

UNDERSTANDING NAAM JAPNA AND NAAM SIMARNA

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ABSTRACT

Naam Japna and Naam Simarna are considered to be one of the major principles of Sikhi (Sikhism). And various methods of practicing this system have been recommended by various mentors in Sikhism. This is a very sensitive topic among the Sikh theologians and the Sikhs at large. This topic has been examined critically according to Nanakian Philosophy embodied in the Gurbani incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib, the only authentic source of information on Sikhi (Sikhism). Firstly the intrinsic values of Naam, Japna, and Simarna have been discussed. Thereafter, relevant Gurbani phrases, stanzas, and Sabds have been studied to understand the meanings of Naam Japna and Naam Simarna in the lives of the Sikhs.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna* has become very common in Sikhism because of improper understanding of Sikhism. Some mentors of Sikhism and *Sant Babas* are exploiting the masses of the Sikhs and misleading them to get their wishes fulfilled through their methods of *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna*. The terms '*Naam Japna*' and '*Naam Simarna*' are commonly found in Gurbani incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1] and Sikh literature. It is difficult to say when this system became popular with the Sikhs; however, it is prominently practiced by the Hindus for the last hundreds of centuries. It is generally considered as to repeat the *Naam* (a word or a phrase) loudly (*Japna*) or silently (*Simarna*) again and again, may be for hours and sometimes whole night. Moreover, a number of methods have been devised for *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna* by different theologians and *Sant Babas*. Before a Sikh starts to practice this system, it is necessary for him/her to study critically the philosophy of Guru Nanak, the founder of *Sikhi* (Sikhism), to understand the meaning of '*Naam Japna*' and '*Naam Simarna*' in its real perspective.

To achieve the above goal it is necessary to look into the intrinsic meanings of '*Naam*', '*Jap*', and '*Japna*'; and '*Simran*', and '*Simarna*'.

1. NAAM

What is a ਨਾਮ (*Naam*)?

1. Punjabi-English Dictionary [4]:

ਨਾਮ . Same as ਨਾਂ or ਨਾਉ (name); dynamic creative principle, Reality, God; mystical word or formula to recite or meditate upon.

ਨਾਮ ਜਪਣਾ: to recite, repeat the name.

ਨਾਮ ਲੈਣਾ: same as ਨਾਮ ਜਪਣਾ, to receive the mystical word or formula from a spiritual teacher, to be initiated.

2. Bhai Kahn Singh [5]:

ਨਾਮ: Name, ਨਾਉਂ, ਕਿਸੇ ਵਸਤੂ ਦਾ ਬੋਧਕਰਾਉਣ ਵਾਲਾ ਸ਼ਬਦ, ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਅਰਥ ਜਾਣਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ, ਸੋ ਨਾਮ ਹੈ...

ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਵਿੱਚ “ਨਾਮ” ਕਰਤਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਹੁਕਮ ਬੋਧਕ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਭੀ ਹੈ. ਯਥਾ “ ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਸਗਲੇ ਜੰਤ। ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਖੰਡ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ । (ਸੁਖਮਨੀ); ਅੰਗੀਕਾਰ; ਸਮਰਣ, ਚੇਤਾ; ਪ੍ਰਸਿਧੀ, ਮਸ਼ਹੂਰੀ.

(*Name. descriptive word for a thing, with which its meanings are known, that is Naam.*)

In Gurbani Naam also means God and Its order/law; to take up to the body; remember, keeping in mind; importance; popularity.)

3. English Dictionaries:

If we examine the meanings of '*Naam*' in Punjabi Dictionaries and *Kosh* it appears to be very similar to 'name' in English dictionaries:

Webster's:

1. A word or phrase by which a person, thing, or class of things is known, called, or spoken to or of; appellation; title.

2. A word or words expressing some quality considered characteristic or descriptive of a person or thing, often showing approval or disapproval; epithet.

3. The sacred designation of a deity (His ineffable name).

Encarta:

A word, term, or phrase by which somebody or something is known and distinguished from other people or things.

Dictionaries, whether Punjabi or English, are unanimous that 'Naam' in Gurbani and Punjabi language is same as 'Name' in English. It means 'Name' by itself does not describe the form or characteristics of a person or thing. Therefore, 'name' is used for undefined entity until a specific word is used that describes its specificity (shape and characteristics) of that entity (person or thing). I am impressed that Webster's Dictionary describes 'Name' as "The sacred designation of a deity [His ineffable name]" exactly the same way as described by Guru Nanak about 5 centuries ago. Since God is ineffable, therefore, no specific name can be assigned to God. It will be explained later in details.

Naming Living Beings (Organisms)

You would notice that just to address an organism (person) or a thing without any specific 'name' means that its shape/form and characteristics are not known or cannot be described. Therefore, some specific name, which would describe the characteristics of the person or the thing is to be assigned to distinguish it from others. Naming a living being (organism) in biology is the best example how a living organism is named.

Naming in Biology (Taxonomy):

In Biology every species is first given a common name to a group of species having common characteristics that is called 'generic name' (Genus). Then a 'specific name' is given for the species to distinguish it from other species of the same Genus. For example:

A group of single-celled bacteria are given a name, *Bacillus*, because of its rod-shaped body and another is given, *Coccus*, because of its spherical shape. The rod-shaped bacteria, which grow in milk, are grouped under the genus, *Lactobacillus* (*Lacto*-meaning milk). The species of this genus, which thrives best in acidic medium (pH 4-5 or lower), is named as *Lactobacillus acidophilus* (*Acidophilus* means acid-loving). This type of name comes under 'binomial system' where two names are necessary to identify a species from the others. *Lactobacillus acidophilus* is considered a 'probiotic' or 'friendly' bacterium. These types of healthy bacteria inhabit the intestines and vagina and protect against some unhealthy organisms. The breakdown of food by *Lactobacillus acidophilus* produces lactic acid, hydrogen peroxide and other byproducts that make the environment hostile for undesired organisms.

Let us take another example of naming animals. 'Homo' is a generic name for a group of organisms (humans), which evolved from primates, who started to walk on its two hind legs. The first species, which started to use some tools with his forelegs (arms) was called 'handyman', thus it was named as *Homo habilis*. (2.4 to 1.6 million years BCE). When a new species started to walk straight up on

its two hind legs it was named as *Homo erectus* (2 to 0.4 million years BCE). Then another new species with bigger brain appeared, which was named as *Homo sapiens*, meaning intelligent man (400,000 to 200,000 years BCE). Still another more intelligent species appeared in Omo in East Africa, which was named as *Homo sapiens sapiens* (130,000 years BCE to the present). This species might have moved to Europe around 35,000 years since a fossil of this species about 28,000 years old was found in Les Eyzies, France.

Homo sapiens sapiens falls under 'trinomial system', which is necessary to distinguish it from the other very similar species as *Homo sapiens*, a binomial name.

On the contrary the individual man or woman, the *Homo sapiens sapiens*, is not named according to his or her characters or qualities as has been explained above. Although all the modern humans are *Homo sapiens sapiens* under the above system of taxonomy still we need to identify each individual from others. Therefore, they are assigned some personal names, which usually do not show any specific characters as mentioned earlier for assigning taxonomic names for a Bacterium and human. The name is assigned after the birth without considering any of the character or quality of the baby. Rather it is the choice of the parents and names are assigned as 'Ram Lal' (God Rama – the ruby); 'Ram Singh' (God Rama – the lion), etc. Sometime this binomial name like 'Ram Singh' is not enough to distinguish him from other individuals also named as 'Ram Singh' by their parents. So the third specific name is needed, which may be his family name like Ahluwalia, Ahuja, Ball, Chadha, Chahal, Dhaliwal, Dhillon, Gill, Mangat, Mann, Mayell, Saluja, Sandhu, Sidhu, Virk, etc. or the name of village like Attariwala, Badal, Barnala, Kairon, Tohra, etc. or of city like, Calcutta, or country like, Canada, USA, etc. Almost same system of naming of individual is found in other religions. Beside the personal name every citizen in Canada is assigned a 'Social Insurance Number' from which one is identified immediately, who is who.

Naming God

Similarly, God is being named by spiritual leaders, Gurus, and Prophets according to some qualities considered best by them. For example, names like Allah, Gobind, Gopal, Narain, Ram, Rahim, Swami, etc have been assigned to God.

The main idea to give so much explanation about naming of an entity (a person or a thing) was that when simply the word 'name' for an entity is used it means its form/shape and characteristics are either not known or cannot be described. Guru Nanak has used the word, ਨਾਮ (*Naam*), in *Gurmukhi* script, which is equivalent to

'Name' in English for that Entity to whom no form/shape or characteristics can be assigned. That Entity is commonly called 'God' in English and just 'NAAM' in Gurbani, although NAAM has many other meanings in Gurbani.

Therefore, according to Nanakian Philosophy no name could be assigned to God. That is why only 'NAAM' (just 'name') has been used extensively in Gurbani, although other *Kirtam Naams* (descriptive/specific names) as mentioned above have also been used allegorically, metaphorically or symbolically to address God so that common man could understand it easily.

Guru Nanak was the first who realized about 5 centuries ago that the God, being Ineffable, cannot be assigned any name, which can describe Its form/shape and characteristics. In the following verse Guru Nanak explains that in spite of all his efforts he could not find any special greatness (characteristics) of God with which he could assign a name to God:

koit kotI myrI Awrjw, pvxu pIAxu AipAwau]
 cMdu sUrju duie guPY n dyKw, supnY saux n Qwau]
 BI qyrl kImiq nw pvY hau kyvfu AwKw nwau]1]
 swcw inrMkwru inj Qwie]
 suix suix AwKxu AwKxw jy BwvY kry qmwie]1]rhwau]
 kusw ktIAw vwr vwr, pIsix pIsiw pwie]
 AgI syqI jwllAw, Bsm syqI ril jwau]
 BI qyrl kImiq nw pvY, hau kyvfu AwKw nwau]2]
 pMKI hoie kY jy Bvw sY AsmwnI jwau]
 ndrI iksY n AwvaU nw ikCu pIAw n Kwau]
 BI qyrl kImiq nw pvY hau kyvfu AwKw nwau]3]
 nwnk kwgd IK mxw piV piV kIcY Bwau]
 msU qoit n AwveI lyKix paxu clwau]
 BI qyrl kImiq nw pvY hau kyvfu AwKw nwayu]4]2]
 Aggs, m 1, p-14-15.

If my life is millions of millions years and air is my food and drink; If by living in cave and not seeing moon or sun to know whether it is day or night and never slept even in dream; still I cannot evaluate that how great you are and how could I say (repeat) God's Name?

God is Formless and is of Its own. People hear again and again to repeat God's name, if God is pleased with this system I will instill so in our minds. Pause.

If I slash my body and cut it into pieces and then put it into the grinding mill to grind it into paste (flour); if I burn myself into ashes even then I could not evaluate your greatness and could not figure out how to say (repeat) your name. 2.

If I were a bird soaring (flying) through hundreds of skies without drinking and eating and go far away to become invisible; even then I could not evaluate your greatness and how to say (repeat) your name. 3.

Finally Guru Nanak says:

If I read and try to comprehend already written about

God's greatness on hundreds of kilograms of paper; if I have thousands of kilograms of paper to write with infinite quantity of ink and my pen writes at the speed of wind even then I would not be able to write your greatness and would not know how to say (repeat) God's Name. 4. 2.

AGGS, M 1, p 14-15 [1].

Based on the above experience of Guru Nanak, Guru Arjan further strengthens it that no '*kirtam Naam*' (descriptive/specific name) can be assigned to the Ineffable Entity (God):

ਕਿਰਤਮੰ ਨਾਮੰ ਕਥੋ ਤੇਰੇ ਜਿਹਬਾ ॥

ਸਤਿੰ ਨਾਮੰ ਤੇਰਾ ਪਰਾ ਪੂਰਬਲਾ ॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੫, ੫-੧੦੮੩.

Your tongue⁴ recites³ descriptive¹ names² of that (God). That Naam⁶ (God) existed⁵ even before⁷ the beginning of the time and space⁸.

(Then how it could be to name It?)

(AGGS, M 5, P 1083).

This verse clearly indicates that although the people recite the '*Kirtam Naam*' (like Ram, Rahim, Allah, Gobind etc. and now Waheguru by many Sikhs) that describes one or two characteristics of God and parroting such names is of no use because the '*Naam*' is used as a metaphor for the Ineffable Entity and '*Sat*' (ਸਤਿ) or '*Sach*' (ਸਚ) is used as one of the attributes for that Entity, which means that that Entity exists. As it is beyond our comprehension to describe or to name the One, who is the Ineffable, therefore, no specific name was assigned to It by Guru Nanak.

A very good example, to show that **even the word 'Naam' has been used as a metaphor for God**, is found in the Commencing Verse (commonly called as '*Mool Mantra*') of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1]. It has been represented before the beginning of the every Raga, every section, and subsection of the AGGS as such, without abridgement or in variously abridged form. This verse is tentatively divided into three sections to make the explanation easy. Since it has already been explained in details by Chahal [2], here I will go directly to the point to show that '*Naam*' has been used as a metaphor in the Commencing Verse (*Mool Mantra*). The complete form of Commencing Verse is as follows, which appears for 33 times in the AGGS:

ੴ १

ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ੨

ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ੩ ॥

*The One and Only, That, the Infinite¹;
Exists; Creator;
Without fear (Not governed by any other or not under
any Laws of Universe);
Without enmity; Timeless (Without effect of time and
space);
Neither takes birth nor dies (Never comes into any
anthropomorphic form);
Created by Itself²;
Enlightener; and Bounteous³.*

The next abridged form, which appears in AGGS for only 8 times, is as follows:

i) *ੴ*^੧ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ^੨ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ^੩ ॥

Here ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ have been eliminated.

*The One and Only, That, the Infinite¹;
Exists; Creator²;
Enlightener; and Bounteous³.*

The next abridged form, which appears for 523 times, is as follows:

ੴ^੧ ਸਤਿ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ^੩ ॥

Here ਨਾਮੁ, which is always associated with ਸਤਿ as ‘ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ’ from the second part, has been eliminated. It indicates that it was used as a metaphor for God who is ਸਤਿ (Sat) – Exists. Besides ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ has also been eliminated:

*The One and Only, That, the Infinite¹;
Exists²;
Enlightener; and Bounteous³.*

Note: Besides the above example of ‘Naam’ as metaphor there is another such metaphor, ਪੁਰਖੁ (Purakh), which has been used with ਕਰਤਾ (Karta) in the Commencing Verse.

From the above example it is crystal clear that Guru Nanak has not assigned any name to the Entity (commonly known as God), even ਨਾਮੁ (Naam) has been used as a metaphor for that Entity.

2. JAP (ਜਪੁ) / Japna

According to Bhai Kahn Singh [Kosh] ਜਪ (Jap) means repetition, to repeat in mind, *Mantar Paath* (repetition of mantra); ਜਪਿ (Jap) means to repeat; ਜਪੁ (Jap/Japu) is the name of first Bani in the AGGS, *Mantar Paath* (repetition of mantra).

3. SIMRAN (ਸਮਰਨ) Simarna

According to Bhai Kahn Singh, [Kosh] ਸਮਰਨ (Simran) means to remember, to keep in mind.

According to Punjabi-English Dictionary [] ਸਿਮਰਨ (Simran) means remembering of or meditation upon God’s name, prayer. ਸਿਮਰਨਾ (Simarna) means to remember, meditate upon, invoke God, to count one’s beads (*mala* – rosary), to pray, to repeat God’s name.

It appears that ‘Japna’ and ‘Simarna’ are almost synonymous words.

DISCUSSION

Meanings of ਜਪ in Gurbani

Let us consider how ਜਪ (Jap), with its various spellings, is understood in Nanakian Philosophy. Meanings of ‘Jap’ have been explained in details by Chahal [2] here it will be mentioned briefly. Whether ਜਪ (Jap) is used as a noun or as a verb has different meanings depending upon the theme and the context in which it has been used. Therefore, one has to be careful to interpret it keeping in view in which context this word has been used. Let us consider different meanings of ਜਪ:

i) ਜਪੁ as Noun:

ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਸਾਧੀਐ ਤੀਰਥਿ ਕੀਚੈ ਵਾਸੁ ॥ AGGS, M 1, p 56.

You practice recitation, austerities and self-restraint, and dwell at sacred shrines of pilgrimage.

In above example *Jap* means repetition. If one analyzes the theme of the Sabd it would indicate that people do the *Jap* but *Japna* of any name is not being recommended here. The real message of the Guru is to practice good deeds as is explained in the next phrase as follows:

ਜੇਹਾ ਰਾਧੇ ਤੇਹਾ ਲੁਣੈ ਬਿਨ ਗੁਣ ਜਨਮੁ ਵਿਣਾਸੁ ॥

What you sows so shall you reap; without good character (good deeds) the life is in vain.

ii) ਜਪੁ as Verb:

a) To Recite

ਅਸੰਖ ਜਪ ਅਸੰਖ ਭਾਉ... AGGS, Jap 17, p 3.

Countless are reciting Your Name and countless loves you.

Here ਜਪ means ‘to recite’ as is being practiced by countless people but it does not mean there is any recommendation to recite any name.

b) ਜਪੁ means ‘Appears-to-be’

ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਧੈ ਕਿਆ ਮਨ ਮੰਤੁ..... AGGS, Jap 24, p 5.

In this stanza ਜਾਧੈ is the past participle of ਜਾਪ or ਜਪ

that means 'appears-to-be'.

No limit 'appears-to-be' of Its motives of creation in Its mind.

Here ਜਾਪੈ has been used entirely in different meaning as 'appears-to-be'.

Recitation/Repetition is not recommended in Nanakian Philosophy

Many phrases in Gurbani do not support the idea that repetition of any Name of God can help to attain salvation or reach God. In this respect the following stanza needs a critical analysis:

ਇਕ ਦੁ ਜੀਭੇ ਲਖ ਹੋਹਿ ਲਖ ਹੋਵਹਿ ਲਖ ਵੀਸ ॥
ਲਖੁ ਲਖੁ ਗੋੜਾ ਆਖੀਅਹਿ ਏਕੁ ਨਾਮ ਜਗਦੀਸ ॥
ਏਤੁ ਰਾਹਿ ਪਤਿ ਪਵਤੀਆ ਚੜੀਐ ਹੋਇ ਇਕੀਸ ॥...

AGGS, Jap 32, p 7.

This stanza of JAP, the first Bani in the AGGS has invariably been interpreted in terms of ancient philosophy by many scholars in which emphasis is on repetition of *Naam* to reach God:

If one tongue becomes one hundred thousand and then two millions;

Then with each tongue, if the name of God is repeated hundreds of thousands times, by following these step (doing so) one can reach God.

But it is not so. It was only Dr Sahib Singh [6] who has explained that repeating Name of God again and again even for numberless times will not help to reach God by interpreting the last phrase as follows:

ਸੁਣਿ ਗਲਾ ਆਕਾਸ ਕੀ ਕੀਟਾ ਆਈ ਰੀਸ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਦਰੀ ਪਾਈਐ ਕੂੜੀ ਕੂੜੈ ॥ ੩੨ ॥

After listening to the above lofty claims even the lowest of low thought that they can reach God by repeating the name of God hundreds of thousands times.

But Nanak Says:

One can reach (comprehend) God only through Its blessings, because the above explained method is the false claim – a boast of a lair. 32.

In the following phrase Guru Nanak has clearly mentioned that recitation/repetition of a word, phrase, or Sabd are practices of no avail:

ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਸੰਜਮ ਥਾਕੀ ਹਠਿ ਨਿਗ੍ਰਹਿ ਨਹੀ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

AGGS, M 1, p 436.

By practicing recitation and self-disciplining, people have grown weary; even after stubbornly practicing these rituals, they still have not been able to control evil wishes.

The above principle of Nanakian Philosophy has been strengthened by Guru Amardas as follows:

ਰਾਮ¹ ਰਾਮ¹ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਕਰੈ ਕਹਿਐ ਰਾਮੁ² ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਰਾਮੁ³ ਮਨਿ^੪ ਵਸੈ ਤਾ ਫਲੁ ਪਾਵੈ ਕੋਇ ॥੧॥

AGGS, M 3, p 491.

Everybody recite Ram¹ Ram¹ but by reciting Ram¹ Ram¹ one cannot get peace of mind².

It is through the Grace of the God³ that when God is imbibed (realized) in the mind then one gets peace of mind^{3,4}.

1. ਰਾਮ is one of the ਕਿਰਤਮ ਨਾਮ (descriptive/specific name) of God.

2. ਰਾਮੁ means when God is imbibed in the mind then one gets peace of mind.

Besides the above there is another phrase of Guru Amardas to support the above principle of Nanakian Philosophy:

ਮੁਖੁ ਹਰਿ¹ ਹਰਿ¹ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਕਰੈ ਵਿਚਲੈ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਵਸਾਇਆ² ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨ ਕੈ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਵਸਿਆ ਮੋਖ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਤਿਨੁ ਪਾਇਆ ॥੮॥੨॥

AGGS, M 3, p 565.

Everybody says Har¹ Har¹ with mouth but rare are those who have imbibed² (realized) the God in their mind.

(Only) Those who have imbibed (realized) the God in their mind attain the salvation.

1. ਹਰਿ is also one of the ਕਿਰਤਮ ਨਾਮ (descriptive/specific name) of God.

The same philosophy of Guru Nanak has further been strengthened by Guru Ramdas as follows:

ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਨਿਤ ਕਪਟੁ ਕਮਾਵਹਿ ਹਿਰਦਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥

ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਹਿ ਬਹੁਤੇਰੇ ਸੁਪਨੈ ਸੁਖੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥੧॥

AGGS, M 4, p 732.

The mind cannot be purified just by repeating Har Har while deceiving others at the same time.

Similarly, even by practicing many types of rituals one does not get salvation even in dream.

And

ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਸੰਜਮ ਵਰਤ ਕਰੇ ਪੂਜਾ ਮਨਮੁਖ ਰੋਗੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥ AGGS, M 4, p 732.

The self-oriented recites mantras or verses, practices austerity and self-discipline, and fasts but his sickness had not gone away.

Now the question is:

What to do?

Guru Nanak advises to comprehend his philosophy embodied in his Bani:

ਭਨਤਿ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਕਰੇ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

ਸਾਚੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਿਉ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥

ਤਾ ਕੋ ਪਾਵੈ ਮੋਖ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥

ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਸਭੁ ਇਹੁ ਸਬਦੁ ਹੈ ਸਾਰੁ ॥

AGGS, M 1, p 661.

Guru Nanak appeals:

One gets salvation by contemplating / deliberating on the True Bani (philosophy) with love. (Therefore), the deliberation on Sabd is the real recitation and austerity.

Note: Here ਨਾਨਕੁ (*Kaka* with *onkar*) is Nanak as person

not the pen name.

Other Meanings of ਜਪ in Gurbani

If ਜਪ is not recitation/repetition then what does it mean when Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus have used it extensively in their Bani?

a) ਜਪੁ means to imbibe/Understand:

ਆਜੁ ਕਾਲਿ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਈਐ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਹਰਿ ਜਪੁ¹ ਜਪਿ² ਰਿਦੈ ਧਿਆਈ ਹੇ ॥
੫॥

AGGS, M 1, p 1025.

O mortal, you may die today or tomorrow; imbibe² the philosophy¹ of Guru in your heart.

The philosophy of Guru Nanak has been explained by Guru Arjan as follows:

ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਨਾਮੁ¹ ਸਮਾਲਿਆ² ॥

AGGS, M 5, p 1348.

Imbibing² of God¹ in mind is equivalent to recitation and austerity.

2. Imbibing* means to take into the mind and keep, as ideas, principles, etc.

b) Good deeds are equated to ਜਪ

ਸੇਵਾ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਵੀਚਾਰ ॥

ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਹਉਮੈ ਮਾਰਿ ॥

ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤੁ ਜਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਸੁਣਾਏ ॥

ਸਚੀ ਰਹਤ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਏ ॥

AGGS, M 1, p 1343.

The service is consciousness towards deliberation of Sabd (philosophy).

Subduing of ego is equivalent to recitation and austerity.

One gets pleasure/peace of mind (freedom from problems) when philosophy of good conduct was received / understood .

ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਕਮਾਵੈ ਕਰਮੁ ॥ AGGS, M 1, p 1411.

Conducting good deeds are equivalent to recitation, practicing austerity and self-discipline.

c) ਜਪੁ means deliberation

ਰਾਮ¹ ਨਾਮੁ² ਜਪਿ³ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਪੂਜਾ⁴ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੁ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ¹ ਅਵਰੁ ਨਹੀ ਦੂਜਾ ॥੧॥

AGGS, M 1, p 1345.

Deliberation³ on Name² of God¹ is the worship⁴ from within because there is no other way (path) than deliberation/contemplation⁵ of the Sabd (philosophy) of the Guru.

Now the question is:

What is that ਜਪ, which puts one on the path of righteousness?

Guru Amardas explains the path as follows:

ਕਿਸੁ ਹਉ ਸੇਵੀ ਕਿਆ ਜਪੁ ਕਰੀ ਸਤਗੁਰ ਪੂਛਉ ਜਾਇ ॥... ॥

ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਪਛਾਣੀਐ ਦੁਖੁ ਹਉਮੈ ਵਿਚਰੁ ਗਵਾਇ ॥

AGGS, M 3, p 34.

I will go to Guru and will ask.

Whom shall I serve? What shall I recite? ...

Answer of the Guru is:

Understanding the Guru's Word (philosophy) would make you realize (God) and your problems will be resolved and ego will be eliminated.

(ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ means Sabd of Guru Nanak)

Guru Amardas has further simplified it as follows:

ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਜਪੁ ਜਾਪਣਾ ॥

AGGS, M 3, p 516.

Deliberation upon the Word of the Guru is equivalent to recitation of Jap night and day.

And

ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਹੋਰੁ ਕੋਈ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਨ ਕਮਾਹੀ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਸਚੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਸਚੇ ਸਚਿ ਸਮਾਇਦਾ ॥੧੨॥

AGGS, M 3, p 1060.

There is no such thing as recitation or austerity, or self-control to realize God. One cannot imbibe the Ever-Existing Entity in one's mind unless one practices the philosophy of the Guru obtained through his Sabd.

(ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ means Sabd of Guru Nanak)

Finally, it can be easily concluded from the above discussion that ਜਪ, ਜਾਪ, ਜਪੁ, ਜਪਿ, means recitation according to ancient philosophy but recitation as well as deliberation and understanding according to Nanakian philosophy. ਜਪੁ (JAP) is also a title of a complete and independent Bani in the AGGS, which means deliberation and pondering upon to understand the essence of Nanakian Philosophy, not for mere recitation.

Dr Gopal Singh [3] and Principal Teja Singh [7, p-3] had also mentioned that philosophy in the AGGS teaches people to think in the right direction but many of them have made it a religion to recite AGGS again and again (*Akhand Paaths*) instead of pondering upon to understand the philosophy in it and to mould their lives accordingly. It has also been observed that many Sikhs consider it most important and sacred duty to recite *Jap* (ਜਪੁ), the first Bani of the AGGS, every morning without any intention to ponder upon its philosophy and to put in practice.

2. Naam Japna

Let us come back to the subject of *Naam Japna*. Now we understand the meanings of *Naam*, *Jap/Japna* and *Simran* and *Simarna* as discussed previously. It has already been discussed earlier (koit kotI myrI Awrjw, pvxu pIAxu

AipAwau] ...) that according to Guru Nanak it is difficult to describe the greatness of God and it is difficult to say (repeat) Its *Naam*.

Now it raises a question:

Does praising please God?

Guru Nanak explains since the greatness of God and cannot be described and it is difficult to say or repeat Its *Naam*, will praising make God's greatness greater or it will be reduced if not praised:

ਸੁਣਿ ਵਡਾ ਆਖੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਇ ॥ kyvfu vfw fITw hoie]
ਕੀਮਤਿ ਪਾਇ ਨ ਕਹਿਆ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਕਹਣੈ ਵਾਲੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਰਹੇ ਸਮਾਇ ॥੧॥
ਵਡੇ ਮੇਰੇ ਸਾਹਿਬਾ ਗਹਿਰ ਗੰਭੀਰਾ ਗੁਣੀ ਗਹੀਰਾ ॥
ਕੋਇ ਨ ਜਾਣੈ ਤੇਰਾ ਕੇਤਾ ਕੇਵਡੁ ਚੀਰਾ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
ਸਭਿ ਸੁਰਤੀ ਮਿਲਿ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਕਮਾਈ ॥ ਸਭ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਪਾਈ ॥
ਗਿਆਨੀ ਧਿਆਨੀ ਗੁਰ ਗੁਰਹਾਈ ॥
ਕਹਣੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਤੇਰੀ ਤਿਲੁ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥੨॥
ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੧, ਪ - ੯ ਅਤੇ ੩੪੮-੯.

Hearing of greatness, everyone calls (God) the Great. But just how great is the greatness if it can be seen? Its value cannot be estimated and Its value cannot be described. However, those, who wish to describe God, get absorbed in Its greatness.1.

O' my God of Unfathomable Depth, You are the Ocean of Excellence. No one knows the depth (vastness) of Your wisdom... 1. Pause.

If consciousness of everybody is put together and try to evaluate God even then It cannot be evaluated. Even if all the intellectuals and researchers, and all the teachers (Gurus) and teachers of teachers try to describe Your attributes even then it will be equivalent to a sesame seed (iota). 2.

And

ਸਾਚੇ ਨਾਮ ਕੀ ਤਿਲੁ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥ ਆਖਿ ਥਕੇ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਨਹੀ ਪਾਈ ॥
ਜੇ ਸਭਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਕੈ ਆਖਣੁ ਪਾਹਿ ॥ ਵਡਾ ਨ ਹੋਵੈ ਘਾਟਿ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥੨॥
ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੧, ਪ - ੯ ਅਤੇ ੩੪੮-੯.

Note: Here ਸਾਚੇ (*Sachay*) has been added before ਨਾਮ (*Naam*) by Guru Nanak. ਸਚੁ or ਸਤਿ means the Entity, which lives forever. Therefore, ਸਾਚੇ ਨਾਮ means God, Who lives forever.

The God, who lives forever, cannot be praised. People have become weary / tired even to describe an iota of Greatness and to evaluate God.

Even if everyone gets together to describe the greatness or smallness of God, It would neither become Great nor Small. 2.

In the above stanzas Guru Nanak has clearly emphasized that recitation of any name of God or praising God in any way does not does make God the great or small or to make him change Its will (Laws of Nature).

Guru Nanak further says that it is difficult to say the Name of God: although many theologians recommend reciting God's Name otherwise one will die:

ਆਖਾ ਜੀਵਾ ਵਿਸਰੈ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਉ ॥ ਆਖਣਿ ਅਉਖਾ ਸਾਚਾ ਨਾਉ ॥
ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੧, ਪ - ੯ ਅਤੇ ੩੪੮-੯.

It is generally accepted according to ancient philosophy that:

If I recite God's name I would live otherwise I would die.

However, Guru Nanak Says:

It is difficult to recite Its Ever-existing Name (since God is Ineffable).

If recitation of any name or word or mantra or praise of God are not recommended then what are the recommendations by Guru Nanak?

Guru Nanak advises that it is important to understand God through Sabd (philosophy).

ਮਨ ਰੇ, ਸਬਦਿ^੧ ਤਰਹੁ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇ ॥

ਜਿਨਿ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮੁ^੨ ਨ ਬੁਝਿਆ ਮਰਿ ਜਨਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਜਾਇ^੩ ॥੧॥ਰਹਾਉ॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੧, ਪ-੧੯.

Note: 1. ਸਬਦਿ = Advice or message of Guru (Nanak). 2.

ਨਾਮੁ = God. 3. ਮਰਿ ਜਨਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਜਾਇ = Metaphor for 'ups and downs' in life.

Hey Mind! One can swim across the sea of life by understanding advice/message¹ of the Guru¹ consciously. Those, who have not understood God², fall into the cycle of life and death (means suffer ups and downs in their lives)³.

AGGS, M 1, p 19.

And

ਨਾਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਨਿਆ ਰਾਮ ਕਾ ॥

ਮੂੜੇ ਫਿਰਿ ਪਾਛੈ ਪਛੁਤਾਹਿ ਰੇ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੧, ਪ-੧੫੬.

Note: Here in this *Rahoo* (Pause) Guru Nanak sums up his message as follows:

If you have not tried to understand the Name of That Entity to whom you call Ram,

Oh fool! You will repent later in life.

The emphasis is to understand (*Naam*) God.

Then how to understand/comprehend *Naam*?

It is explained as follows:

ਆਪਿ^੧ ਸੁਜਾਣੁ ਨ ਭੁਲਈ ਸਚਾ ਵਡ ਕਿਰਸਾਣੁ ॥

ਪਹਿਲਾ ਧਰਤੀ ਸਾਧਿ ਕੈ ਸਚੁ^੨ ਨਾਮੁ^੩ ਦੇ ਦਾਣੁ ॥

ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ^੪ ਉਪਜੈ ਨਾਮੁ ਏਕੁ ਕਰਮਿ ਪਵੈ ਨੀਸਾਣੁ^੬ ॥੨॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੧, ਪ-੧੯.

Note: As a farmer knows that before planting seed, the soil must be prepared properly to make it fit to support

the germination of the seed and then growth of the plant. We should not forget the wisdom² of God¹, Who is a great farmer who advises that one should first prepare the soil (cleanse the mind) before a seed (philosophy/wisdom) about Ever-existing³ God⁴ is planted in it.

Only then the God's wisdom will grow and will bear the fruits of wisdom⁵. Then such an effort is accepted⁶ (by God).

AGGS, M 1, p 19.

and

ਐਸਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਦੇਉ ॥

ਹਉ ਜਾਚਿਕੁ ਤੂ ਅਲਖ ਅਭੇਉ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੧, ਪ-੨੯੬.

I am begging such a Naam, which can make me free from taints.

Next sentence explains what Naam is:

I am beggar of the One, Who is Ineffable and does not keep secrets.

AGGS, M 1, p 796.

Here Guru Nanak is explaining that 'Naam' means "God who is ineffable and does not keep secrets (means open to all to discover Its Laws of Nature). Therefore, Guru Nanak is begging to understand that 'Naam' (God), Who can free one from taints by understanding Its Laws of Natures (symbolized as secrets).

What is achieved after understanding / comprehending God?

By comprehension about God one develops and achieves the qualities mentioned in the following verses:

ਨਾਮ¹ ਰਾਤੇ² ਹਉਮੈ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ, ਸਚਿ ਰਹੈ ਸਮਾਇ ॥

ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ, ਜੋਗ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥ ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ, ਪਾਵਹਿ ਮੋਖ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥

ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ, ਤਿਭਵਣ ਸੋਝੀ ਹੋਇ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ, ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ ਸਦਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥੩੨॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੧, ਪ-੯੪੧.

Understanding² God¹ one gets rid of egoism; the Truth is imbibed; the yoga system is understood (that it is not helpful to realize God); gets salvation; understands the mythic three worlds.

Nanak says:

Understanding God achieves all the pleasures of life all the time.

and

ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ ਸਿਧ ਗੋਸਟਿ¹ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ ਸਦਾ ਤਪੁ ਹੋਇ ॥

ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ ਸਚੁ ਕਰਣੀ ਸਾਰੁ ॥ ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ ਗੁਣ ਗਿਆਨ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

ਬਿਨੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਬੋਲੈ ਸਭੁ ਵੇਕਾਰੁ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ, ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ ਤਿਨ ਕਉ ਜੈਕਾਰੁ ॥੩੩॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੧, ਪ-੯੪੧.

Understanding God one attains the wisdom to have discourse with wise people¹; is equated to as if one is always in austerity; one always work for the truth; one attains wisdom and ability to comprehend; without understanding God is as speaking in vain.

Nanak says:

Understanding God is victory for them.

AGGS, M 1, p 941.

How to obtain Naam?

Many mentors of Sikhism and Sant Babas just tell a word, or phrase as a Naam for repetition again and again to their followers. However Guru says that although everybody wishes to obtain Naam, it is obtained through Guru's teachings:

ਨਾਵੈ ਨੋ ਸਭ ਲੋਚਦੀ ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

AGGS, M 1, p 789

Everyone longs for the Name, but it is only found through the Guru's Teachings.

And

ਪੂਰੇ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਜਾਇ ॥

ਜੋਗ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਸਚਿ ਰਹੈ ਸਮਾਇ ॥

ਬਾਰਹ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਗੀ ਭਰਮਾਏ, ਸੰਨਿਆਸੀ ਛਿਅ ਚਾਰਿ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਜੋ ਮਹਿ ਜੀਵੈ, ਸੋ ਪਾਏ ਮੋਖ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥

ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਸਭਿ ਦੂਜੈ ਲਾਗੇ, ਦੇਖਹੁ ਰਿਦੈ ਬੀਚਾਰਿ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਵਡੇ ਸੇ ਵਡਭਾਗੀ, ਜਿਨੀ ਸਚੁ ਰਖਿਆ ਉਰ ਧਾਰਿ ॥੩੪॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੧, ਪ-੯੪੧-੯੪੨.

Naam can be understood from the the complete/perfect Guru.

Once understood then it is equivalent to 12 systems of Jogis and 10 (6+4) of Saniasis.

One, who would understand the advice of that complete Guru, gets salvation.

One can experience oneself after serious analysis that without Guru's advice there is no success when following others (Yogis or Saniasis).

Nanak says:

Those, who have understood the Ever-existing Entity (Naam), are great and fortunate people.

AGGS, M 1, p 941-942.

Guru Amardas strengthened that above principle of Nanakian Philosophy:

ਜਿਨੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਸੇਵਿਆ ਤਿਨੀ ਪਾਇਆ ਨਾਮੁ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ ॥

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਰਸੁ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਚੂਕਾ ਮਨਿ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੁ ॥...੨॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੩, ਪ-੨੬.

Those, who have understood the philosophy of the True Guru (Nanakian Philosophy), have attained the Naam (understood what the Naam is.).

Once God is comprehended then one gets rid of one's ego

AGGS, M 3, p 26.

And

ਗੁਰਿ ਪੂਰੈ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਾਇਆ ਹਰਿ ਭਗਤਾ ਅਤੁਟੁ ਭੰਡਾਰੁ ॥੧॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੩, ਪ-੨੮.

(Continued from page 49)

The Perfect Guru has implanted the Naam in the minds of the God's devotees.

AGGS, M 3, p 28.

It means: The Perfect Guru is Nanak here, whose philosophy has made the God's devotees to understand/comprehend Naam (God). This understanding/comprehension of Naam is now the treasure of those devotees.

And

ਸਾਚੇ ਸੈਲੁ ਨ ਲਾਗਈ ਮਨੁ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਹਰਿ ਧਿਆਇ ॥

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸਬਦੁ ਪਛਾਣੀਐ ਹਰਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਨਾਮਿ ਸਮਾਇ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਪ੍ਰਚੰਡੁ ਬਲਾਇਆ ਅਗਿਆਨੁ ਅੰਧੇਰਾ ਜਾਇ ॥੨॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੩, ਪ-੨੯.

Guru Amardas explains that Naam (God) is understood by understanding the Sabd (Nanakian Philosophy):

The Pure-One (Ever-Existing) is never soiled, therefore, one's mind gets purified after understanding/realizing That - the Pure-One.

How do you understand/realize God?

By understanding and practicing the Sabd (advice/Nanakian Philosophy) God is realized.

The energy about the philosophy of Guru (Nanak) has been initiated (enlightened) and darkness of ignorance has vanished.

AGGS, M 3, p 29.

And

ਹਉਮੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਖੋਈਐ ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥੧॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ ੩, ਪ-੨੯.

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ means the one who follows the philosophy of Guru.

Following Guru (Nanakian Philosophy) one gets rid of egoism and understands the Naam (God,) then there is pleasure everywhere.

AGGS. M 3, p 29.

CONCLUSIONS

- *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna* have become very common in Sikhism because of improper understanding of Gurbani.

- Some mentors of Sikhism and Sant Babas are exploiting the masses of the Sikhs and misleading them to get their wishes fulfilled through their methods of *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna*.

- ਜਪ, ਜਾਪ, ਜਪੁ, ਜਪਿ, means recitation according to ancient philosophy but recitation as well as deliberation and understanding according to Nanakian philosophy.

- **Guru Nanak has not assigned any name to the Entity (commonly called as God), even ਨਾਮ (Naam), the abstract noun*, has been used as a metaphor for that Entity.**

- Critical analysis of Gurbani clearly indicates that there is no recommendation of recitation of *Naam* or any name of God or any phrase or any Sabd from the Gurbani again

and again.

- The emphasis is on deliberation and pondering upon the Gurbani to understand the main message and to practice that message in one's life.

- Guru Nanak has clearly emphasized that recitation of *Naam* or any name of God or praising God in any way does not make God the great or small or to make him change Its will (Laws of Nature) to grant the wish of the devotees.

Finally, Guru Nanak has clearly mentioned that one cannot achieve anything just by repetition of *Naam* or any name of God or word or mantra again and again.

jpu qpu kir kir sMjm QwkI hiT ingRih nhI pweIAY] .

AGGS, M 1, p 436

By practicing recitation and self-disciplining, people have grown weary; even after stubbornly practicing these rituals, they still have not been able to control evil wishes.

The main message of Guru Nanak is to deliberate upon Gurbani to understand the message in it and practice the message to lead a peaceful life.

* **'Abstract noun'** is a noun that denotes something viewed as a nonmaterial referent.

Referent: Words are used to represent things and experiences in the real or imagined world. Different words can be used to describe the same thing or experience.

<http://www.sil.org/linguistics/GlossaryOfLinguisticTerms/WhatIsAnAbstractNoun.htm>

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