

The Metaphysics of *Naam*

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Japu to eko nama: contemplate thou only the Name. This expression is found in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, *Rag Suhi Mahala I*, P-728. The meaning of the technical terms "*Japu*" and "*Nama*", expressed in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, is as follows:1

"*Japu*" means prayer, meditation, "*Nama*" means the Name; the spirit within; figuratively the Name also means *Amrita* or nectar of immortality.

In Punjabi verse, *Rag Suhi Mahala I* is as follows:

Bhanda dhoi baisi dhup devahu tou dudhai kou javu

Dhudh karam phuni surati samain(u) hoi nirash jamavahu. (1)

Japu to eko nama. avari niraphal kama (rahao)

Eh manu iti hath karahu phuni netreo nind na avai

Rasna nam japu tab mathiai in bidhi amrit pavahu (2)

Manu sampat jit satsari navan bhavan pati tripat kare

Puja pran sevak je seve in bidhi sahib ravat rahai (3)

Kehnde kahai kahe kahi javahi tum sari avaru na koi

Bhagat-hin Nanak jan janpai hou salahi sacha soi.(4)

(SGGS, P. 728)

The above hymn translates as follows: **One washes the vessel and disinfects it with incense before one pours milk in it. Yea, the milk is of the deeds; our conscious mind the ferment, and the milk is curdled through disinterestedness (in the result).1 Dwell thou on the One Name (of the Lord): For, all other works are fruitless and vain, (1-pause) Let this mind be the holding-ends of the cord, and the churning-stick be of being ever-watchful.**

Essence: And let the churning be the uttering of the Lord's Name with the tongue; thus wilt thou gather the butter, yea, the Nectar of the Lord. (2) Let thy mind be the abode (of God), washed in the pool of Truth, make leaf - offering of devotion to please (thy God); and dedicate to him even thy life; thus wilt thou enjoy thy union with thy Lord.(3)

Many but say Thy praise, O Lord, and many more will say and leave off, but there is no one to equal Thee.

Nanak, bereft of devotion, fervently prays before thee: "O God, I praise only Thee, the True One alone."(4-1)³

In Sikhism, the worship is done by praising God through the praise of His attributes (*kirtan*) along with the lovable remembrance of God's name, known as "*Nam-simran*", i.e. the recitation of the name of God all the times in the focussed mind, individually or in congregation. A particular way is suggested by the spiritual teacher, or Guru, for *nam-simran*. The spiritual teacher governs the human mind according to its spiritual capacities. Those who remember God's name and are devoid of ego, never have any fear of death. In Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p 72, *Sri Rag Mahala I*, we have:

Sat sangat kaisi janie

Jithe eko namu vakhania

eko namu hukam hai, Nanak

Satguru dia bujhai jio. (5) (SGSS: P.72)

The English translation approximates as follows:

Sadh-Sangat: Of what nature is the society of saints? It is that where they truly utter the Name of the one Lord. For the Lord's will is in the (Lord's) Name and, through the True Guru, one realises it all. (5)

Nectar-sweet is the Lord's Word,

Filling the devotee's hearts,

If we cherish in ourselves the peace-giving service (of the Lord),

He blesses us with His grace and save us. (12)

True is the meeting with the True Guru,

If through him, one recites the Name (of the Lord).

Without the True Guru, no one has found thee,

O Lord; all are tired of the (way of) works. (13)⁴

Non-Dualism: The essential element of metaphysical doctrines of Guru Nanak is its uncompromising monotheism. The ultimate reality is the One Absolute, the transcendent, the

ineffable, the unborn, eternal, self-existent. He is the infinite being who can never be defined in human words, who has existed from all eternity, by whose perfect power and mercy all this universe has been called into being by a simple act of His Will. He is One - creator, preserver, and destroyer. The burden of Guru Nanak's song is:

"Thou alone art, the one true Lord, truth is thy law and rule" (Asa -di-Var, 8:2)

A true conception of the oneness of God is acquired if He is realized to be one within and without.

"Everyone says God is one,

Through intellectual reflection and pride

He alone understands the oneness of His presence

who realizes the One God, within and without". (Omkar 5)

Only Reality: Strictly speaking, God alone exists: *Akaal Purakh* is the only Reality. In *Japji*, we get the last line of the *Pauri* nos.28, 29, 30, 31 as: "*Jug Jug eko wes*" i.e. "He is One and same, in all times, of course".⁵ In *Pauri* 32 of *Japji*, we have:

Ik - doo jibhoo lakh hoe

Lakh howe lakh - vees

Lakh lakh gera akhiye,

*Ik nam jagdish*⁶

In substance this means: If one tongue turns into thousands of tongues, and each multiplied by twenty times, and each tongue may repeat a million times, the name of one God time and again, even so there is no end. Yet let us remember Him.

Gurbani says a Guru-drenched person (*gurmukh*) can realise God's grace; yet the *gurmukh* knows that all depends on divine will and there is no other way out. "*Karan kaaran sabhna ka eko, avar(u) na dooja koe*", i.e., He is the entire creation and none else is the cause of causation. (SGGS, P 666)

Guru Tegh Bahadurji, the Ninth Guru, reminds us to concentrate on one God, whose attributes are enshrined in all holy books, including the Vedas and Puranas:

"bed puran jaas gun gaavat

ta ko naam(u) heeaaai mo dhar(u) re" (SGGS, P 220)

Revelation: *Gurbani* is the revelation, the commutative wealth of that truth, it is a love, devotion of Him. *Gurbani* leads humanity to salvation. Guru Nanak says that in order to be reunited with reality one must contemplate upon one formless God who is all the all - pervading spirit, and advises us to dwell on *Naam simran*: *Prani eko naam(u) dhiavoh(u), apnee pat(e) seytee ghar(e) javoh(u)*", i.e. acknowledge only one God, and do not recognise the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. (SGGS, P 1254)

Guru Angad Dev ji, , the second Guru, lovingly urges us: "*Jini naam dhiaia gae musakat ghal/Nanak te mukh ujle hor keti chhuti nal*" (Var Majh Shlok).

Guru Amar Dasji, the third Guru, upbraids those who meditate on false gods and applauds those who concentrate on the attributes of one eternal formless God:

"har(e)-har(e) naam(u) dhiae(e) man har(e) dargah paveh(e) maan(u)"

(SGGS, P 1418-19)

Guru Ram Dasji, the fourth Guru, defines the object of meditation in the following verse:

jap(e) man nirbhau(u)

sat(e) sat(e) sada sat(e) nirvair(u) akaal murat(e) aajoonee sambhau(u)

i.e., O, my mind! contemplate on one who is fearless, who is timeless being, beyond limits, above want, and self-existent:

so purakh(u) niranjan(u) har(e) purkh(u) niranjan(u) har(e) agama agam apara

sabh(e) dhiavah(e) sabh(e) dhiavah(e) tudh(u) har(e) sache sirjanhara

(SGGS, P 10)

i.e., Thou, the person purest of the pure, infinite, true creator on whom all meditate.

Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru and compiler of Guru Granth Sahib, reiterates the same truth to the Sikhs:

"sat(e) purakh akal murat(e), ridai dharoh dhian". In *Bachitter Natak*, Guru Gobind Singhji, the tenth Guru, lays down a clear code of conduct for his followers emphasising "*Naam-simran*". He says:

na dhian ann ko dharo, na naam an uchro.

param dhian dhario anant paap tariao.

i.e. adhere to one supreme being, reject all other entities.

The importance of utilizing every available time in the remembrance of God in our daily lives is beautifully illustrated in the following lines from *Raag Asa*:

Kab ko bhaalaai ghunghroo taala kab ko bajavaai rabab(u)

aavat jaat baar khin(u) laagaai hao(u) tab lag(u) samarao(u) naam(u).

(SGGS: 368)

i.e., How long must one search for bells and cymbals, and how long must one play the guitar? In the brief instant between coming and going, I meditate on the *Naam*, the name of the Lord. How long must one tune the five strings, and assemble the seven singers, and how long will they raise their voices in song? In the time it takes to select and assemble these musicians, precious moments elapsed, and my mind sings the glorious praises of the Lord.

Any time, that the saints forget to remember God, for them it is like dying:

Gun gaava nit-nit sad har(e) key

man(u) jeevaai naam(u) sun(e) tera

Nanak jit(u) vela visraai mera suamee tit(u) Velaai mar(e) jaae(e) jeeo(u) mera

(SGGS: 562)

Each and every day, forever, I sing the Lord's praises. My mind lives by hearing your name. O Nanak, that moment when I forget my Lord and Master - at that moment, my soul dies.

Following are some of the most sought-after and key benefits of doing *Naam-Jaap*:

***Naam* as dispeller of the fear of death:**

Prabh kai simran(e) naahee jam trasaa

Prabh kai simran(e) pooran aasa

(SGGS: 263)

In the remembrance of God, there is no fear of death. In the remembrance of God, hopes are fulfilled.

***Naam* as *Aukhad-Panacea* for all diseases, woes and sufferings:**

Anik upavee rog(u) n(a) jaae(e)

Rog(u) mitaai har(e) avkhadh(u) laae(e)

(SGGS: 288)

All sorts of remedies may fail to cure the sickness, which is cured only by giving the medicine of the Lord's name.

Naam as Parjat (The tree) - Kamdhenu - fulfiller of all wishes:

Paarjaat(u) eh(u) har(e) ko naam

Kaamdhen har(e) har(e) gun gaam.

(SGGS: 265)

This Elysian Tree of miraculous powers is the name of the Lord, the wish-cow of miraculous powers, is the singing of the glory of the Lord's Name.

Naam as Sin Erasure:

Anik bisthaar ek te bhae

ek(u) aradh(e) praachat gae.

(SGGS: 289)

The many expanses of the Cosmos have all come from the One. Adoring the One, past sins are removed.

Naam as giver of occult powers or Ridhi Sidhi:

Prabh kai simran(e) ridh(e) sidh(e) nao(u) nidh(e)

Prabh kai simran(e) giaan(u) dhiaan(u) tat(u) budh(e) (SGGS: 262)

In the remembrance of God are wealth, miraculous spiritual powers and the nine treasures. In the remembrance of God are knowledge, meditation and the essence of wisdom.

Eh(u) dhan(u) sanchoh(u) hovoh(u) bhagvant. (SGGS: 288)

Grasp firmly the theme of the Lord's name. Gather this wealth and fortune. Pure are the instructions of the humble saints. Remembering God is like thanking Him for His many bounties, especially for the gift of life. as per our Guru's advice, we are expected to do so if we have to reap the benefits which accrue from such a practice:

Jap(e) jann sadaa sadaa din(u) rainee.

Sabh te ooch nirmal eh karnee.

(SGGS: 283)

Meditate on Him for ever and ever, day and night. This way of life is exalted and ennobled.

The desirability of the repetitious nature of *Naam-Jaap* is given by Guru Nanak Dev ji, in *Japji Sahib, Pauri 32* and by Guru Arjun Dev ji in his *Bani - Sukhmani Sahib*.

Ik doo jeebhao lakh hoe(e) lakh hovah(e) lakh vees

Lakh(u) lakh(u) gerha aakheeah(e) ek(u) naam(u) jagdees

Et(u) raah(e) pat(e) pavreea chareeai hoe(e) ikees (SGGS: 7)

If I had 100,000 tongues, and these were then multiplied twenty times more, with each tongue I would repeat, hundreds of thousands of times, the name of the one Lord of the Universe. Along this path to our Master Lord, we climb the steps of the ladder, and come to merge with him.

It is not to be confused with the *Naam Jaap* as a quantitative and qualitative equivalent of the other forms of *Jap-Tap* and rituals, as in the following quote:

Anik punahcharan kart nahee taraai

Har(e) ko naam(u) kot(e) paap parharaai

(SGGS: 264)

By performing countless religious rituals, you shall not be saved. The Name of the Lord washes off millions of sins.

Giaan dhiaan sagley sabh(e) jap tap jis(u) har(e) hirdaai Alakh abhevaa.

(SGGS: 356)

All wisdom and meditation, all chanting and penance come to one whose heart is filled with the invisible inscrutable Lord.

If we are able to do the *Naam-Jaap* initially, we will be doing it as habit, knowing the numerous benefits (or rewards) accruing from this practice, until such time that we get used to it and, perhaps, start getting the blissful and uplifting feeling - the ultimate goal.

Grace: Every chapter of the Guru Granth Sahib begins with the invocation "*Ek Onkar Satguru prasad*", which translates as "There is only one God. Only the grace of true Guru can guide us to Him". Guru Nanak took some aspects of God from the Vedas, such as the concept that God was *nirguna* (without quality) and in *sunya samadhi* (a state of profound meditation) before creation. After creation, however, He became the repository of all qualities (*saguna*). Likewise, the symbolic representation of God as the mystic syllable or sound *Om*, in saying "*Ik Aumkar*" (there is one God.)

The various *Janamsakhi* traditions record that Guru Nanak summed up the fundamental Sikh tenets for his followers in three simple precepts:

"*Kirat karo, wand chhako and nam japo*", meaning thereby: "work and earn thy livelihood by honest means; share the fruits of thy labour with others; and practice the discipline of *naam*. (i.e. remembering God.)

Sikhism propounds an objective idealism of spiritualism with the characteristics of dynamism, non-dualism and social involvement. Man as a microcosm is constituted of spiritual energy (*sakti*) and consciousness (*siva*): *Siva sakti dehi mahi pai*. Sikhism gives priority to the spirit over the matter. Thus it is spiritualism.⁸

Robe of Honour: According to the *Janamsakhi*, Nanak was summoned by God (River Bein experience at the age of twenty-nine), and charged with his mission in the following words: "Let your life be one of praise of the "word" [*nam*], charity [*dan*], ablution [*ishnan*], service [*seva*], and prayer [*simran*].

Fortunately, it is not necessary to rely on the *Janamsakhi* account of this episode, though these may well contain a strong kernel of truth. One of the Guru's own hymns is probably intensely autobiographical.

"I was a minstrel out of work, the Lord gave me employment. The mighty one instructed me, "night and day sing my praise," The Lord summoned the minstrel to his high court. On me He bestowed the 'robe' of honouring him and singing his praise.

"On me he bestowed the nectar in a cup, the nectar of his true and holy Name. Those who, at the bidding of the divine Guru, feast and take their fill of the Lord's holiness, attain peace and joy. Your minstrel spreads your glory by singing Your word. Nanak, through adorning the truth, we attain to the all-highest." (SGGS: p. 15)

Redemption: Nanak believed that, by repetition of the *naam*, one can conquer the greatest of all evils: the ego, or *haumai* ("I am"). So great is the power of the ego, said Nanak, that those who conquer it attain salvation while still alive; they become *Jivanmuktas*. According to Nanak, the ego carries within itself the seed of salvation, which can be fully nurtured by the repetition of the *naam*. Once the power of the ego is properly channeled, the conquest of the other five sins - lust, anger, greed, attachment, and pride - follows as a matter of course. The wanderings of the restless mind stops, and it attains a state of divine bliss (*vismad*). So, *Naam japo* ("worship the name of the Lord") was Nanak's constant exhortation.

According to Sikhism, the knowledge of the way to Truth, even "*Naam-simran*" (remembrance of God's name or recitation of God's name), without the direction of the true Guru is useless and illusory. Unless human consciousness in its pure sentiments contemplates on the true *naam* of God with the help of Guru's direction, no way is open for self-realization.

God-realization, i.e. self-realization, or whatever word we may use for the ultimate destination of the human soul but faith in the one and concentrated streamlined love-worship of the one is the

only way to that one. *Naam-simran*, with the concentrated single-mindedness is the way established by the Gurus for worship in Sikhism. Recitation of God's name holds the key to realization. The remembrance of God alone while withdrawing from all the altercations of the world and concentrating upon the one absolute alone leads to the final destination, and none else. *Sadh-sangat* is a significant part of the Sikh way of religious life. This is the place where faith in the One is discussed, *simran* of the One is performed, and praise of the One is pronounced in a collective and co-ordinate way. Faith in God, and praise only of God and remembrance of God alone while submitting the whole of individual independent consciousness to His will, with the help of true Guru is the way to attain oneness with that greatest One.

The *Sadh-sangat*, or the holy congregation, is the gathering of the like-minded God-oriented people where only One is praised, only One is remembered and only One is discussed in the presence of the Guru. The Guru asks, "what qualities has the holy company? Then he himself replies: such it is where in the sole name of the Lord is expounded, by the sole name of the Divine is known the ordinance (*hukam*) of which the preceptor has granted the realization.

Merger: When the separateness of soul, the individual ego, "*haumai*", i.e. "I-am-ness" is shunted out with the divine knowledge and further erased with the concentrated love - worship, then slowly and gradually, it comes to the knowledge of the realized soul that there is no essential difference between the individual and the universal soul. As the individual soul comes near its destination, i.e. the supreme reality, the divine qualities automatically start flowing into the individual consciousness.

Ultimately, at its final realized state the individual self merges into the being of God and itself becomes God, as a drop becomes ocean when it mingles with the ocean. **This in fact is the re-absorption of the human essence into the real source essence and the ultimate ground of its being. This state is the final goal, destination and complete perfection of the human existence.** It is said in *Gurbani*, "As into the sun is the ray absorbed, water in water, light into light is merged, and is perfection attained. It is said; "*suraj kiran(e) milé jal ka jal(u) hua raam jotee jot(e) ralee sampooran thia raam.* (*Bilaval Mahala*, SGGS: P 5)

As realized person reaches the final destination the attributes of God simultaneously manifest in him, he becomes the *jivan-mukta*; the liberated while living. Guru Arjun Devji refers to the realized person, as *sadhu*, *sant*, and *brahmagyani* and even calls him God. He says, "The knower of God is God Himself. There is no difference between the sadhu and God. We have:

"*Sadh ki sobha sadh ban(e) aae.*

Nanak sadh prabh bhed(u) n(a) bhaee"

(*Gauri Sukhmani Mahala.*, SGGS: P 272)



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