



MOTH & THE FLAME  
BARODA

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Shabd is the Guru,  
and Surat, the disciple.  
—Guru Nanak

**M**aster-ji and I board a rusty twenty-two-seater bus, bound for Baroda, a long ride towards the south-west of India. Scorching heat is amplified by the bare tin roof and more than sixty passengers. Its unpadded metal seats must have been designed in some fiendish place for the long-of-leg! We stop in a barren region (not a living tree or plant in sight) to pick up loin-clad Bhil tribesmen wearing hunting slings wrapped around their wide turbans. The one closest to me suddenly vomits on the floor. I try my failing best to accept the heat and other conditions as gifts of the Lord. Master's car then passes on our right. Eyes close in remembrance; cool and fragrant mystic breezes waft over from the direction He passes, and mind stops complaining.

*The mind is its own place, and in itself,  
can make heaven of Hell, and a hell of Heaven.—John Milton*

It is past 9 in the sweaty, sultry evening when we reach Baroda, a sprawling city of several million. As the bus roars away, leaving us in a diesel cloud, Master-ji exclaims, 'Oh, oh! I forget Baroda address of Maharaj Ji!' We laugh like it's the funniest thing in the world, and agree that He will take care of us, so why worry! By rickshaw we proceed to a gurdwara built over the place Guru Nanak visited five hundred years earlier. From the *granthi*, we obtain permission to stay. In perfect comfort we meditate, eat, and rest.

In the morning, the friendly priest gives a lesson on the *vina*, a traditional stringed instrument with a long fretted neck and two large gourd sound-chambers attached to the underside. The *vina*'s haunting if not beautiful note-bending sound has no parallel in Western music, and its timbre and tone are said to resemble the sound-current in *Daswan Dwar*—the third spiritual region. Master-ji takes off for a walk in a nearby bazaar and soon returns with a gentle giant by the name of Kartar Singh, a prosperous merchant *and* the local satsang leader who just happened to be purchasing vegetables for the Master's free kitchen when he and Master-ji literally bumped into each other. *More* laughter!

Kartar delivers us to a palatial former residence of the Maharaja of

Baroda, then ushers us into a huge bedroom, where the Master rests upon a canopied bed. Seeing us, he sits up, perfect feet peeking out from under baggy sylvar trousers, skin color like honey-golden amber, unlike any other. I find it impossible not to bow before such unpretentious majesty. 'You have the Indian disease!' Master jokes about my bowing, which I don't mind at all. 'People were out looking for you until after 1 a.m. I was not worried.' His eyes are giving sport as he adds, 'but others were!' I'm one big smile.

In the evening, a mammoth crowd gathers to hear the Master's two hour Hindi discourse. I only managed to get the following:

*God working through the Guru can connect you to That which has no mother, no father, no brother, no equal. A genuine man of realization never calls Himself a Master. When Nanak was asked, 'Who is your Guru?' he replied, 'Shabd or the Eternal Sound Principle is the Guru, and Surat [the Attention] is the disciple.' A true Master always considers himself to be the servant of servants.*

In 1963, Sant Kirpal Singh was invited to speak at the Grand Mosque of Paris. After listening carefully to his message, the head Mufti requested a memento. The Master gave him a photograph of Hazur which he then inscribed in Urdu, using his pen-name, *Jamal*:

*Ghulam-i-ghulama Jamal.  
Jamal, the Slave of Thy Slaves.*

It is the morning of initiation and departure. Of sixty new seekers, only one man cannot hear the sacred inner Sound at the first sitting. Even when put aside for a second session, he experiences nothing. Master frowns with *apparent* impatience, *seemingly* in a hurry for the next leg of our journey. He touches the new initiate's right ear, and after less than a minute, taps the top of his head. The meditator opens his eyes and with a stunned expression, reports hearing loud ringing bells within.

According to the Adepts of Sant Mat, the internal sound of the big bell is the first important level of *shabd* or Sound-current heard within; it is the inner Bell that exerts magnetic attraction upon the listener, thus drawing soul-consciousness into the astral plane. Regions above and beyond the astral heavens reverberate with even finer and more compelling melodies and are filled with radiant scenes of such exquisite beauty and grandeur that the beholder is overwhelmed and enraptured. There is no earthly parallel. Khawaja Hafiz, a Persian sufi mystic set afloat these reminders more than seven centuries ago:

*From the turret of Heaven, a call bids you Home,  
But fallen into the snares, you hear not.*

*No one knows where the mansion of the Beloved lies,  
But sure enough, the chiming of bells proceeds therefrom.*

*Take the seals from your ears and hearken  
unto the Voice of emancipation calling you constantly.*

*Attach not to the ephemeral world of matter,  
as the elixir of life is showering from above.*

*The beat of Love sounding in the Heavens,  
Sends blessings to the souls of the devotees.*

—Hafiz

When Francis of Assisi took shelter in a cave from a raging storm and opened his heart to God, he received a profound vision of Christ accompanied by loud pealing of church bells in and around him. While engaged in deep prayer, St. Theresa of Avila also heard God speaking to her through the medium of inner bells, although initially fearful. While meditating in the Cave of Hira, prophet Mohammed heard inner bells, transforming into the voice of Gabriel, which then dictated to the unlettered shepherd boy the inspired Q'uran.

Jacob Boehme of early Germany was also conversant with the inner path of Celestial Sound, which was gifted to him by a mysterious Master from the East when Jacob was just a young boy mending shoes:

*If you should in this world bring many thousand sorts of musical instruments together, and all should be tuned in the best manner most artificially, and the most skillful masters of music should play on them in concert together, all would be no more than the howlings and barkings of dogs in comparison of the Divine Music, which rises through the Divine Sound and tunes from Eternity to Eternity.*  
—from Jacob Boehme's *The Aurora*

The inner sound has nothing to do with the medical condition known as *tinnitus*, although several who have heard unbidden strains of the music of the spheres within initially sought help from doctors. There is, however, no cure for God but *God*.

The more I travel with the living Master, the more it becomes obvious that he, in his time, is in harmony with the Divine Will and thereby in control of the cosmic tap—for those in this time, who seek the inner way.

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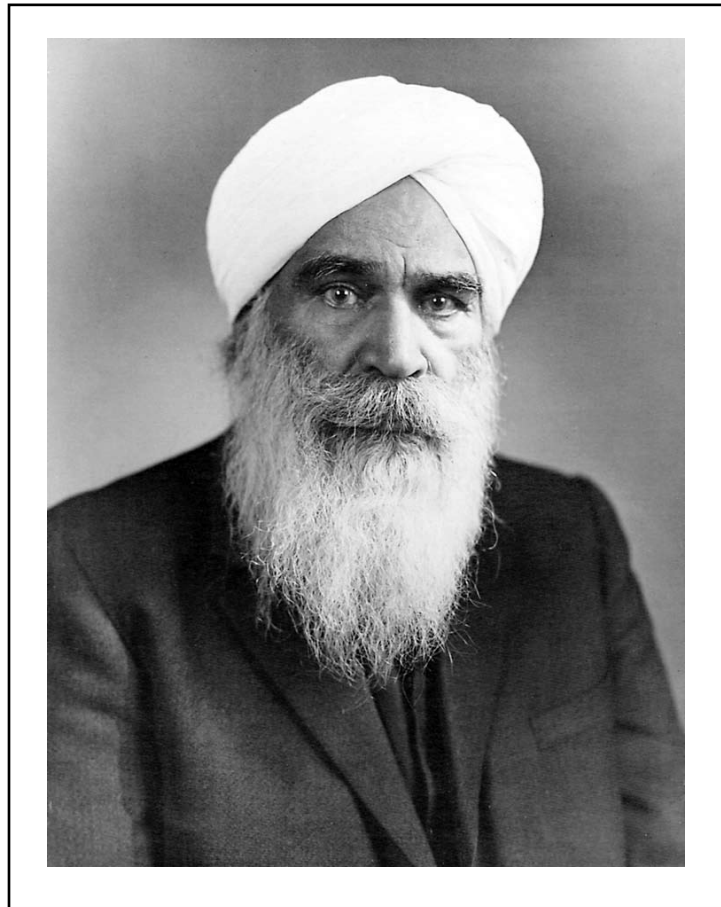
Five centuries earlier, Guru Nanak taught the helplessness of ego-centered attempts to realize the Divine—before Whom one must become humble as dust:

*You have no power to speak or to be silent,  
No power to ask or to give.*

*You have no power over life or death,  
No power over wealth or state  
For which you are ever restless.*

*You have no power over spiritual awakening,  
No power to know the Truth,  
Or to achieve your own salvation.*

*Let him who thinks he has the power, try.  
O Nanak! none is high or low, but by His Will.*



Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj

Photo by Harris & Ewing, 1963