

Curative Quality of God's Name

*"Aukhad khaiyo Har(i) kau Naon
Sukh paey dukh binsiya thhaon."
(32)]*

[SGGS: 378

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Whenever anyone near and dear to us falls sick the immediate impulse is to consult a doctor. The belief that the medicine man knows best about sickness of the body, or that the treatment prescribed by him (or her) is Holy Grail is deeply imbedded in our mind, even though some doctors are said to be more competent than others - by reputation.

In this decision-making process, God is given a go by, or only marginally invoked. Yet, on a deeper reflection, most people concede - by courtesy or in earnest - that the body has been fashioned by God's Will and its biological functions controlled by His subtle power that has been variously accepted as the vital force or dynamics of the Soul.

Guru Granth Sahib is replete with references to the gift of life, insisting that the best way to health - physical or mental - is through discipline of the body and mind; that is best ensured through an understanding of the true nature of the human mind and a consciously determined effort to lead a harmonious life in synch with the laws of Nature.

No wonder the Scripture has been set to music - for maximum effect in order to mobilise the *inner vitality*. One of the more evocative verses of Guru Arjun Devji accords the highest priority to *Swasthya-biwastha*, or the regime of good health (SGGS:681). So fascinating is the theme of physical well-being that the 20th century poet-philosopher Raghbir Singh Bir, best known for his *Bandgi Nama*, devoted a whole book to the significance of a single quotation from "Sukhmani": *Sarab rog kau aukhad Naam**, wherein he stresses the inseparability of mind and body as the basis for spiritual healing. This is quite different from the Shamanic healing that has been prevalent in the earliest tribal societies. Indeed *Guruvani* approaches the subject from a rational angle exploring the psychosomatic dimensions of existence.

It must be conceded however that the importance of religion as a means of healing has been recognized over a long time. Guru Nanak's extensive travels are a testimony to the use of his Divine message for providing succour to the suffering humanity in remote lands and diverse cultures. He not only ministered to the sick and the disabled but also won their hearts by identifying himself with the lowliest of the low, even as the gentle notes of his message, sung with *rabab* of Bhai Mardana, relieved anxiety and mental suffering. This "treatment" leads to the triumph of mind over body and faith over reason.

An increasing number of biologists and medical scientists understand and recognise the contribution of prayer for spiritual healing in collective and individual welfare. In so far as the scriptural text of Guru Granth Sahib is universally valid, and the truths set forth therein are not the monopoly of the Sikhs, these messages have the capacity to make all people feel better and

stronger. How *Naam Simran*, or the chanting of the holy Name, can be a channel for relieving anxiety and curing sickness has been demonstrated in scores of personal testimonies. It, however awaits institutional recognition and confirmation.

The young chief of internationally respected Ranbaxy Laboratories, Malvinder Singh (son the late Sr Parvinder Singh and grandson of Bhai Mohan Singh) recently expressed his desire to "redefine health care in India and create strong *brands* that people have faith in." There is no patent on *Naam Simran*, yet the medical science is not far from recognising its therapeutic potential for helping patients to feel better. Raghbir Singh Bir's analysis dwells on maximising the *SOOTHING* effect, through rhythmic breathing, while minimizing the mental stress, thereby to reduce the heart beat rate, lower cholesterol and boost immune functions that may be compromised by psychological stress. "Feeling better" is a widely shared experience in congregational *kirtan* sessions. *Simran* is about the best way to be "wired to God". In this process, the fundamental belief in God's benevolence supplements (if not take over) the biological intervention.

There are many ways of coping with pain and suffering. While the cultural and religious mindset has a good deal to do with the end-result, *Guruvani* repeatedly emphasizes the technique of *Naam-yoga* to release the body's inner vitality to cure itself.

Emphasis on a scholarly study of *Guruvani* would stimulate greater interest in the therapeutic aspects, since the reduction of suffering has been - and will remain - a major concern of religious and spiritual life. Ancient Buddhism recognised suffering as the First Noble Truth. To a significant extent the history of the Sikhs is one of extraordinary *endurance* of suffering, even if few historians have dwelt on the religious and spiritual implications of the massive suffering endured by, say, Guru Arjun Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur and a long line of martyrs. In Christianity, the crucifixion of Jesus is spiritually interpreted as atonement of humankind's sins - past, present and future.

While the existential debate will probably never end, it is worthwhile to explore *Guruvani's* curative quality unleashed through meditation.

