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## Exploring the Essence of Naam Simran in Sikhism: A Pathway to Divine Connection and Enlightenment

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### Abstract

In Sikhism, the concept of *Naam*<sup>1</sup> plays a fundamental role in shaping spiritual beliefs and practices. *Naam*, meaning the divine Name, goes beyond being just a word; it embodies God's essence and the divine presence that fills the entire universe. For Sikhs, meditating on and embracing *Naam* is crucial for forming a deep connection with the divine, gaining spiritual insight, and discovering one's true self. Sikhs practice *Naam Simran*, or the recollection and repetition of God's Name, in order to transcend the ego, purify the mind, and achieve peace, unity, and enlightenment. This practice is regarded vital for emancipation from the cycle of birth and death, as it aligns the individual soul with the ultimate truth. The notion of *Naam* emphasizes a continuous, mindful relationship with the divine in every moment and is closely linked to Sikh teachings on humility, devotion, and leading a moral life.

**Keywords:** Divine, Enlightenment, Guru Granth Sahib, *Naam*, Sikhism

### Introduction

*Guru Granth* <sup>[2]</sup> is revered by Sikh followers as both a sacred text and the physical manifestation of the essence of the ten holy Gurus. It represents concept of brotherhood and compassion; overcomes all types of negativity and obstacles with a focus on welfare of all (*sarbat da bhala*). Scripture also contains the concept of *Naam*. Gurus never advocated renunciation rather believes that living a good life is the best way to reach God. God can be experienced through worship, and prayer. The principal of hard & honest labour provides the first & foremost basis of Sikh prayer. Sikhism holds that a holy man must live a creative, active life. As a result, domestic life is accepted and monasticism is rejected. This gives spiritual legitimacy to man's moral life which allows the seed of *Naam* to blossom.

Sikh concept of *Naam* emphasize on the methodology of deeds. Everyone should love the Lord and HIS creatures'. Guru Nanak says; a life without *Naam* is like a flower without a fragrance. All things are created by *Naam*. Separating from *Naam* is like a life without life <sup>[3]</sup>. A disciple is ignorant. He does not know how to realize God <sup>[4]</sup>. *Naam* encompasses a deep connection to divine consciousness, bringing with it a sense of inner joy and a vibrant appreciation for life. It awakens the joy found within one's true self, fostering a profound sense of fulfilment and peace. In our relationship with God, through *Naam*, we rise consciously towards HIM. The going may appear slow, but it is similar to getting up each time to resume the climb. The higher we climb up, the mount of spiritual attainment, the more we feel a current of happiness in worldly affairs. With prayer, spiritual changes begin inside; in the genre of consciousness: with our daily prayers, we have dialogue with God, feel that HE is nearby, listening and goading us to action. All we need is to feel his company which is possible only through prayer. Guru Nanak believes that the effect of bad actions

<sup>1</sup> The remembrance of God or (the *Akal Purkh*).

<sup>2</sup> In the year 1604, the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, compiled and modified Guru Granth which is a substantial scripture with 1430 large-size printed pages in *Gurumukhi* script that contains hymns of Sikh Gurus as well as hymns by 36 additional Hindu and Muslim saints and bards who belonged to different castes and creeds.

<sup>3</sup> See *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (hereafter, SGGS), p.603.

<sup>4</sup> To quote saint Kabir, A disciple realizes God after listening to and following the sermons of his Guru (Almighty).

(*Karma*) can be lessened or counteracted by constant efforts for good actions such as constant remembrance and meditation on God (*Naam*). We can mitigate the consequences of past wrongdoing. Everyone's fate can be changed by invoking God's Grace through prayer. But equal emphasis is placed on the individual's genuine efforts also to improve his lot. There is no place in this creation of God where *Naam* does not exist<sup>[5]</sup>. With the grace of God, one comes into contact with such an enlightened person who is the perfect Guru and awakens one's heart to the vision of *Naam*<sup>[6]</sup>.

### The Philosophy of Naam (Prayer)

Concept of *Naam* (prayer) is fundamental and central thesis of Sikh philosophy of Religion. Sikhism is based on three core principles: *Kirat Karo*, which means earning an honest living; *Wand Ke Chhako*, which encourages sharing with others; and *Naam Jappo*, the practice of reciting God's Name. No matter the situation, Sikhs strive to always remember the existence of *Akal Purakh*, the Almighty.

The spirit of *Gurbani* can be clearly understood through the notion of prayer. In Sikhism, the religion is the mystic transcendentalism from ordinary state of mind to the transcendental or liberated soul level to devoutly do contemplation remembrance of God and to render self-less service to Humanity to reach the cherished spiritual Goal of Life. Prayer is a person's only safe haven for navigating the challenges of life and overcoming the five inner enemies: (*Aram*) lust, (*Krodh*) anger, (*Lobh*) greed, (*Moh*) attachment, and (*Ahankaar*) ego. Through prayer, one finds the strength to move toward peace and harmony. Therefore, it dedicatedly mediates upon the holy word (*Naam*) of God to remain in HIS remembrance while doing the necessary worldly deeds<sup>[7]</sup>.

The *Shabad* (Sacred word) represents the Guru, and the Guru is present within the *Shabad*. It carries the essence of *Amrit* (Divine nectar), holding within it the power and wisdom of spiritual teachings. If the devotee acts upon the *Shabad* of the Guru, the Guru will definitely save him<sup>[8]</sup>. Prayer is also said to be the most valuable possession of worldly man and in its absence, everyone is a pauper. Subsequently, the True Guru has imparted this understanding unto me<sup>[9]</sup>. Those who embrace *Naam* from their hearts are blessed<sup>[10]</sup>. To be divorced from *Naam* is like living a life with no meaning as through *Naam* comes all inner wisdom<sup>[11]</sup>. By Divine Grace, comes illumination to the self.

The Gurus refer to *Naam* as the highest power which supports and directs the entire cosmos. Scripture contains numerous verses where *Naam* and God are used interchangeably. The highest state of man is described as living and working in harmony with God. The very first

verse is-'God is one' (*Ek Oamkaar*). The oneness of God is not to be understood through personal spiritual experience and inner thought. A person has to meditate on this belief in order to experience the existence of God. While practising the guidelines established by the Gurus and continuing our *Naam Simran* (Prayer), we shouldn't forget to pray since true prayer comes from the depths of the heart and is acknowledged in the presence of the Lord<sup>[12]</sup>. Prayer is the sustainers and director of the Universe, opposed to egoism and the enriches with all qualities. Prayer establishes its ethical standard and emphasises that the universe is the place where the qualities of *Naam* must be expressed in order to overcome immoral characteristics. Only *Naam* can cure egoism, suffering, and dissatisfaction<sup>[13]</sup>.

The Gurus have stated two types of people: one, the selfish (*Manmukh*), who are self-centred, and the other, pious person (*Gurmukh*), who adheres to the values and *Naam* in all spheres of life<sup>[14]</sup>. Guru Nanak taught that one should earn a living through honest means, with keeping God's name in their heart and on their lips. Saint Kabir has also imparted the message of recognizing God as our Father and embracing the brotherhood of all humanity. By concentrating our mind on the transcendent and immanent qualities of God, the mind will imbibe the same qualities in due course.

### Ethical and Devotional Practice of Naam in Sikhism

In Sikhism, the practice of *Naam* (the divine Name) is essential for spiritual growth and ethical conduct. *Naam Simran*, or repeated recitation of God's Name, is a fundamental form of devotion in Sikhism. The ethical and devotional practice of *Naam* in Sikhism covers a comprehensive approach of living which not only strengthens one's bond with the divine but also supports personal spiritual development.

One of the key impacts of *Naam* is its power to reduce personal ego and cultivate humility. By focusing on *Naam*, individuals learn to move beyond their own self-centered desires and understand their place within a larger spiritual framework. This process of self-reflection and submission to the divine promotes a humble mind-set, which is essential to Sikh ethics. Humility enhances how people relate to each other, promoting an environment of openness and respect.

The ethical principles of *Naam* apply to how one interacts with others. Sikhs are encouraged to live their life in ways that reflect the heavenly attributes represented in *Naam*, such as love, compassion, and kindness. Practicing *Naam* empowers people to be compassionate and to provide selfless service (*Seva*). This service to helping others is a way of expressing the divine love that *Naam* represents, highlighting the importance of mutual support and the interconnectedness of all people.

### Conclusion

The doctrine of *Naam* and the central thesis of the scripture profess that complete participation in life is the ideal. To establish link with *Naam* and God, five modes of training have been described i.e. remembering God all the time;

<sup>5</sup> SGGs, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid; p. 1242. A spiritual guide (enlightened person) is one who has an awakened mind and has experienced the Reality (Truth) or seen the Light of God and thereafter leads mankind on the path of God so that men develop their spiritual faith. Man finds solace in following the teachings of a spiritual guide.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; p. 289 Thou Lord Art my only shelter.my only prop Nanak ask for they excellent name, my master.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.; p. 982.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.; p. 1232.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.; p. 284.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.; p. 946.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.; p. 882.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.; p. 1205.

<sup>14</sup> A *Manmukh* will accept God's will (*Hukum*) if it is favorable to him, and will struggle against HIS will, if it is unfavorable to him. It is only a *Gurmukh* who always accepts HIS will under all circumstances.

company of God faced man; sense of discrimination between good and bad; doing virtuous activities & avoiding vices.<sup>15</sup> The values of love, honesty, tolerance, nonviolence, and peace were to Guru Nanak like his real family<sup>16</sup>. Sikhism does hold the mystic experience inherently sacred. When the ego is completely removed from one's consciousness and one fully submits to God's Will, Only then one have the highest spiritual experience and the ultimate connection with *Naam*. One has to pray to God to invoke HIS grace. Prayer becomes a dynamic tool for directing and sustaining the universe following the mystic experience and non-egoistic deeds in life. After enlightenment, person becomes an agent of Prayer; becomes more purposeful. He cannot be a mute observer but his objective in this world lies in serving God's plan, which gives purpose, hope, optimism and meaning to life. Always to wish and pray for the wellbeing of entire Humanity; by always being in ever-exalted spirits is concept of prayer in Sikhism: "*Naanak Naam Chardi Kala*".

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.; p. 648. Guru Ram Das Said: Pure are all their deeds who utter ever the Lord's True Name.

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