

## THE SOUL'S TRUE HOME

by Darshan Singh

*The following is an English version of a satsang talk given by Sant Darshan Singh on November 21, 1981, at Kirpal Ashram, Delhi, India.*

*There is a land where only the swans (hansas or pure  
souls) dwell,  
Few there be that approach it!  
With the habits of a carrion crow,  
One cannot change into a swan.*

This is a hymn by Kabir Sahib. During his time, the two main religions in India were Hinduism and Islam, but the true spirit of these religions was dead. The Hindu pundits taught in Sanskrit, and the Muslim maulvis, in Arabic - the languages which were hardly understood by the layman. The Hindu and the Muslim preachers, themselves ignorant of the esoteric or inner side of religion, entangled the populace in religious ceremonies and ritualistic observances. A special feature of Kabir's teachings is that his hymns were composed in the language of the common man. He brought home to the people the quintessence of spirituality and set forth profound religious truths in the simplest of words. His songs are full of vitality. In talking to the Hindu and Muslim pundits and maulvis he would sometimes use harsh language, but when addressing ordinary men and women he would be gentle and soft-spoken. He would take examples from common people and daily life, and would coin symbols which were easily intelligible.

In the terminology of mysticism certain expressions have special meaning. For example, the word "hansa," which literally means "swan," is used here by Kabir. It symbolizes a pure spirit, a saint who has reached his original home, Sach Khand.

The human form is achieved as a result of the greatest good fortune and it is for this reason that it is called the crown of creation. The task before us is to know our self and to realize God. Our physical body is activated by the soul. In truth, we are embodied souls, but such is the veil of *maya* (illusion) enveloping us that when anyone questions our identity we say we are Ram Singh or Abdul Majid or Sant Lal. We think of ourselves only as bodies, and have no understanding of our true nature. In reality, we are *atman*, a living spirit, and the body is just a rented house which we may be called upon to vacate at any time without any notice. Our life's mission will be fulfilled when our soul is drawn to the feet of a Master. We will learn to rise above the body and traverse the subtle and causal regions, ascend to Parbrahm, shed the gross, subtle and causal wrappings, and become absorbed in God. Our goal is to return to our Homeland. In the words of Swamiji Maharaj:

*Brethren, return to your own Home,  
How long will you tarry in a foreign land?*

Here we are aliens or strangers, foreigners on earth. Our true Home is Sach Khand. We think that we know so much about ourselves and our environment, but we are in error. There are

three kinds of knowledge. The first is related to the physical body. From our ancient history we learn that the first teachings imparted to young pupils in India were about *ayurveda* (the science of medicine). The saints lay primary emphasis on keeping the body pure and healthy. The Gurbani says:

*Let the heart worship His holy feet, and the tongue repeat  
His Name.  
For this purpose alone, O Nanak, nurture your body.*

The body is the means for reaching the presence of a Master, and thereafter transcending the body to see the God Power. Much emphasis is laid on taking proper care of the body and nurturing it in a proper manner. In this regard, we are taught to be vegetarians. Our diet has an effect upon us. A pure vegetarian diet helps to ensure that our passions are not excited. A vegetarian diet can give you all the strength you need. The elephant living on a vegetarian diet is so strong that it can uproot a tree. The horse lives only on grass and yet is a symbol of speed and energy. In fact, in physical science, energy is often expressed in terms of "horsepower." By restricting ourselves to a vegetarian diet and avoiding meat, fish, fowl and eggs (both fertile and infertile), we can remain healthy and keep our desires under restraint.

The second type of knowledge is about ethics, a code of moral, social conduct to ensure happiness and peace. The elements of an ethical life are chastity, nonviolence, truthfulness, honesty, tolerance, love and selfless service to all mankind and all living creatures. Much emphasis is placed on *brahmcharya* (chastity) of which the true import is not merely abstention from sex, but following a code of conduct which leads us to self-knowledge and union with the Lord. Emphasizing the need for an ethical life, Sant Kirpal Singh was the first saint to prescribe on a scientific basis the keeping of a daily self-introspection diary with the following headings: nonviolence, truthfulness, chastity, humility, selfless service, adherence to a strict vegetarian diet and avoidance of liquor and intoxicating drugs, time spent in bhajan and simran, and the nature of the inner experience gained.

True brahmcharya demands controlling our animal passions and disciplining all the organs of perception. A Sufi has said:

*Shut your ears, lips and eyes.  
If thereby you do not see God's mystery,  
You may laugh at me!*

About eighty-three percent of our impressions of the world come from seeing, fourteen percent by hearing, and the rest through the senses of taste, smell and touch. Only if we exercise full control over the senses can we become true brahmcharis and attain God.

The third type of knowledge concerns the upliftment of the soul. Our soul has descended from God and it must ultimately ascend and merge back in Him. The Koran says: "There is a hidden treasure within you." This treasure can be unlocked if you go to a Godman because the key is with him alone.

*O Bhika, no one need go hungry;  
All have rubies in their girdle;  
Not knowing how to untie the knot,  
They remain paupers.*

By not paying attention to the soul which is within us, we remain separated from God. The three resources we have for God-realization are: the body, a moral life, and self-knowledge. The Gurbani says:

*Naught else is of any avail,  
Except absorption in Naam in the company of saints!*

If our soul seeks union with God, we must first have contact with Naam, and this is gained from a competent saint. From him emanates a radiation and if we are receptive our soul feels the presence of God. Once when King Akbar and his minister Birbal were conversing, Birbal declared that our thought waves make an impression on others. Akbar could not believe it. To convince him, Birbal disguised the king so he bore no symbol of royalty on him, and took him outside. Soon they saw a man coming towards them. Birbal asked the king to harbor some thought about the traveller. The king entertained the idea of killing the man. When the man drew near they asked him to state truthfully, without fear of any punishment, what thought had crossed his mind on seeing them. Pointing towards Akbar's bald head he said that he felt like breaking his odious head with a blow from his fist! Such is the impact of our thoughts! If we develop right thinking and right understanding, there will naturally result kind and good deeds. To find God we must have mastery of these three kinds of knowledge.

A special quality inherent in a swan is that by dipping his bill in a solution of milk and water, it can separate the two and drink only the milk. This symbolizes the power of right discrimination - *vivek*. Only if we become capable of discriminating truth from falsehood, can we aspire to be swans (pure souls). Unfortunately, at present our habitual tendencies are like those of the crow. In spiritual lore, the swan is the symbol of a saint, a realized soul. The crow represents the worldly man engrossed in the material life, so busy in his petty strifes that the thought that he is an embodied soul never enters his mind, and he never even dreams of aspiring to realize God. We have to rise above crow-like propensities and give up lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego. We have to learn to control our senses. The union of soul and mind in our body has made us human, yet we are so enveloped by maya that we regard ourselves merely as a body. We need right understanding and true discrimination. All saints have prayed to God to lead them from falsehood to truth, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality. Kabir says that we spend all our time thinking of the world. At least now we should give up our crow-like proclivities and cherish the disposition of a swan. We should seek the guidance of a Master Soul who is one with God, who has solved the mystery of life and death, and who can aid us in resolving it for ourselves. If we go to his feet he will give us a contact with Naam, and at the very start will put us in touch with the divine Light and Sound so that we can gradually rise above body-consciousness and merge first in him and thereafter, through his grace, arrive at our Eternal Home. A Sufi has said:

*Your home is in the highest heaven.  
What a shame you build it on a heap of rubbish.*

Man, who belongs to heaven, is caught up in the tentacles of the body. The soul should fly heavenward and become one with God, but is instead caught in the web of the world. Our external religious devotions are centered on the reading of sacred texts, going on pilgrimages, observing fasts, performing penances, engaging in acts of charity, and carrying out rituals and ceremonies. But such performances do not help us in realizing our goal. Our life's object is fulfilled only when the soul, our conscious self, merges in God who is the Ocean of All-consciousness. There is no salvation until our individual consciousness finds repose in that vast sea of All-knowledge. For this purpose Kabir asks us to search for a Master, be initiated by him, and to put all our faith, hope and conviction in his saving grace. With his blessings we will learn to rise above body-consciousness, cross the spiritual planes, and arrive at our true Home, Sach Khand.

*The swan swims in a sea of joy,  
It does not enter a pond.  
Except for the Water of Life,  
The swan takes no other drink.*

The swan dwells in the ocean of bliss which is shoreless and beyond measure. The swan also transcends all limitations. God is infinite, our soul entering Him becomes a part of His infinitude. At the present time we are obsessed with the senses. As Sant Kirpal Singh used to say, we live in an upside down world. Instead of the soul exercising full control over the mind; and the mind disciplining the senses, the senses drag down the mind, and the soul yoked to the mind is also pulled down. Our senses are turned outward and downward, and so long as we look outside and below, we harbor the tendencies of a carrion crow. Kabir asks us to give up this crow-like mentality and invert the senses. Only then will we catch the shower of Nectar coming down within. Only a cup properly placed below the pitcher gets filled.

The swan is said to feed only on pearls. Once a swan alighted in a field of barley. The farmer, fearing that the swan might eat up his crop, ran after him with a cudgel. The swan reflected that the poor peasant did not know that the swan never ate barley; its food was pearls. Whenever the saints come to earth, they squander with both hands the store of spiritual wealth they possess. The saint who is one with God, talks only of spiritual matters and offers spiritual experience free of charge. But the worldly-wise understand him not.

The Gurbani says:

*The soul of one who controls the ten senses, receives  
illumination.*

The mission of our life is to unwrap the three veils enveloping the soul. That means we must discard the sheaths of the material, the astral and the causal bodies, secure freedom from the three gunas with the help of our Master, and reach our true Home. Once a seabird visited a frog living at the bottom of a narrow well. The frog asked him how big the ocean was. Taking a little jump, the frog asked, "Is it this big?" The seabird said that it was much larger. The frog took another jump and asked if it was as big as that. It got the same answer - the ocean was much vaster. The frog

hopped around the full circumference of the well and asked, "Is the ocean this large?" The seabird replied that it was infinitely vaster than that. The frog declared that the matter was beyond belief. Similarly, the saints and Godmen have no limitations, but we cannot form any idea of how great they are. We gauge them according to our intelligence, like the frog of the well contemplating the ocean. What understanding can the frog have? Our intelligence is limited, but God is without bounds - a shoreless and depthless ocean. How can we comprehend Him? By following the teachings of a living Master, we can gradually change from our limited state to a limitless one; it is only then that we can know something of God as He may choose to reveal Himself to us.

The swan separates milk from water. We too should learn to discriminate, and determine our priorities in life. After passing his matriculation examination, Sant Kirpal Singh faced his most important question: What should be his life's ideal? He spent many days thinking over the pros and cons of the problem, and after weighing everything, he concluded: "God first and the world afterwards." We too must set our priorities and decide upon self-knowledge and God-realization as our life's goal. We must resolve to feed on pearls and reject glass beads, and we must not be deceived by false mirages and illusions. We can achieve this only when a living Master, having mercy on us, takes us under the shadow of his protective wings. We, like the lost sheep in the wilderness, cannot find our shepherd. But the Master, out of his compassion, calls us to himself. It is said that "Love first emanates from the heart of the Beloved."

Love first manifests in the Guru's heart. He calls us to his feet, turning a blind eye to all our faults and misdeeds. If a way to salvation is open to us, it is only through grace and forgiveness, it is not due to any merit in us, for we have none. Were he to call us to account, we would have no legs to stand upon. The story is told of a Sufi saint who lived, absorbed in the worship of God, in an uninhabited desert. Miraculously, a pomegranate tree grew there which yielded one large fruit every day, enough to satisfy his hunger. A spring of fresh water also sprang up in the desert where he could quench his thirst. He passed his whole life in worship and contemplation. After death, when he stood before the judgment seat, God benignly declared that He, out of mercy and indulgence, would grant him absolution. The Sufi was surprised and upset. In his mind he began complaining: "I prayed all my life, until my kneecaps had worn out, and in the end I have to be forgiven through God's grace?" God knowing his thoughts, asked whether he would like a rendering of his karmic account. The Sufi said, "Yes Lord, as You think best." And so, God began: "In the wilderness, where you passed your life, there was no possibility of an oasis existing, and no tree could have grown there. But for your sake I created an oasis, raised a tree, and caused a spring of water to appear. This was done only for you. Against the rule of Dame Nature, every day the tree produced a pomegranate so large as to make a full day's meal. All these facilities I provided for you alone. All your devotion and penance has been compensated for by these extraordinary gifts. Further, when you walked, you trod to death hundreds of tiny insects. According to the law of retribution, you should be given birth hundreds of times, and then killed." The Sufi felt penitent, and bowing low, sought to be forgiven through God's grace and benevolence.

*Of Mansarovar, the lake of immortality, what account will a  
crane give?*

*His heart is set on a pond, and an inland sea is beyond his  
surmise.*

We see so many Mansarovars and temples in the world, but the true Mansarovar, the temple of

God, is within man. The swan bathes in the true Mansarovar and drinks the nectar therein, but we in the world are occupied with the world's business. To find God we have to reject our worldly ways, but not by renouncing the world to go into a cave in the Himalayas or to retreat to a tent in a desolate desert. The way of the saints is the way of positive mysticism. We must fulfill our worldly duties, but remain detached from within.

*The lotus growing in a swamp remains untouched by mud;  
The duck in water flies away with dry wings.  
So too must we cross the ocean of life,  
Absorbed in Naam, linking the soul's attention to the  
harmonious Sound.*

Living in the world and attending to our worldly duties, our attention should simultaneously be directed towards God. Our hands are occupied in work, and our heart is turned towards God. In this way we can achieve our ideal.

Our life now is one of outward show. When Kabir uses the symbol of the crane, he is implying a showy and pretentious life. Cranes and swans are both white on the outside, but there is a vast difference between the two. Kabir first compared the swan with the crow which is black in color. Now, going a step further, he cites the example of a crane which is white like the swan. The crane's pretentiousness is symptomatic of our life; we do not show ourselves in our true colors. We wear a camouflage and present ourselves in fake and deceptive colors. We boast of our spiritual accomplishments and declare that we daily hold conversation with our Guru's radiant form, that our inner flight is up to Sach Khand and we meet God face to face. We boast that our life is pure, and our dealings fair and just. When we go to a public platform we present ourselves as being so pure, pious and sincere that people are left wondering that such a high soul is living on earth! Even the satsangis talking amongst themselves do not present themselves as they truly are; there too we move heaven and earth to describe our inner visions, claiming to go beyond the seven heavens and even rising beyond our Eternal Home. Our life should not be pompous and showy. The crane's life is one of hypocrisy; he looks like the swan, but his intentions are not so pure. The swan lives in the Mansarovar and is beyond the three gunas, but the crane lives in the vicinity of a pond and as soon as any fish jumps, it swallows it. So is our life one of pretense. The Gurbani says that from within we are pitch black, but from outside we appear spotlessly white. We live a life of pretense because we are not aware of the Mansarovar, we know only of small ponds and puddles, and there too our attitude is not aboveboard. Many of us, when we ascend the religious stage, appear to be saintly, but ascending the political stage our hue and color change. Like a child wearing different masks, now of a lion and now of a lamb, we too wear many masks each day. Seldom do we appear as we really are. Kabir asks us to give up hypocrisy and become truthful and straightforward. If we show ourselves as we really are, a man of God may show us mercy and put us on the path Godward.

The saints do not live for themselves but for the entire world. If the crane has even the slightest apprehension that its life is in danger, it takes to its wings. But the saints not only live for others, they even lay down their very lives for them. Take the example of Jesus Christ who was put on the cross. Guru Arjan Dev was made to sit on an iron plate and hot sand was poured over his body, yet he continued to proclaim: "Sweet is Thy Will, O God." His friend, a mystic named Hazrat Mian Mir, said: "I cannot bear this horrible sight. If you permit me I shall destroy the Moghul dynasty." But Guru Arjan Dev said that such was not their way; their path was of

self-surrender and resignation. Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded in Chandni Chowk in Delhi where a gurdwara now stands. Shamas Tabrez was skinned alive; Kabir was once bound and cast into a river, and at another time thrown before an elephant. Similarly, Zoroaster was also martyred. They sacrificed their lives for others. The crane-like people loudly proclaim that they are the Master's disciples and servants. All our leaders declare that they are the servants of the people, but behind their facade of service lies concealed all their selfish desires. Only one in a million may truly serve mankind. Only a person who is under the protection of a perfect Master Soul can truly serve others.

*Though born a swan, he fell among cranes.  
Searching blindly without the eye of true knowledge,  
He lost himself, confused by a doubting mind.*

A swan coming down to live amongst cranes begins to regard himself as one of them, but in truth he remains a swan. When the time comes he rises and joins the flight of other swans. Hazur Baba Sawan Singh used to give the example of a lion cub which fell into the hands of a shepherd. It started living among the sheep and thought it was a sheep, too. Once another lion happened to pass that way, and seeing the cub told him that it was of the same species as the lion himself. The lion took the cub to a pond and asked him to look in and see for himself whether it resembled the lion. The cub found it to be so. When both of them began to roar, all the sheep, as well as the shepherd, fled.

Kabir says that we are souls come down to earth, and are the children of God. We embody the Divine Will, but we have lost our way among the worldly. We lack the discrimination to see that the body and soul are distinct. Whenever God wishes to save the souls which He has earmarked for saving, He descends to earth assuming the human form. He calls us to His feet and instructs us that we are not merely bodies, but souls, and our destination is Sach Khand. He teaches us that we are not meant to keep crawling like worms on the earth. He gives us divine love, initiates us, and on the very first day gives the experience of godly Light and Sound.

Kabir takes the example of a swan who, straying from his flock, joined the cranes and thought that he was one of them. He was met by another swan (a sage) who was united with God and invested with the power of discrimination. This enlightened being made him realize that he was a swan and not a crane.

The worldly man lacks discrimination; he lives in darkness and cannot cross over to the region of Light. It is God's blessing which allows him to reach his true Home. There are two kinds of paths open to us; one is the *Pitriyan Marg* and the other of *Deviyan Marg*. The first comprises ceremonies and rituals, but engaging in these observances will not gain for us liberation from the wheel of transmigration. Even the performance of good deeds alone will not give us salvation. Lord Krishna has said that both good and bad actions are chains, one of gold and the other of iron. We can only break the karmic chain with the help of a saint, a God-realized soul. The *Deviyan* path is known as a path of light. In India these are the commonly understood paths, but Hazur Baba Sawan Singh used to explain that by traversing the commonly known *Deviyan* path, our purpose is not served. When a Hindu is dying it is customary to show him a lighted lamp; the real purpose of this action is to remind him of the Light within. Man must establish contact with the inner Light and the Sound Current if he is to reach his ultimate Home. Following the *Pitriyan* and the *Deviyan* paths we do not find God: We have to follow the "Srutu Marg," or the path of the

inner Sound Current.

*Taking off, the young swan joins the high flying swans.  
The cranes are left alone on the ground.  
They cannot wing their way above,  
Poor creatures of the earth!*

There is a common saying that birds of the same feather flock together. The souls destined to become swans join the assembly of swans through the bounty of a living Master. The cranes, whose life is of mere show, have no inkling of the inner truth; they live in a camouflage all the time, strut about the earth and fall continually into the round of births and deaths. The swan on the other hand breaks out of the interminable cycle and finds salvation. He reaches the planes of joy and ecstasy, and as Kabir says, lives in the pool of happiness. The cranes and the crows pass from birth to birth and face suffering as all living creatures must. The inclination of the crows and cranes is for gross and material objects, whereas the swans are conscious, awakened beings; they rise to join the vast region of All-consciousness. The Gurbani says:

*Those who worship the liberated ones become liberated.*

One who is drawn to the feet of a Master who has solved the mystery of life and death and who has attained salvation, finds liberation. It is said that it is good to be born in a church or temple, but it is a sin to die there! We are members of certain societies and wear their social labels, but unless we discover for ourselves who we really are, from where we have come, and to where we must go, we do not find salvation. If we desire salvation we must search for a Godman who can help us vanquish lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego, free ourselves from maya, rise above the physical, astral and causal regions, and merge in God.

All spiritual men have love for each other. Those who walk the way of God love all mankind, and all creation. We talk of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Man, but we do it only at the intellectual level, we pay only lip service to this ideal. It does not come from our heart or from the depths of our soul. But when we rise into the spiritual regions and merge in our Guru, we will see the image of the Guru reflected in the leaf of every tree, and in every particle of dust. When we see God reflected everywhere, we naturally love all. This is the true road to God.

When we become conscious beings and enter the vast Ocean of All-consciousness, we find everlasting joy and bliss. Kabir says that if you seek salvation and an end to the cycle of birth and death, join the company of a swan, a saint, a prophet, who is himself liberated. He will bring you salvation also.