to the different religions. He observes that the Vedas and the Puranas, other scriptures, and the Koran all try to explain religion and God in various ways. However, they did not seem to penetrate the heart of the devotees that God is one, as in practice they all behave as if they are worshipping different gods. Even the six philosophies try to explain the mystery of God, but it is done according to the imagination of the propounders of such philosophies. Guru Kabir observes that the true saints who see the unity of God, and all of creation manifesting the same life force, are really the foolish ones in the eyes of those who make all the differences. He, somewhat sarcastically, says that these people creating all the differences appear to be the smart ones, as the majority of people adhering to the various schools of religion and philosophy, seem to give some validity to his observations.

Guru Kabir instructs us to see the unity in all beings, and not to be misled by the various forms of religion, or the names of God, or the various ways of explaining the scriptures.

शब्द ४९

बुझ बुझ पण्डित पद निर्बान, साँझ परे कहवाँ बसे भान.  
ऊँच नीच पर्वत ढेलान ईंट, बिनु गायन तहँवा उठे गीत.  
ओस न प्यास मंदिर नहिं जहँवा, सहसों धेनु दुहावै तहँवा.  
नित अमावस नित संक्रान्ति, नित नित नौग्रह बैठे पाँति.  
मैं तोहिं पूछौ पंडित जना, हृदया ग्रहण लागु केहि खना.  
कहहिं कबीर इतनो नहिं जाना, कौन शब्द गुरु लागा कान.

*shabda 49*

*bujh bujh pandit pad nirbān, sāñjh pare kahawān base bhān.  
ūñch nīch parvat dhelan īnt, binu gāyan tahawān uthe gīt.  
os na pyās mandir nahin jahawān, sahason dhenu duhawai tahawān.  
nit amāwas nit sankrānti, nit nit nowgraha baithe pānti.  
mein tohi puchown pandit janā, hridayā grahan lāgu kehi khanā.  
kahahin kabīr itno nahin jānā, kown shabda guru lāgā kān.*

Meaning:

O pandit! Consider what is the state of Nirvana! Tell me when evening appears (death), where does the sun (soul) reside?

(In the state of God union) there is no high or low, no mountain or soil or bricks, but only consciousness. There, songs spring up without singing.

There is no dew (sense gratification), nor thirst (desires) nor temple (place for deities), but thousands of cows (thought waves) provide the milk (of realization).

There is always *amawas* and *sankranti*, and the nine planets are always sitting in their orbits.

Oh pandits! Tell me when did the soul become overshadowed by ignorance?

Kabir says if you don't know this much, then tell me what is the use of the mantra whispered in your ears by your guru?

Commentary:

In this shabda Guru Kabir is speaking of the state of Nirvana or super conscious state - a state of Self-realization or liberation. This state cannot be realized by studying the scriptures. It is a practical process of overcoming all the material desires and bondage, and rising to a state of absolute stillness in meditation. It is only in this state that one realizes the eternity of one's true Self. This pure conscious state has no material adjuncts or paraphernalia. It is a state of absolute Truth and peace. Guru Kabir thus challenges the pandit (priest) about this state of realization. Pandits, like priests everywhere, are well versed in their scriptures, but most of them have not undergone this inner journey to realize the state of pure consciousness.

Guru Kabir is stating that in that state of realization there is nothing material, such as the lumps of soil or bricks, or things that we consider to be high or low, or the functioning of the nine planets etc. (Scientists now say that there are planets, as Pluto is not considered a planet). These are all used allegorically to refer to "things" within the physical being. The singing refers to the "unstruck" or divine melody one hears in meditation. There are no pleasures of the senses, nor desires, nor temples nor places of worship. There are no thought waves to disturb that pure state of consciousness. There is always the union of the left and right nerve currents as taught in Yoga, and they merge into the *Sushumna* or the central channel through the spinal cord proceeding to the brain. This means that one is in meditation. The nine planets - the nine apertures of the body - sitting in their orbits mean that they have ceased functioning at the time of death. Guru Kabir thus originally asked where does the soul reside after death? Scripturally learned people do not have answers to most of these questions and ideas mentioned by him. Thus he asks, "Of what use is the Guru mantra given to you at the time of initiation, if you have not realized the state of Nirvana." All devotees who wish to obtain liberation from the passions, desires and material bondage, must travel this inner path, and realize the super conscious state which alone gives salvation.

शब्द ५०

बुझ बुझ पण्डित बिरवा न होय,

आधे बसे पुरुष आधे बसे जोय.

बिरवा एक सकल संसारा, स्वर्ग शीश जर गई पतारा.

बारह पँखुरिया चौबीस पात, घन बरोह लागे चहु पास.

फूले न फले वाकी है बानी, रैन दिवस विकार चुवै पानी.

कहहिं कबीर कछु अछलो न तहिया,

हरि बिरवा प्रतिपालिनि जहिया.

*shabda 50*

*bujh bujh pandit birawā na hoi, ādhe base purush ādhe base joi.*

*birawā ek sakal sansārā, swarga shīsh jar gāi patārā.*

*bārah pankhuriyā chowbīs pāt, ghan barohh lāge chahu pās.*

*phūle na phale wākī hai bāni, rain diwas vikār chuwai pānī.*

*kahahin kabīr kachhu achhalo na tahiya, hari birawā pratipālani jahiyā.*

Meaning:

Oh pandit! Consider this world to be a very exceptional tree. Half of it is male (Purush) and half of it is female (*Prakrati*).

This whole world is like that tree, and its top is in heaven, and its roots are in hell.

It has twelve petals (twelve months) and twenty-four leaves (twelve dark and twelve bright fortnights), and it has several aerial roots (desires) surrounding it.

By its very nature it has no flower (knowledge) or fruit (salvation). Useless water (passion) drips from it night and day

Kabir says that when God, in the beginning, nurtured the subtle world, nothing like this gross world existed.

Commentary:

Prior to the manifestation of the gross material world, the world existed in a subtle form. Purush is the conscious animating principle that is often considered as the male, whereas *Prakrati* is considered as nature and the female principle. Both of these together create or manifest the material world of form and consciousness. Just as a tree has its top pointing to the sky and the roots grounded in the earth, just so the people of the world are aspiring to great heights, but they remain firmly fixed or grounded in worldly pursuits. The world is similarly divided into the twelve months and the twenty-four fortnights, and all people are subject to the ravages of time. The various aerial roots are the desires that drive people into various types of activities, whether good or bad. The unfortunate thing with this tree of the world is that it does not bear any flowers of spiritual knowledge, or produce fruits of salvation. Instead, night and day only useless water, or passions, are driving the world into activity. Guru Kabir says that when the world was in the subtle form, prior to the gross manifestation, then there was none of these various desires and passions, or divisions of time, or any preoccupation with knowledge, salvation or ignorance. All was in an unmanifested state in the consciousness of God. When the gross world is "destroyed" after its cycle of manifestation, then it exists in a subtle form, just as when the body is destroyed the mind, intellect, consciousness and ego persist in order to carry the karmas into another birth. This is the same as the condition of the physical body that exists as the subtle of astral body after death.