

MUREED

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Dedicated to
My Murshid
Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj

CONTENTS

Friendship Forged
Journey Commences
Friends Compare Notes
Meets with an other friend
Friends as contended devotees

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The booklet Mureed is a humble endeavour towards fostering communal harmony, one of the main teachings of the Nirankari Mission. It narrates the story of three disciples, one Sikh, one Hindu and one Muslim (named Mureed) and their teacher, Master Ji. The setting is the partition of India in 1947, when the communal frenzy incited by the misguided religious zealots was at its peak. It tells how with the sagacious guidance and deep love of the saintly Master Ji, the prevailing abhorrence between different communities is converted into mutual love and affection, care and concern. It also highlights what a human can attain in this life when he is blessed with the Divine Knowledge by the grace of Murshid (Spiritual Teacher). The blessee not only overcomes base impulses, he also perceives the Divine in all: loves and owns all. Liberated from the shackles of caste, creed, faith, race, nationality, hatred, enmity, jealousy and strife, a human is transformed into a divine being.

Mureed is the second publication authored by Lt. Gen. A.S. Bhullar (Retd.) which is a compilation of the series of articles published in the monthly Sant Nirankari. In his earlier publication, self and self-realization, complex philosophical topics have explained in simple and comprehensible language.

We are grateful to the compilers, Rev. Joginder Singh and Des Raj Ahuja. The young devotee Sonu Kapur deserves our thanks for going through the proofs.

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Sant Nirankari Mandal

M U R E E D

FRIENDSHIP FORGED

In a sleepy village of pre-Partition days, lives a Muslim family belonging to the weavers clan. Every morning the father would take out yarn and stretch the same to sort out the knots and crossings. When ready, it will be put on the handloom.

The work is tedious, back-breaking and barely remunerative. But he has to carry on, just like his father, and his grandfather before that. He considers himself lucky, since he was given the loom, which he now operates because his elder brother had migrated to Moradabad along with his family to work in a factory making brass utensils and items. An occasional letter does arrive mentioning the good money his brother makes, but the abominable living quarters where his brother's family is all jam-packed. His own concern is, however, for his three sons and one daughter. His first son Allah Bux has started helping him in weaving. His eyes are sharp and his hand sure. He should be a great asset for increasing the cloth output. His second son is a mischievous one. He is forever running through the narrow lanes of the village, chasing other boys or being chased himself. He has been unable to persuade him to take interest in weaving the cloth-making. But for the protection of his wife, Khuda Bux would have received a daily thrashing, rather than the occasional one, which he now receives at the hands of his father. Then comes his darling daughter Meher-un-Nissa. She is already helping the mother in housework and has also learnt to operate the spinning-wheel for making the yarn from cotton. So far the father has

prohibited her from joining the weaving sessions girls have at night in their homes, turn by turn. He mother's pleas, "More yarn can be produced in company", have fallen on his deaf ears and simply ignored.

Moula Bux, the third and the youngest son, is the baby of the family. Every body indulges him. He is the object of love and affection for all. Allah Bux, his eldest brother, he simply ignores him. He is too big and aloof for his liking. Khuda Bux, his other brother, he tries to avoid him, because he is not averse to give him a punch or two just for the fun of it. Meher-un-Nissa is his favourite, because she provides him jaggery stolen from the kitchen-store. When he protests about its small size, his sister abraids him to keep it a secret from the mother who would notice a large piece being pilfered. Moula Bux is the only one who is sent to the newly opened Government school. There he meets other boys. The Muslim and Sikh boys are almost equal in number. There is, however, a sprinkling of Hindu boys, as well. There are no girls in the school. He does not understand why, because he would like to have Meher-un-Nissa with him to love her and protect her from the bigger boys who are usually bullies. All boys play together, study together, do common mischief and have similar habits, concern and pursuits. So, he was very surprised when he invited his friend Harnam to come to his place for sharing the Eid repast, but Harnam pleaded inability to do so till he had taken his father's permission.

Next day, when he accosted Harnam about the matter, Harnam's narration shocked him completely. Not only had the father prohibited him from going to Moula Bux's place, he had also asked him not to have anything further to do with a Muslim boy. "Don't you know that we are Sikhs? The Muslim Governor of Sirhind killed our Guruji's son by bricking them alive. We cannot visit their homes. It will amount to disrespect to our Guruji," was the refrain of Harnam's father. The two boys sat next to each other almost whispering, so that others should not hear their words of dissent. The pain and confusion was evident in Harnam's eyes. Ultimately, both of them decided to approach their Master Ji

(Teacher), who was the only person of sufficient authority known to them. But there was a problem. Who was to broach the subject to Master Ji? Then they remembered the cool, calm, serene and loving nature of Master Ji and mustered enough courage to approach him after classes. Very gingerly and hesitantly they approached him. They noticed his smiling face and his opening remarks dispelled all their hesitation.

Master Ji: "Come, come. You want to see about something?"

Harnam: "Yes, Sir, I want to ask whether it will be wrong for me to go to Moula Bux's place during Eid and eat their food."

Master Ji: "I see nothing wrong with it. But why are you asking me about it?"

Harnam: "Because my father has strictly prohibited it, Moula Bux and family being Muslims."

Master Ji kept silent for sometime. His usual smiling face acquired a bit of gravity. He clasped his hands together, in his characteristic manner, and looked down. Then he looked up, and he was his usual genial, calm self. Maybe that he had said a silent prayer before looking up.

Master Ji: "I see that we have a genuine problem over here. Let me hear what Moula Bux has to say in the matter."

Here he turned to Moula Bux and addressed the question to him: "Do you think it is wrong for Harnam to come to your place for the Eid repast, just because he is a Sikh?"

Moula Bux: "Who is a Sikh? Who is a Muslim? What does it matter if one is a Sikh and the other a Muslim? Why cannot we be friends? Did I kill the Guruji's

Sons? Why should Harnam's father hold his rancour against me or my family? I see nothing wrong in Harnam coming to our place for the Eid feast."

Master Ji: "Even if it means that Harnam should disobey his father?"

Moula Bux; "What is the justice in this, which prevents two genuine friends to have a meal together?"

By this time Moula Bux's face was red with shame and anger, and his eyes were brimming with tears. Master Ji instinctively raised his arms and clasped Moula Bux in and embrace. This resulted in Moula Bux to let loose a series of sobs, which he tried to stifle in Master Ji's shirt. Harnam was looking on with awe and respect. He never realized that his friend could be so emotional over a small meal invitation. His respect and love for Moula Bux went up a few grades. The flood subsided and Moula Bux stepped back with a final backhand swipe of his nose and eyes.

Master Ji: "I see that you, Moula Bux, have the seeds of a true Mureed (follower). I am sure some day you will have all the answers to face up to your life. From today onwards I am going to call you Mureed. Whenever you can, do come and talk to me. I would love to listen to you."

Here he turned to Harnam, who was speechless till now.

Master Ji: "That includes you, too, Harnam. Come and talk to me any time you like. For the time being I would not advise you to go to Moula Bux's home against the wishes of your father. As I see it, he did not directly prohibit you from eating that portion of Eid respect which Moula Bux can hide and bring to school for you. Of course, you run the risk of having to share it with other boys."

At this Master Ji winked and chuckled at his joke. The boys looked at each other, smiled and walked away hand-in-hand. This is how the friendship between Mureed and Harnam was forged.

JOURNEY COMMENCES

A few months before the partition of India, Mureed's father had died due to lung infection. You could no longer hear his agonizing wheezing cough at night for long periods. He had finally succumbed to it. The elder brother came over from Moradabad. Allah Bux took over the weaving work and Khuda Bux joined the army as a soldier. Meher-un-Nissa hid behind the curtains or others, forever crying for her father. Moula Bux (Mureed) was like a lost lamb. When it was suggested that he should shift to Moradabad for his further studies, there was a mixture of apprehension and expectation. In the end, their mother gave her consent and Mureed shifted to Moradabad. Here the crowded conditions, both indoor and outdoor, hit Mureed like a bomb. He missed his Punjabi surroundings and the open fields of wheat. Further trouble was in store for him in the shape of his cousin Aslam, who resented his presence. Aslam was working in a factory and always come home with his clothes and hands black, whereas Mureed was reasonably clean after attending the high school. Aslam would tease him about it and call him a softie and a waster. Sometimes he was called a bookworm due to his fondness for reading. The constant hackling was due Aslam's own lack of education, which he never acquired in spite of his father's urging. Now here was an upstart trying to cosy up to his father, bringing not a rupee in and yet partaking the two meals a day. What injustice! Alam Ara, his younger cousin sister, eyed him through shy eyes. She barely spoke, but her constant presence was like an ever-present spy, trying to watch what he was doing. At first it only amused Mureed, but now it was a distraction from his studies. He was in the final year of Matriculation and wanted to do well. His uncle was, of courses, very happy seeing his devotion and diligence.

Into this routine, arrived the Partition. They heard the news of slaughter and mayhem, of trains stopped and ransacked till all aboard were dead, of whole

populations gone mad, of neighbours turning enemies, of lootings, stabbing, rapes, and of innocent deaths, of cries of "Allah-hu-Akbar", "Har Har Mahadev" and "Sat Sri Akal" to justify killing others. Curfew was imposed and army was called out. The atmosphere of mistrust, fear and hatred prevailed everywhere. "Is this the price of Independence we are paying?" thought Mureed. "Does religion teach all this? Does religion sanction such behaviour? Neighbours and friends for ages have turned enemies overnight. Only Allah could save this world." He and his uncle's family were safe. They did not stir out. At the first sign of trouble, they would go back to their small two-room tenement and barricaded themselves. They heard of many violent deaths, but somehow escaped a similar fate.

When the mad frenzy of Partition had subsided, Mureed received a letter from Khuda Bux, his brother in the Army. He was charged up on the creation of Pakistan and how Pakistani army was a wonderful place to serve in. He boasted of his village having been cleansed of the presence of the Sikhs and the Hindus. It was truly Pakistan with only Muslims there, who had quickly occupied the houses and lands of the Sikhs and the Hindus. In the end, he mentioned how Master Ji (the teacher), who was a Sikh, had tried to broker a peace between Hindus and Muslims, but had to run away to India with a stab wound on his thigh. This upset Mureed to no end. His breath quickened and his heart beat faster. Khuda Bux had further mentioned, that he had heard that Master Ji was at the Kingsway Refugee Camp at Delhi. Master Ji had handed over the keys of his "pucca" (made of baked bricks) house in the village to a Muslim friend, who was moving out of Delhi to Pakistan. The former had told the latter to use it for himself as long as he wished. That is how he knew of Master Ji being at the Kingsway Camp. When the Muslim friend arrived to take possession of the Master Ji's house, he found the locks broken and another occupant in it. Luckily, the temporary occupant knew Master Ji and he abided by his wishes. He vacated the house for the newly arrived person from Delhi. He did not lose very much. In the village, there were plenty of houses. He had occupied three

houses. He still had two more. At the first available opportunity and after telling a tall story to his uncle, Mureed took a bus to Delhi and landed at the Kingsway Camp. There he introduced himself as a pupil of Master Ji for whom he was searching. He managed to trace him.

Under a makeshift tent, with four beds, he found Master Ji reclining on his bed. Master Ji had lost weight, which made his eyes look bigger. He had fractured his leg and walked with a limp. Also he had to support himself with a walking stick. They took a walk outside, so as not to disturb the other occupants. Mureed, of course, guessed correctly, that Master Ji wanted to hide his Muslim identity to avoid any problem. There was no hugging, no clasping of hands, no expression of joy. There was only the silent foreboding quiet between them. They did not know where to begin. Ultimately, it was Master Ji who broken the ice.

Master Ji: "Do you realize the risk you have taken? These are dark times. Anything could happen to you, God forbid, if you should be recognised or be asked to prove your identity."

Mureed: "I heard from my brother Khuda Bux that you may be here. I could not resist myself and came over here to see you, Sir."

Master Ji turned towards Mureed and finally hugged him, and then held him at arm's length to take deeply into his eyes.

Master Ji: "Forgive me, my son, I realize that you, too, have gone through very trying times. My earlier remarks were only because of my concern for your safety."

They adjourned to the makeshift canteen and had a meal. The atmosphere had again become serious and somber. No one spoke. It was during the stroll after

the meal that Mureed could no longer stop the bubbling out of the anguish and pain in his heart.

Mureed: "You changed my name from Moula Bux to Mureed. Well, as a Mureed (follower). I am asking you about this madness which has been let loose. What impels a man to kill a fellow-human? Why so much hatred and strife? Cannot all humans live in peace, irrespective of their religion, language, community, country or ancestry? Surely, God, if there is one, cannot be so cruel. Allah, they say, is all-merciful. Where is He and where is His mercy?"

Master Ji sat silent for a little while, as if absorbed in his own thoughts. Then he showered his genuine loving smile on Mureed.

Master Ji: "I notice that the spirit of enquiry has not died in you. Surely, this spirit will get you the Divine Knowledge. You will then know the Allah who is great and the Allah who is merciful. For this, you need to meet a Murshid (Spiritual Teacher). I can arrange it, and I will. For the time being, be satisfied with what I tell you. God is the all-powerful being, who does all things. The misery and strife, however, is of man's making. Man in his ego and pride creates the hell which you see. Saints, however, rise above all this. No happening, good or bad, affect them. They live like the lotus flower in a dirty pond, ever centered in Allah and the Murshid. I do not expect you to understand this reasoning at this juncture. It will come later when you have met the Murshid. Be contented that the Murshid will show you the right path. The Murshid alone can impart the Divine Knowledge to the seeking devotee. All doubts vanish. The purpose of life becomes clear. The place of the human being in the divine order is revealed. One becomes cool, contented and serene. The running about the questioning and the uncertainty is all dissolved."

Master Ji's words were like a balm to the inner pain Mureed was feeling. He felt light. Involuntarily, he lifted Master Ji's hands and kissed them. Mureed: "Sir, I,

am glad that I come and met you. But when can I see you again, and also when can I meet the Murshid you mention."

Master Ji" Give me your address and I will give you mine. We can correspond. I will also ask Harman to write to you or meet you."

Mureed: "What! Is Harnam here? Where? I would like to meet him."

Master Ji: "All in good time Harnam is now at a village near Ludhiana (Punjab). They are staying with their relations. I will give you his address and also write to him."

They parted after exchanging other pleasantries. Mureed looked forward to hearing from Harnam and even seeing him. As he trudged back to the bus stand, his only worry was the explanation he had to cook up to his uncle for being absent for one whole night and good part of two days. But there was a bit of joy and happiness in him at the prospect of meeting the Murshid. After all, why should Master Ji lie.

FRIENDS COMPARE NOTES

Mureed was contemplating pursuing his Inter with Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics, which he thought were his good subjects. In his preoccupation with admission formalities and studies, he had not got round to writing to Harnam. His uncle had upbraided him for his absence during which he had gone to Delhi to meet Master Ji. He was veering round to the view that his trip to Delhi was childish, unnecessary and bit foolish. It was a monotonous repetitive life he was leading with hardly any motive or goal. So, you can imagine his surprise and shock, when on entering the house he saw Harnam sitting on the Piri (small low stool), trying to fan himself with a newspaper. Mureed did not know how to respect and respond. All he said was, "Harnam! Is it you? Let us go out and talk in the park."

They had gone to the nearby park, which was just an apology of a park, with very few bushes and trees and some odd cement benches. They sat on one such cement bench trying to ignore the heat seeping into their bodies from the hot cement. Here Harnam narrated the story of his arrival.

Harnam: "When I knocked, your cousin sister opened the door. She saw my turban, and immediately banged the door in my face, shouting for her brother. When he arrived, he almost hit me and asked me to go away before I got killed. He just would not listen to me. Then your uncle heard the shouting and came out. When I told him about me being from the same village in Pakistan as yourself, he asked me to sit down and wait. Your cousin kept glaring at me with angry eyes for a long time. At last, he went inside in a huff."

Mureed: "I am very sorry for the rude reception you have had. You know how things have been till recently. I guess that you got my address from Master Ji. Well, what brings you here?"

Harnam: "That is a silly question to ask. I have come here to see you because of our old friendship."

Mureed: "I value your sentiments, but is it possible for us to remain friends in these hostile times, when our communities have shed so much blood amongst themselves."

Harnam was somewhat taken aback at Mureed's words. Then he noticed the concern and anguish in Mureed's eyes. He picked up Mureed's one hand and cupped it in his two huge hands.

Harnam: "I have come to you as a last resort. I am quite unhappy at my home. I was hoping that at least you will understand. I thought you being my age, your understanding of my problems would be better compared to Master Ji. So I did not go to him, but come to see you. Now, you are telling me we cannot be friends!"

Mureed was visibly agitated. The conversation had taken a turn which was unpleasant and unnerving.

Mureed: I am very sorry, Harnam. I did not mean it that way. Tell me your problem, and may be I can help."

Harnam: My father has taken to drinking too much. He lost his brother and father in tragic circumstances during the family's migration to India. He now rants and raves about the Muslim community of the village in particular and all Muslims in general. No amount of reasoning is working on him. My mother is

the only controlling influence on him. He cannot stop hitting me any time he sees me. He always reminds me of the Muslims friends, I have had, and that is sufficient reason for him to start kicking and hitting me. After a very severe beating up, my mother took me aside, thrust some money into my hand, and asked me to run away for a few days. That is how I am here."

Both the friends were quite. All that was required to be said had been articulated. Their emotions had spent themselves. Nothing else remained. After a long silence. Mureed gave out a heavy sigh.

Mureed: "In one sense we are both orphans. My family is in Pakistan. I have no hope of meeting them. You are not very welcome in your family. My position here is quite precarious. Aslam, my cousin, is making life hell for me, because I am a non-earning member. Position is such that I cannot invite you to our home here. It is a Muslim dominated area, and stray violent incidents between communities are quite common."

Once again a heavy silence fell between the friends. They looked at their feet and brooded over their ill-luck. Time passed slowly, till Mureed once more spoke up.

Mureed: Harnam, can you wait here for a little while? I am off to the home to inform my uncle about my going away for some time. Later, both of us will go to Master Ji and seek his advice."

Harnam: "I do not want you to leave your home, and get into trouble over me."

Now it was the turn of Mureed to get angry.

Mureed: "Just now you were casting aspersions on my friendship. Now that I am offering you my help, you are taking this haughty stand. I have made up my mind. Both of us are going to Master Ji to talk about our problems."

And this is how the two friends found themselves heading for Delhi by a bus. The atmosphere becomes jolly and gay. They talked and they laughed, occasionally patting each other's thighs to emphasis on point or the other. Mureed narrated the experience of his previous trip to Delhi to meet Master Ji. Also what Master Ji had said, and his promise of arranging a meeting with the Murshid. Harnam was both astounded and apprehensive. According to his faith, as drilled into him, a mere human cannot be a Murshid. He, however, looked forward to meeting Master Ji, who had shown both of them only love and affection when they were studying together. All their earlier memories came back to them. Both were wondering as to what Master Ji would tell them. They were both reconciled to leaving their families. Would Master Ji ask them to go back? Would he be able to reconcile the almost two opposite faiths and strengthen their friendship? Or, is their temporary escapade heading for rebuke from Master Ji and resumption for their previous humdrum life? These and many such thoughts assailed their minds. The dice, however, had been cast. They were determined to go and see Master Ji and hear what he had to say about the life they should lead in future. There was a mixture of expectation and worry in their hearts. As Delhi approached, they both become quite. The initial euphoria had evaporated.

MEETS WITH ANOTHER FRIEND

When Mureed and Harnam met Master Ji, there was only a joyous welcome awaiting them.

Master Ji: "I was thinking of both of you. You have come at a very opportune time, because I wanted you to meet Ram Prasad."

Here he turned towards a person of their age, waiting there with bowed head, visibly distressed, and obviously unhappy. He looked up momentarily just to register their presence and was again his normal melancholy self with his eyes downcast once more.

Master Ji: "You can see that Ram is very distressed. He has lost both his parents in an air accident. He is lonely confused, sad and forlorn. He needs someone to look after him. He has no elder in the home. He has a younger brother only, about 5-6 years younger than him. I was wondering whether both of you would go to his home, and stay with him for a few days."

The friends looked at each other, then at Master Ji, and managed to nod in assent. That is how the three friends come to stay in a fairly palatial house in Delhi. Ram would not permit them to move out. All the three friends resumed their college education. Mureed took up Science. Ram, of course, was studying in a prestigious Engineering College. During this otherwise busy life, they would meet Master Ji quite often. He was also the occasional visitor to the house. An experienced qualified manager had been hired in consultation with Master Ji to take after the manufacturing and distribution business of automobile components which Ram had inherited from his father. All the three friends would act as the protecting father to Shyam Sunder, Ram's younger brother. This did not prevent

Shyam from playing his pranks on the three friends. One friend would find his one shoe missing. Another would find his cycle tire flat. Once Mureed blackened his teeth while using a 'tooth paste', of course, placed there by Shyam. It did cause a momentary exasperation, but all had a hearty laugh thereafter. The gloom of the sad, untimely death of Ram's parents had been overcome.

Into this happy normal busy routine of the friends, entered the Divine Revelation by Murshid. They had been attending the congregation now and then. During some of these, they had looked at the physical body of the Murshid and once they had a chance to speak to him personally. Then, one very pleasant evening, the three friends had been endowed with the Divine Knowledge ("Gian") by an emissary of the Murshid. They were now back to the home and were discussing this momentous event.

Mureed: "The Revelation completely agrees with the Holy Quran. God is formless. That is why no image is permitted in a mosque. Also, you will not see any photograph of even Prophet Mohammad."

Harnam: Yes, it matches the description of God as per the first stanza of Japji Sahib (Adi Granth). So far, I only used to repeat it. Now the Murshid has shown the entity as described in the Japji."

Ram: "Even though a Hindu puts up an image in a Temple, it is generally accepted, that it helps you to concentrate your thoughts. Beyond that, the image has no purpose. We have to go beyond the image. Then there is the description of God as enunciated by Lord Krishna in the Geeta: He cannot be cut by a weapon, burnt by fire, wetted by water and blown away by wind. The Murshid has shown us such an entity. From a mere description in a book, it has now become a known and realizable reality. We should truly and humbly bow down to such a Murshid, who has shown us the ever-present divine reality. He deserves all the reverence we can show him."

Mureed: "If Allah is what we saw today, then His constant divine presence is an irrefutable fact. If the whole creation is His, then where is the place for hatred, revenge, jealousy and division on the basis of caste, creed, race, gender, age or religion?"

Harnam: "Each and every word and sentence of the Sikh Gurus, have now become true, and appeal to my heart. From being mere words, they are my very life now."

Ram: "what I liked most is the concept of living this life as a householder and performing all duties towards the family, the society and the country in an enlightened manner. The Murshid did not ask us to renounce the worldly things. He only asked us to renounce our attachment to them. Never before has the concept of "Karam Yoga" (practice of selfless action) been so clear to me."

The friends kept on talking throughout the dinner and later even after dinner. Shyam was one bored person; he begged to be excused and retired. The friends gave him an affectionate pat on his head or shoulder or the back and continued with their animated discussion.

Mureed: "Even though I cannot see any flaw or shortcoming, my apprehension is in being able to live up to and abide by the pledges given to the Murshid. They seemed so simple and logical at that time. I have my own doubts now about fulfilling them.

Harnam: "I used to wonder at the supreme love and affection expressed in the Sikh scriptures for the Guru. Now it is getting somewhat clear to me. The reverence and the love come out of the devotee's realization of Truth or God or Nirankar (Formless God) through the Guru. The same Truth has been propagated and revealed by the Sikh Gurus and other divine beings to the

seeking devotees. The whole plethora and edifice of the Sikh scriptures now stands revealed."

Ram: "At this stage it all looks unbelievable. Is it so simple and easy? Hindus, generally, believe in long penance, hours of meditation, years of struggle and rebirth after rebirth, before one can attain the Divine Knowledge. And, here is the Murshid, reverently called Baba Ji, *showing* Nirankar or God Formless in one short sitting."

The cycle of appreciation and doubt continued in their discussions. Then one after the other, the long day had its effect, and they started yawning and stretching.

They finally retired for the night. It looks a long time for their minds to calm down and rest. The day's events kept intruding, particularly the words of Baba Ji's emissary, who blessed them with the Divine Knowledge. They were trying to reconcile and rationalize the emissary's words with their lives, their existing beliefs, their separate religions and the future life they intended to lead.

The following day was bright and sunny. The long drawn out discussion was forgotten. The necessities of the life and routine intruded their consciousness. All of them got dressed had breakfast and rushed off to their respective colleges. Somehow their steps were a bit lively, a more serene; calm pervaded their minds, and they were already repeating the "words" suggested by the emissary for remembering the Allah, Waheguru and Brahman. They felt His presence all-around them and rejoiced in it.

FRIENDS AS CONTENTED DEVOTEES

The scene now shifts to Austria, where the Murshid or Baba Ji has gone for a visit. A special congregation is being held. Accompanying the Murshid are also Ram and his wife, Mureed and Harnam. But we are getting ahead of the story. Let us see how this came about.

After finishing their education, the three friends had opened a computer hardware and software company. Ram was the Managing Director. Mureed and Harnam were and contended to be called as partners. Ram looked after their computer hardware business in India and abroad. Mureed preferred to stay in India and manage the computer software operation from here because of good software engineers being available in India. Harnam had taken over the financial, legal and administrative operations of the company. He was also the Company Secretary. Each of them complemented the others' working. As a team, they were perfect and there was never a misunderstanding among them. That does not mean that they did not have different ideas on business matters. These they thrashed out during their strategy sessions. It was during such a strategy session at their Amsterdam branch that Ram had met Jennie, now his wife. They had needed a part-time secretary for their session. Jennie had obliged. One thing led to another and Ram and Jennie were united in a wedlock after seeking Murshid's blessings. Shyam, Ram's younger brother, was an object of affection and love for Jennie, who did not have a brother in the family. This was Shyam got one more person who called be the but of his practical pranks. He was forever leaving funny notes on her mirror using her mirror using her lipstick. The three friends always had a good laugh at her shouted exasperation at Shyam.

Mureed had undergone a tough period due to the divorce of his sister, Meher-un-Nissa. A divorcee in Asia in an object of ridicule. She was a confused person. She could not understand, why her husband had divorced her in preference to another girl. She even contemplated taking her life. Mureed had gone to Pakistan to meet her. There he managed to convince the concerned authorities that he was the only real guardian now alive. Very reluctantly he had been permitted to bring her to India. The moment she saw Harnam, she clung to him and cried and cried. They had last seen each other in the Pakistani village. She recognized in him a loving genuine human being. Harnam saw in her a person pure and simple at heart, who had become a victim of circumstances. He took upon himself the duty of cheering her up. Later, he expressed his desire to marry her. Mureed was shocked to hear it. Meher-un-Nissa, too, opposed it on the ground that she did not want her misery to be passed on to others. It was Jeenie who convinced everyone about the good match. Harnam and Meher-un-Nissa were Joined in wedlock by the Murshid. She very efficiently took over the running of the Delhi house. Mureed was a much relieved and happy man.

It was under these circumstances that the three friends had assembled in Austria for the special congregation. Each of them was asked to speak.

Mureed: "God is formless, eternal and everlasting. One, who has realized God, cannot quarrel over cast, creed, religion, race, nationality or colour. All are His creatures. All the world's prophets gave the same message. However, humans in their folly have forgotten this essential truth. They have created hatred where only love should prevail. Those, who know this elementary truth, will be saved forever. This Divine Knowledge can be had only from a true Murshid.

"Do not consider the Murshid to be a mere human. His divine element is the same as Nirankar (Formless God). In that sense, he is himself the creator of all things. In him vests all the power of Nirankar. He can save you from the cycle of birth and death. He is all-powerful and all-merciful. Realisation of the One is

the only pursuit worth following in this life. All other activities cannot fetch you the bliss which each of us cherishes. The Murshid's message is simple: "Know the One and be one."

Ram: "The Brahman of the Hindus, the Allah of the Muslims, the God of the Christians and the Waheguru of the Sikhs is the same – one and the only truth. He is realizable and attainable. The unity (oneness of God) then stands explained. Shed your ego and come to the feet of the Murshid, who alone can bestow this vision. All duality is then lost. The whole creation becomes yours. Only then will you understand your own position vis-à-vis the Creator. You will then be calm, happy, contented, serene, loving, truthful and humble."

Harnam: "At first I was confused as to the identity of a Murshid or Guru? Could a mere human being be a Guru? Now having realized the Ultimate Reality from him, I can say that the Guru is God himself. God himself assumes the form of a human to pass on His message of unity and love. The visible body is not the Guru. It is the Divine Knowledge within the body which is the Guru. After all, what better form the Divine Power can assume for conveying its message than that of a human being. This is what has happened throughout the ages. Lord Jesus Christ came and preached on this fair earth. Prophet Mohammad, Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, All were humans in form: We also have the ten Sikh Gurus. It was the divine entity speaking through them.

"Now the Murshid or Baba Ji is carrying on this noble task. Those, who come to him and regard him as human, get only help and succour at the human level, for example, good advice and good cheer. But those, who regard him as Divine, are *connected* to the Divine. Such devotees then partake of the divine boons such as love, affection, humility, harmony, serenity, calmness, equipoise, good health, freedom from anger, lust, greed and attachment.

"Firstly, one has to attain the Divine Knowledge. Then one has to practice it in one's life. Only then the true benefit of the Divine Knowledge will accrue to him. Such a person cannot express his inner feelings in words. It is akin to eating jaggery by a dumb person who cannot express his joy. Our human speech has got similar imitation. It is unable to express the true joy and bliss of acquiring the Divine Knowledge and living up to it."

Many other person also spoke, but all eyes were focused on these three friends. An inner joy was shining on their faces. Their hearts were at peace. The Lord's Name was on their lips and they were a contented happy lot.

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