

WHAT IS NAAM AND NAAM JAPNA?

Gurpreet Singh Sumra
14 Hoskins Square, Brampton, Ontario, Canada, L6S2N6
Email: sumrajatt@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Naam Japna is becoming a latest trend to attain spirituality in Sikhism. Various methods and postures are recommended for Naam Japna by various theologians, Sants, Dehrewalay Babe. However, very few understand what the meanings of Naam and Naam Japna according to Gurbani are.

INTRODUCTION

What is *Naam*?

Is *Naam* a specific word which has to be repeated?

Does *Naam* itself mean God?

God is known by different names in different religions, even in Gurbani there are different names used symbolically for God like Ram, Allah, *Vithal*, *Ramya*, *Gopal*, *Gobind*, *Swami*, etc. There are many people who are giving *Naam/Gurmantar* and telling them to recite in some particular manner.

Is that the *Naam*?

Radhaswamis give 5 *Naams* :

Jot Niranjana, Onkar, Nirankar, Soham, and Satnam. Then you have to make some special *asans* (postures) then close your ears and eyes and concentrate on the picture of their Guru and repeat these words.

There are some *Dehrewale Sant Babe* who are also giving *Naam/Gurmantar* and they give this only in the ears of the person who wishes to take it and that person cannot disclose that *Naam* to others.

Is this the *Naam*?

DISCUSSION

Now a day Sikhs have started using the term *Gurmantar* (which is also mentioned in *Sikh Rehit Maryad* (SRM) as *Waheguru* for *Naam*, and are telling people to repeat it. So *Naam* as per these people is synonymous with *Mantra* to which they call *Gurmantar*.

Let us first see what Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha [] says about *Naam*:

Naam : (1) To tell you about something which can be categorized into : (a) to refer to something (*vastuvachak*), e.g. man, mountain, bull etc (b) to convey something (*bhawvachak*) beautiful, roughness, etc.

(2) In Gurbani it is referred to God and his *hukm*, e.g. "*Naam ke dhare sagle jant*"

(3) Continuous remembrance (*Simaran, Cheta*)

Now let's see what Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha says about *Mantra* []:

Mantra: "*Actually Mantra means exchange of thoughts (salah mashwara), jantar means machine and tantar means combination of substances. But Tantriks have given the name Mantra to the repetition of some particular sabd or word; writings on paper have been given the name jantar and tunas as tantar. In Gurmat such Mantra and Tantars have been condemned. It is really sad! That even after reading Gurbani everyday many Sikh brothers are telling to recite some words as mantra, and telling people about different asans and malas and misguiding them.*" []. (Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, *Gurmat Martand*, p789)

According to Hinduism Mantras are found in Sam Veda. Brief descriptions of 4 Vedas is as follows:

1) Rig Veda: Worship of different deities as the controller of different powers of nature which is countless. As per colors Rig Veda is said to be Yellow and one is supposed to discuss or deliberate on them wearing yellow clothes.

2) Yajur Veda: This Veda gives different techniques of doing *yagnas* to please different *Devtas* (Deities) created in Rig Veda. It is said to read/discuss this Veda you have to wear Red clothes.

3) Sam Veda: After creating Vedas and *yagnas*, the problem was Mantras so this Veda contains Mantras to be recited during *Yagnas* created in Yajur Veda to please deities created in Rig Veda. Color coding is White.

4) Atharvan Veda: It contains *Jadu, tuna* and talisman to bring someone under your control. Color Coding is Black.

Color Coding of God in different Yugas (Sat/treta/Duapar/Kaljug):

Satjug - White, Tretajug - Yellow, Duaparjug - Red, Kaljug - Black. [Hindu Mythology and Religion by John Dowson, pages 344-351, and Mahan Kosh by Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha]

Mantra according to Encarta Dictionary:

1. in religion a sacred word, chant, or sound that is

repeated during meditation to facilitate spiritual power and transformation of consciousness.

2. an expression or idea that is repeated, often without thinking about it, and closely associated with something

Mantra in Gurbani

Mantra (*Mantar*) in Gurbani is not the mantra as is considered in the Vedas. It has different meanings and most of the time it has been used as allegorically, metaphorically, and symbolically. Guru Nanak has out rightly rejected the use of mantra in any form in the following stanza:

ਤੰਤੁ ਮੰਤੁ ਪਾਖੰਡੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ਰਾਮੁ ਰਿਦੈ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਨਿਆ ॥
ਅੰਜਨੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਤਿਸੈ ਤੇ ਸੂਝੈ ਗੁਰਸਬਦੀ ਸਚੁ ਜਾਨਿਆ ॥੪॥

AGGS, M 1, p 766.

I don't care about or believe in any magic, jadu, tuna, mantars and any rituals, I only have God always etched in my mind/heart, I have understood what Naam is by having God always in my mind, which I have come to know through Guru's teachings.

Now the question arises what is *Naam* and how to recite (*jap*)? Here Guru Nanak explains *Naam* as follows:

ਇਸੁ ਜੁਗ ਮਹਿ ਕੇ ਵਿਰਲਾ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਗਿਆਨੀ ਜਿ ਹਉਮੈ ਮੋਟਿ ਸਮਾਏ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਸ ਨੇ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਸਦਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਈਐ ਜਿ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ
ਧਿਆਏ ॥੧॥

AGGS, M 3, p 512.

Very rare are those persons in this world who have eradicated or overcome ego by continuously remembering God or having it in his thoughts and mind, no matter what they are doing (playing, walking, doing work, attending to household chores).

Nanak says:

You get happiness to meet such person who is always imbued in God's love.

In the following verse Guru Nanak is telling to be aware of *Naam* (God) all the time:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਧਿਆਨ ਸਹਜ ਧੁਨਿ ਉਪਜੈ ਸਚਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇਆ ॥

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਰਹੈ ਰੰਗਿ ਰਾਤਾ ਹਰਿ ਕਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਮਨਿ ਭਾਇਆ ॥

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹਰਿ ਵੇਖਹਿ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹਰਿ ਬੋਲਹਿ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹਰਿ ਸਹਜਿ ਰੰਗੁ
ਲਾਇਆ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਤਿਮਰ ਅਗਿਆਨੁ ਅਧੇਰੁ
ਚੁਕਾਇਆ ॥

ਜਿਸ ਨੇ ਕਰਮੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਧੁਰਿ ਪੂਰਾ ਤਿਨਿ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਇਆ ॥
੧॥

AGGS, M 3, p 512.

Those who follow the teachings of their Guru, their hearts/minds are always in tune with God. They are always imbued or colored in God's love and having remembrance of God with them all the time. Those, who follow Guru's teachings (Gurmukh), see God everywhere in everybody, so they never say words that hurt someone as God is in their mind always and they are always imbued in Its love.

Nanak Says:

Those who follow Guru's teachings (Gurmukh) have dispelled the darkness of ignorance and attained the wisdom of Guru. Very fortunate are those, who always remember God.

ਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਾਇਆ ਭੰਨਣ ਘੜਣ ਸਮਰਥੁ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਸਦਾ ਸਮਾਲਹਿ ਮਿਤ੍ਰੁ ਤੂ ਦੁਖੁ ਸਬਾਇਆ ਲਭੁ ॥੧॥

AGGS, M 5, p 317.

Guru Arjan Says:

Guru Nanak has sown/implanted the name/remembrance of that supreme God, who can destroy and create anything and everything in this creation, in my mind.

Always remember that supreme God and you can overcome all your sorrows.

Here again Guru Nanak is telling us to remember God all the time and have it in your memory.

Is reciting any *Gurmatar* or any word, given by any Baba, Sant, or preacher, again and again for some specific times, called *Naam Japna*? Let us see what Guru Nanak teaches us on this issue:

ਏਕ ਜੀਹ ਗੁਣ ਕਵਨ ਬਖਾਨੈ ॥ ਸਹਸ ਫਨੀ ਸੇਖ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਨੈ ॥
ਨਵਤਨ ਨਾਮ ਜਪੈ ਦਿਨੁ ਰਾਤੀ ਇਕੁ ਗੁਣੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕਹਿ ਸੰਗਾ ॥੧੬॥

AGGS, M 5, p 1083.

How many qualities/virtues can I enumerate with my one tongue since your attributes are so innumerable, which cannot be listed, even thousand fanged-serpent cannot list God's attributes. One may create new name and recite it (like Waheguru) day and night even then one cannot explain a single virtue of God.

What Guru Saab says about reciting *Naam* from mouth which some people say *Gurmantar*:

ਮੁਖਹੁ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਕਰੈ ਵਿਰਲੈ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਵਸਾਇਆ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨ ਕੈ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਵਸਿਆ ਮੋਖ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਤਿਨੁ ਪਾਇਆ ॥੮॥੨॥

AGGS, M 3, p 565.

Everybody can recite God's name from his mouth, but

rare are those who have established God in their minds, means always remember God.

Nanak Says:

Those who have God always in their remembrance they overcome all their shortcomings.

ਰਾਮ ਰਾਮ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਕਹੈ ਕਹਿਐ ਰਾਮੁ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਰਾਮੁ ਮਨਿ ਵਸੈ ਤਾ ਫਲੁ ਪਾਵੈ ਕੋਇ ॥੧॥

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਗੋਵਿੰਦ ਜਿਸੁ ਲਾਗੈ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ॥

ਹਰਿ ਤਿਸੁ ਕਦੇ ਨ ਵੀਸਰੈ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਸਦਾ ਮਨਿ ਚੀਤਿ ॥੧॥

ਰਹਾਉ ॥

AGGS, M 3, p 491.

By unnecessarily repeating or reciting Ram, Ram..., you will not understand God. It's a misconception. If you follow the teachings of Guru, you will realize God.

Those who love to understand God in their mind, they never forget him even for a fraction of second, God is always in their mind.

There are some people who are telling to take *Gurmantar* with concentration (*surti birti jod ke*), and there is one more variety called '*saas giraas Naam simran*'. Here in Canada I was watching on TV program in which one more such person was giving another technique: To make some special *asan* (posture) and then say "**Wahe**" when you breathe in, and say "**Guru**" when you breathe out. At Guru Nanak's time there were *bodi* and *dhoti wale* Brahmans, now we have *joode* and *kachere wale* Brahmans. This is *Jogmat* and not *Gurmat* about which Guru condemns in the beginning in *Jap* in *paudi* "*munda santokh saram patt jholi*---"(AGGS, Jap 28, p 6.)

If Naam is the name of God which should be repeated as *Gurmantar* then Guru uses more than 100 names in the following *sabd* for God, which should we chose:

ਅਚੁਤ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਪਰਮੇਸੁਰ ਅੰਤਰਜਾਮੀ ॥ ਮਧੁਸੂਦਨ ਦਾਮੋਦਰ ਸੁਆਮੀ ॥

ਰਿਖੀਕੇਸ ਗੋਵਰਧਨ ਧਾਰੀ ਮੁਰਲੀ ਮਨੋਹਰ ਹਰਿ ਚੰਗਾ ॥੧॥

ਮੋਹਨ ਮਾਧਵ ਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਾ ਮੁਰਾਰੇ ॥ ਜਗਦੀਸੁਰ ਹਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਅਸੁਰ ਸੰਘਾਰੇ ॥

ਜਗਜੀਵਨ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਠਾਕੁਰ ਘਟ ਘਟ ਵਾਸੀ ਹੈ ਸੰਗਾ ॥੨॥

ਧਰਣੀਧਰ ਈਸ ਨਰਸਿੰਘ ਨਾਰਾਇਣ ॥ ਦਾਤਾ ਅਗ੍ਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮਿ ਧਰਾਇਣ ॥

ਬਾਵਨ ਰੂਪੁ ਕੀਆ ਤੁਧੁ ਕਰਤੇ ਸਭ ਹੀ ਸੇਤੀ ਹੈ ਚੰਗਾ ॥੩॥

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਰਾਮਚੰਦ ਜਿਸੁ ਰੂਪੁ ਨ ਰੇਖਿਆ ॥ ਬਨਵਾਲੀ ਚਕ੍ਰਪਾਣਿ ਦਰਸਿ ਅਨੂਪਿਆ ॥

ਸਹਸ ਨੇਤ੍ਰ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਹੈ ਸਹਸਾ ਇਕੁ ਦਾਤਾ ਸਭ ਹੈ ਮੰਗਾ ॥੪॥...

AGGS, M 5, p 1082.

'Naam' word is itself used for God in Gurbani:

ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਸਗਲੇ ਜੰਤ ॥ ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਖੰਡ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ ॥

ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਬੇਦ ਪੁਰਾਨ ॥ ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਸੁਨਨ ਗਿਆਨ ਧਿਆਨ ॥

ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਆਗਾਸ ਪਾਤਾਲ ॥ ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਸਗਲ ਆਕਾਰ ॥

ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਪੁਰੀਆ ਸਭ ਭਵਨ ॥ ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਸੰਗਿ ਉਧਰੇ ਸੁਨਿ ਸ੍ਰਵਨ ॥

ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਜਿਸੁ ਆਪਨੈ ਨਾਮਿ ਲਾਏ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਚਉਥੇ ਪਦ ਮਹਿ ਸੇ ਜਨੁ ਗਤਿ ਪਾਏ ॥੫॥

AGGS, M 5, p 284.

All the creatures are created and supported by Naam. All the planets, galaxies, stars, solar system; this whole universe is created and supported by him. Smritis and Bed purana exists under his command, It is his will that we talk about wisdom, knowledge, the so called mythical akaas pataal/nether worlds are supported by him. All forms of life are under his will or created by him. All this creation which we can think of and which is beyond our imagination is created and supported by him. By always remembering him all the time we can overcome our shortcomings. Those who want to understand him and always remember him, hey Nanak! They achieve the highest standards of this life.

If *Naam* itself means God/Akal Purkh then why not repeat/recite "*Naam*"?

While talking to a learned preacher I asked him the duration for reciting *Gurmantar* (*surti birti jod ke*), he told me initially start with 5-10 minutes and then increase time step by step.

When Guru is telling me to take *Naam* continuously day and night 24 hours in the following stanza, then it means when will I do my work to earn my living, when will I eat, and when will I go for toilet?

ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਪੁਭ ਅਪਨੀ ਦਾਤਿ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪੈ ਦਿਨ ਰਾਤਿ ॥

AGGS, M 5, p 192.

Hey Almighty! Bless me so that I am always imbued in your remembrance; always have you in my mind (so that I can desist from doing bad deeds and spreading lies).

Here "*ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪੈ ਦਿਨ ਰਾਤਿ*" means always keep imbued in God.

Those who were lost in *mantras* Guru said understanding *Bani* itself is *mantra* then what is *Gurmantar*?

ਬਾਣੀ ਮੰਤ੍ਰੁ ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖਨ ਕੀ ਮਨਹਿ ਉਤਾਰਨ ਮਾਂ ਕਉ ॥

ਖੋਜਿ ਲਹਿਓ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਖ ਬਾਨਾਂ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਾ ਬਿਸੁਮ ਕਉ ॥੨॥੧॥੨੦॥

AGGS, M 5, p 1208.

Bani is the greatest mantra of the preceptor (Guru Nanak), understand and follow its teachings. By conducting research try to contemplating and understanding Bani then you will find God or understand what God is.

(Continued on page 38)

the same. Having reached this stage one admires the Creation of universe upon universe like the Creator. One can realize the pleasure of Creations being created by the Creator and enjoy a happy and healthy life.

CONCLUSIONS

The truth about the spiritual journey, because of limited human ability, can never be put into any form of communication for others to understand. Since the rewards of the spiritual journey are so wonderful, it can be started with simple process of *Simran*. For any journey, one must take the first step and the first step in spiritual journey is to do *Simran*. Guru Arjan has written an excellent verse recommending *Simran* and its myriads of benefits: ਸਿਮਰਉ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਵਉ ॥ ਕਲਿ ਕਲੇਸ ਤਨ ਮਾਰਿ ਮਿਟਾਵਉ ॥

ਸਿਮਰਉ ਜਾਸੁ ਬਿਸੁੰਭਰ ਏਕੈ ॥ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਤ ਅਗਨਤ ਅਨੇਕੈ ॥
ਬੇਦ ਪੁਰਾਨ ਸਿੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਸੁਧਾਖੁਰ ॥ ਕੀਨੇ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਇਕ ਆਖੁਰ ॥
ਕਿਨਕਾ ਏਕ ਜਿਸੁ ਜੀਅ ਬਸਾਵੈ ॥ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਮਹਿਮਾ ਗਨੀ ਨ ਆਵੈ ॥
ਕਾਂਖੀ ਏਕੈ ਦਰਸ ਤੁਹਾਰੋ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਉਨ ਸੰਗਿ ਮੋਹਿ ਉਧਾਰੋ ॥੧॥

*Do Simran, and by doing Simran enjoy comforts of life,
Worry and anguish shall be dispelled from your body.
Remember in praise the One who pervades the whole
Universe.*

*God's Name is chanted by countless people, in so many
ways.*

*The Vedas, the Puraanas and the Simritees, the purest of
utterances,*

*were created from the One Word of the Name of the
Lord.*

*That one, in whose soul the One Lord dwells,
the praises of his glory cannot be recounted.*

*Those who yearn only for the blessing of Your Darshan
- Nanak: save me along with them! ||1||*

AGGS, M 5, p 262.

REFERENCES:

1. AGGS = Aad Guru Granth Sahib. 1983 (reprint). Publishers: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. (M= Mahala, i.e. succession number of the Sikh Gurus to the House Guru Nanak, p=page number in AGGS).
2. Chahal, Devinder Singh: 2003. 'Jap, The Essence of Nanakian Philosophy', a scientific and logical explanation. Institute For Understanding Sikhism, 4418, Rue Martin-Plouffe, Laval, Quebec H7W 5L9, Canada.
3. Dhaliwal, Avtar Singh: 2004, 'Bliss in Listening' (suixAY). Understanding Sikhism Res. J. 6 (1): 17-22.
4. Dhaliwal, Avtar Singh: 2003, Conciousness and Gurbani. Understanding Sikhism Res. J. 5 (1)43-48.
5. Dhaliwal, Avtar Singh: June 2005, Doctrine of Soul in Gurbani. Understanding Sikhism res. J. 7 (1) 48-55.
6. Nabha, Bhai Kahan Singh, *Mahan Kosh*, Simran (ismrx) p.639; Encyclopedia of Sikh Literature Gur Shabad Ratnakar. Website: MahanKosh.
7. Raghbir Singh 'Bir': 1956 (reprint) *Simran Mehmaa*. Atam Science Trust, D-990 New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110065.

(Continued from page 41)

CONCLUSIONS

Study and understand Gurbani, and try to follow its principles.

Naam is Bani, *Gurmantar* is Bani, and *NaamJapna* means always having God in your mind/heart.

REFERENCES

1. AGGS = Aad Guru Granth Sahib. 1983 (reprint). Publishers: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. (M = Mahla, i.e., succession number of the Sikh Gurus to the House of Nanak, p = Page of the AGGS. M is replaced with the name of Bhagat or Bhatt with their Bani.)
2. Singh, Kahn (Bhai). 1981. *Mahan Kosh* (Punjabi). Bhasha Vibhag, Punjab, Patiala.
3. Singh, Kahn (Bhai). 1996. *Gurmat Martand* (Punjabi). Language Department Punjab, Patiala.
4. Dowson, John. 2005 (5th Ed.) *Hindu Mythology and Religion*. Rupa & Co. 7/16 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi