

Naam-Simran: A Discourse

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"*Naam Simran Bhakti*" in Sikhism by Gurbax Singh. Published by Hemkunt Press. A-78 Naraina Indl. Area-I. New Delhi. 110028.

ANY discussion on "*Naam-Simran*", is a theoretical exercise to explore that which cannot be expressed through words, and which needs to be experienced through undergoing a practical endeavor. However, a discussion through the teachings of *Gurbani*, which guides a man to be practical, can be useful learning process.

First, let us know the meaning of *Naam Simran*. It is a pregnant word made up of "*Naam*" and the term "*Simran*". *Naam* is God's name and *Simran* means remembering. It is not a subject of learning anew, but it is remembering what is forgotten. Learning is necessary when a subject is to be learnt from the beginning, but remembering is when a person forgets what he knows, but has somehow forgotten. So there can be any name of God and He is to be remembered constantly through word, thought and deed. Although the word "*Waheguru*" is the most appropriate word according to *Gurbani*, the purpose behind this is to select a word comfortable to mind for a perpetual remembrance of God.

There are a good number of books on the subject; and perhaps most of the authors have said that their purpose of venturing to write on such a subject will go in vain if the reader does not translate this theory into practice. One writer is Sr. Gurbax Singh whose publication* has come through the Sikh Welfare Foundation of North America, and I had the opportunity of writing a review (*The Sikh Review*, February 1999) The book is "*Naam_Simran and Bhakti in Sikhism*". He writes that he will be happy if at least one person comes up to that standard of *Naam_Simran*, which his book aims at.

Devotion:

According to the author, *Naam_Simran* is at the center of Guru Nanak's teachings. He says the whole message of Guru Nanak, as contained in the Guru Granth Sahib, revolves around *Naam*, as a top revolves around its axis. The first chapter of the book is devoted to differentiate between the meanings of *Naam Simran* and *Bhakti*. *Simran*, he says, is the beginning, *Bhakti* is the end; *Simran* is the seed, *Bhakti* is the fruit. Further, he elaborates elsewhere, *Naam* is the seed. This seed, when sown in the soil of mind, must sprout in the form of the love of God, to fructify. This does not happen overnight, unless of course *Naam Simran* spans more than a lifetime. According to him, in Satyug, the human mind was basically pure, and there was little vice. In the course of time, as the vice gradually increased, and consequently the purity of human mind declined, *Satyug* first gave way to *Tretayug* and later on to *Duapuryug*. In *Kalyug*, vice predominates, and as a result the human mind has lost much of its luster. Since *Naam* is the only detergent that can cleanse the mind, it alone has the capability to change the *Yug*. It functions at all levels, from micro to macro. If, by any chance, the entire human race takes to *Naam Simran*, *Kalyug* can

change to *Satyug* overnight. But if an individual starts meditating on *Naam*, he can live in *Satyug* while surrounded on all sides by *Kalyug*. The author argues that "There are two ways to live a human life - by treading the path of *Bhakti* (Devotion to God) and by following the path of *Maya* (worldly attachments). Devotion to God and worldly attachments are two distinct paths. The Path of *Bhakti* leads to a rewarding life, peace, happiness, bliss and union with God. The path of *Maya* ends up in pain and suffering. The choice is clear.

Obedienc:

Naam Simran is an inseparable part of a Sikh's life. In fact, *Sikhi* is synonymous with *Naam Simran*. In other words, *Sikhi* is where *Naam* is: (*look at this *Shabad* of Guru Ram Das ji)

ਗੁਰਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਜੋ ਸਿਖ ਅਖਾਏ

ਸੋ ਭਲਕੇ ਓਠਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥

ਉਦਮੁ ਕਰੇ ਭਲਕੇ ਪਰਭਾਤੀ ॥

ਇਸ਼ਨਾਨ ਕਰੇ ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸਚਿ ਨਾਵੈ ॥

ਉਪਦੇਸਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਪੁ ਜਾਪੈ

ਸਭਿ ਕਿਲਵਿਖ ਪਾਪ ਦੋਖ ਲਹਿ ਜਾਵੈ ॥

ਫਿਰ ਚੜੈ ਦਿਵਸੁ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਗਾਵੈ

ਬਹਦਿਆ ਉਠਦਿਆ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥

ਜੋ ਸਾਸਿ ਗਿਰਾਸ ਧਿਆਏ ਮੇਰਾ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ

ਸੋ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਨਿ ਭਾਵੈ ॥

ਜਿਸ ਨੇ ਦਇਆਲ ਹੋਵੈ ਮੇਰਾ ਸੁਆਮੀ

ਤਿਸੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਗੁਰੂ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਸੁਣਾਵੈ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਧੂੜ ਮਾਗੈ ਤਿਸ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਕੀ

ਜੋ ਆਪੁ ਜਪੈ ਅਵਰੈ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਾਵੈ ॥੩੦੫-੬॥

How much emphasis is laid in this *shabad* to emphasize that without *Naam Simran* a sikh cannot be called a sikh. So, *Sikhi* is synonymous with *Naam Simran*.

In Naam_Simran, both the tongue and the mind need to be engaged and involved completely. Here is something of what the *Gurbani* says about the role of the tongue:

ਸਾ ਰਸਨਾ ਧਨੁ ਧਨੁ ਹੈ ਮੇਰੀ ਜਿੰਦੜੀਏ

ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵੈ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੇਰੇ ਰਾਮ ॥ ॥੫੪੦॥

Again,

ਇਕਦੂ ਜਿਭੋ ਲਖ ਹੋਵੈ ਲਖ ਹੋਵੈ ਲਖ ਵੀਸ

ਲਖ ਲਖ ਗੇੜਾ ਆਖਿਏ ਏਕ ਨਾਮ ਜਗਦੀਸ!

The technique of *Naam Simran* has two components; (i) *Simran*, or continuous recitation of the *Gurmantra* (Wahe-Guru) by the tongue and (ii) *Dhyan*, or simultaneously fixing the mind on the Lotus feet of the Lord (Guru). In the matters of *Dhyan* (Meditation), God and Guru are interchangeable.

Yet at another place in the book, the author has given a nice modern equation as regards, *Bhakti*. His equation: *Bhakti* = Meditation on Naam + Love of God.

Or,

Bhakti = Naam Simran + dhyan + Love of God.

Therefore, Meditation on *Naam*, is equated as *Naam_Simran*, plus *dhyan*.

So, *Naam Simran* by tongue and the *dhyan* by mind, are both essential components of *Bhakti* (love of God), according to *Gurbani*.

On the technique of *Naam_Simran* it is further elaborated: ‘In the beginning *Simran* is done at the normal speed level of sound, but by and by the sound goes on diminishing till it dies down completely, while the tongue still doing the *simran*, even without moving. The speed of *Naam Simran* should be according to one’s concentration. In the final stage it is the mind which, by the grace of Guru, becomes the recipient of Naam, from where it percolates to every fibre of one’s being:

ਰੋਮਿ ਰੋਮਿ ਰਵਿਆ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮ ॥

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪੂਰੈ ਕੀਨੋ ਦਾਨੁ ॥ ॥੧੧੪੪॥

Two questions arise:

God has many names, and all are equally sacred, which name of God should we use in our *simran*? How to involve the mind in our meditation? *Gurbani*’s answer is:

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰ ਮੰਤ੍ਰ ਚਿਤਾਰਿ ॥

ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਸਾਚੈ ਦਰਬਾਰਿ ॥ ੧੮੬॥

Again,

ਅੰਧਕਾਰ ਮਹਿ ਗੁਰ ਮੰਤ੍ਰ ਉਜਾਰਾ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਗਲ ਨਿਸਤਾਰਾ ॥ ੧੮੬੪॥

Bhai Gurdas has done a sterling service by revealing the secret Guru's word for the followers of Guru Nanak,

vwiHgurU gurU mMq@ hY jp haumY KoeI] vwr 13-2

So, "Waheguru", is the most suitable Name of God, for the purpose of *Naam Simran*.

As to the second question, the involvement of the mind in meditation is to be through "*Dhyan*". But *dhyan* of what? The Guru provides the guidance:

ਖੋਜਤ ਖੋਜਤ ਲਾਲ ਇਕ ਪਾਇਆ

ਹਰਿ ਕੀਮਤ ਕਹਣੁ ਨਾ ਜਾਈ ਸੰਤਹੁ ॥

ਚਰਨ ਕਮਲ ਸਿਉ ਲਾਗੇ ਥਿਆਨਾ

ਸਾਚੈ ਦਰਸਿ ਸਮਾਈ ਸੰਤਹੁ ॥ ੧੮੬੬॥

Again to emphasize on "*Dhyan*", Gurbani says:

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੇ ਚਰਨ ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਧਿਆਨ ॥

ਸਗਲ ਤੀਰਥ ਮਜਨ ਇਸਨਾਨ ॥ ੧੮੬੬॥

Further,

ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਧਿਆਨੁ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਮੰਤ੍ਰ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਨ ॥ ੧੮੬੪॥

Concentration: In *Naam Simran*, therefore, "*Dhyan*" is more important than even the verbal recitation of the tongue. But, without the regular *abhyas* the component of "*Dhyan*", cannot be achieved simply because the mind is all the more powerful and will, by itself, never like to be steady even for a moment, and it is a distraction in the process of *Naam Simran*. That is why in

the "*Japji-sahib*" Guru Nanak has said "*mann jeetai jagg jeet*". Even the Yogis, who are involved in the process of Meditation for years together, are unable to control the wandering of the mind.

According to Patanjali's Eight-steps of Yoga, the "*Dhyan*" is practised in the last three stages, which covers many years of practice, "*Dharan*", "*Dhyan*" and "*Samadhi*". Since the mind cannot be harnessed easily, the attempt is made to slowly tame it through the three stages, first concentration, i.e. "*Dharn*", where a Yogi first looks at a spot with focussing attention continuously for hours together for the purpose of eliminating the distracting thoughts, which interfere during the period of "Meditation". The second stage is contemplation, i.e., the actual sphere of "*Dhyan*", where the focussed attention is perfected, and then this practice finally culminates in the third stage of deep contemplation i.e., "*Samadhi*" - the two-in-one-state. It is a tedious process, which consumes almost the lifetime of a person, in order to stop the wandering of his mind during "Meditation".

About this wandering of the mind, there is an appropriate discussion in the "*Siddha Goshth*", between Guru Nanak and the Siddhas. Guru Nanak was asked, by the Siddha:

"Ehu mann maigal kahan basieley,

kahan basai ehu pawana

kahan basai so shabad audhoo,

taka chukai mann ka bhavana"

i.e. "Where dwells this mad elephant of mind and where should dwell the life force(*Praan*), so that the wandering of the mind may cease."

The "*mann ka bhavna*" is the greatest impediment in the process of "Meditation", let it be *Naam Simran* or even the *Kirtan* sung sitting at the holy feet of the "Guru".

Ehu mann maigal kahan basieley,

kahan basai ehu pawana kahan basai so shabad audhoo,

taka chukai mann ka bhavana

To this Guru's reply was:

"Aape aap khai ta nirmal hovai, dhavat varaj rahai"

i.e. "That is, by annulling egoism is the mind purified, and its wandering stilled.

Guru Nanak also holds that mind reside in a poised heart, that is the state of "*Sahaj*" and the cushion seat of the vital breath of the paravel is in the navel (*Nabhi*". Guru Nanak adds:

"Ehu mann nehchal hirde basieley,

Gurmukh Mool pachhan rahe.

Nabhi Paven ghar aasan vase

Gurmukh khojat taat lahe".

Equipoise:

In spite of the fact that Guru Nanak disarmed the Yogies in the discussion, yet he all the time maintained that the mind needs to be purified, and by the grace of Guru, made to stop its wandering. During *Naam Simran*, it is not only that the state of equipoise is very essential, but also a state of perpetual link with God is necessary. Because it is not that here we talk about God, but we must realize that we are talking to God. So there is no leniency to the game of the mind in Sikhism. Even if we are the householders and not the Yogis. So in our *Naam Simran* we do need to control the mind even better than the Yogis. Because the Yogis have no other work to do except Meditation, but a Gharasthi has to fight the *Maya* at every step of life. In my experience, there are certain important requisites for Naam_Simran: viz. solitude; good health and holy company.

Solitude:

Just as we have said that the 'elephant' of mind has to be stilled during the process of *Naam Simran*, let us see how the mind is disturbed. All the time the unwanted thoughts hover around our mind. If we analyze we can see that these thoughts are either of our past memories or the future worries and plans. To counteract the effect of these thoughts we have to find out a substitute for it.

The low tone musical accompaniment is the best solution. Even at the level of *Kirtan*, it is an automatic antidote to this effect. By a regular *abhyas* of searching the silence in every turmoil makes a habit of freedom from the unwanted thoughts. The most important point, however is to create an ambience for the mind, which will smoothly drag the mind to the all round prevailing eternal silence. And this eternal silence is always present in the very depth of our own mind, in a state of quiescence, which according to Gurbani is the state of '*Sahaj*' - a relaxed condition.

It is also important to note here that our breath plays a vital role in bringing the mind into silence. The breath is a bridge between the body and the mind. Slight disturbance in the mind can upset the breath and vice a versa. That is the reason why the yogis resort to "*Pranayaam*".

Energy:

It is also to be understood that when we practice *Naam Smran*, or sit in the congregation during *Kirtan*, we have to sit straight, so that the spine remains erect. The reason is that the entire nervous system of our body, which is connected to the brain, is at work, by channeling the "Divine Energy" into the body, and if the spine is straight, the flow of this cosmic energy is

smooth. In the brain two important glands, pituitary body and the pineal gland are the medium of the link of our body with the cosmos. Knowingly or unknowingly, during *Naam Simran*, every one communes through this system with the cosmos.

Food and Health:

At this stage let us see, what is that physical thing, which makes the structure of the "Mind". Since, the "Mind" is all the more important in the process of *Naam Smran*.

The human mind operates, depending on his past *Samskaras*, in synch with the five elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Space)

Gurbani says:

"*Ehu Mann Karma, ehu mann dharma,
Ehu Mann panch tatt te janma.*"

"This mind doeth deeds, this mind practiceth righteousness,

And this mind is born of five elements".

(SGGS: 415)

Now wherefrom do these five elements come? Naturally, the food we eat. Hence, if we eat the "*sattvic*" food, the characteristic of our mind will be of "*sattvic*" *gunaas*. If we eat the *raajasic* food, the mind will be of the *raajisic* temperament, and similarly if we are prone to the *taamasic* food, our mind is bound to produce the taamasic qualities, like drunkardness, or lethargy.

In a similar type of verse, Bhagat Kabir ji says:

"*Ehu mann shakti, ehu mann shi(v)o, Ehu mann panch tatt ka jeeo,*

Ehu mann le jo unn mann rahe,

Tau teen lok ki baten kahe" (SGGS: 342)

i.e. "This mind is *shakti*, this mind is *shiva*, This mind is originated from five elements, One who transcends into Higher consciousness, To him is revealed the mystery of Three Words".

Shakti resides in the lower region of the physical body and *shi(v)o* resides in the head region of the body. But the "Mind", which is the product of five basic elements, ranges its vibration from the *shakti* to the *shi(v)o* level, i.e. from the grosser matter of the lower nature of mind to the energy of the higher nature of mind, which is also called the transcendental region. By ascending to these heights, one becomes conscious to the "Three worlds". One can scan the physical world, the mental world, and the astral world, at 'will'.

Thoughts in our mind, keep on stimulating the body organs. Evil thoughts which originate from the lower mind are prone to generate disease. The pure thoughts, which originate from the higher mind, can cure them all. The degree of purity is in direct proportion to the development of consciousness in the mind of a person. According to *Hath Yogic* practices, *Shakti* which resides in the *Mooladhara Chakra* of the physical body called '*Kundalini*', a serpent force, normally dormant, is deliberately aroused, so that it can pass through the spine (*Nadis* - the energy channels) and get communion with the pure consciousness residing in the crown *chakra*. That is '*Shiva*'.

Whatever be the ill effects of this type of practice of Kundalini Yoga, it aims at getting rid of the evil thought-patterns, like *kama*, *karodh*, which are dominantly responsible for creating innumerable diseases in the body. The experience of many people who practice *Naam Simran* and sing God's name for long periods of time, feel that *kundalini* automatically rises higher up unconsciously and communes with the crown *chakra* from where one can drink the nectar of bliss, i.e. "*Amrit*".

Naam_Simran, is a simple way of spiritual practice, as compared to the complicated methods of Yogic practices. It is a process of constantly remembering mentally and uttering by tongue, in low tone, the name of God, which sanctifies the atmosphere around the body and soul of a person. Its practice aligns our individual consciousness with the Universal Consciousness without much effort, provided one has developed the faith and purity. As a consequence the practitioner gets Divine protection from all evils: Again, coming back to the item of food in the *Naam Simran*:

"Ehu Mann Karma, ehu mann dharma, Ehu Mann panch tatt te janma."

This is sung by Guru Nanak Dev ji, whereas Bhagat Kabir says:

"Ehu mann shakti, ehu mann si(v)o, Ehu mann panch tatt ka jeeo,"

That means the "Mind" is the product of the *tattwas*, and it implies, it is the product of the food we eat.

One may wonder how this mundane issue of food is going to interfere in our *Naam Simran*. It is important that, for such a person, the food is meant to sustain life, and not to satisfy taste. It is not an end in itself, it is a means to some end. Mostly we eat food for the sake of taste. Rather, every aspect of our life is dragged into satisfying the luxury of life and food.

Guru Nanak dev ji says:

Rass soina, rass rupa, kaaman rass parmali ki vaas,

Rass ghode rass sejan mandir, rass mittha rass maas,

Etai rass sarir ke, kai ghat "Naam" niwas. [16]

So, this *rass mittha* and *rass maas*, the unnecessary food items are bound to interfere with our *Naam Simran*.

And yet at another place, Guru Nanak Dev ji says:

Baba, hor khana khusi khuar,

Jit khade tan peediey, mann mai chale vikaar.

Holi-Company or Sat Sang:

In this important section, the *Sat_Sang*, I fall back on the book, "*Naam Simran and Bhakti in Sikhism*" by Gurbax Singh. He says:

"For the sake of study of *Naam_Simran*, the meaning of *Satsang*, should not be misunderstood. In a sense, *satsang* is the mother of *Naam Simran*, for in most cases, it is here that the very desire of *Naam Simran* takes birth. Literally, *satsang* means the *sang* (company) of *sat* (Naam, Guru, and God). It has three levels:

Level I: We call the congregation in the Gurdwara a *satsang*. Remember, the mere assembly of persons does not constitute it; for they assemble in the cinema hall too. Two things go to make a congregation a *satsang*:

- the presence of the Guru, and
- the recitation of *Naam* and/or singing of the laudation of the Guru-God in his presence.

ਜਹ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਤਹਿ ਸਤਿਸੰਗਤਿ ਬਣਾਈ ॥

ਜਹ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਸਹਜੇ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਈ ॥ ੧੬੦

Level II: At this level, the devotee creates the *satsang* of his own in his own self. He makes his self the temple (Gurdwara) of his Guru-God and sitting in his lotus feet, he recites His Name and sings His praises.

ਮਨਿ ਚਾਉ ਭਇਆ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਆਗਮੁ ਸੁਣਿਆ ॥

ਹਰਿ ਮੰਗਲੁ ਗਾਉ ਸਖੀ ਗਿਹੁ ਮੰਦਰੁ ਬਣਿਆ ॥ ੯੨੧॥

The man diverts his focus within the self, and most of the time remains "*antar-gatt*":

At this level, one does not need to depend on any holy spot for his *satsang* as he can have it at any time, at will. But still one must attend the *satsang* in the Gurdwara, whenever available, because it provides the inspiration without which further progress in *Naam Simran* could be impeded.

Level III: *Satsang* of the second level, when performed with utmost devotion could culminate in having the vision of the Lord.

ਜਨ ਜੀਵਨਾ ਸਤਿਸੰਗਿ ॥ ਗੋਬਿੰਦੁ ਭਜਨਾ ਰੰਗਿ ॥

ਰਸਨਾ ਬਖਾਨੈ ਨਾਮੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਰਸਨ ਦਾਨੁ ॥ ॥੮੩੮॥

This is the highest form of *sat_sang* where the devotee loses his identity and merges in the Guru-God.

Again on closing this treatise, I must emphasize that all the time during *Naam Simran*, we must feel that we are not talking *about* God, but we are talking *to* God, and being merged into his divinity feels the Oneness of God that is Eternal.

