

# Simran and Sikhi

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SIMRAN ਸਿਮਰਨ is a Sanskrit word that translates as remembrance. Its Punjabi equivalents are ਯਾਦ and ਚੇਤਾ. The evening Sikh prayer Rehras (ਰਹਿਰਾਸ) contains a verse: ਉਡੈ ਉਡਿ ਆਵੈ ਸੈ ਕੋਸਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਪਾਛੈ ਬਚਰੇ ਛਰਿਆ ॥ ਤਿਨ ਕਵਨੁ ਖਲਾਵੈ ਕਵਨੁ ਚੁਗਾਵੈ ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਕਰਿਆ ॥ (GGS page 10)। Guru Arjun uses the illustration of the florican – a migratory bird of cold regions which flies out long distances in search of food; leaving its young behind. Despite the distance, separation and the continually arduous task of finding food that the bird has to perform, remembrance of its offspring remains a constant. (ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਕਰਿਆ)।

Sikhi places primary importance on remembering God at all times. Guru Arjun says in GGS page 263 ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕਾ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਸਭ ਤੇ ਉਚਾ ॥ Meaning of all spiritual deeds, keeping God in one's mind or remembering Him is of the highest order. The vocabulary of Sikhi that has captured such a principle is *Naam Simran* ਨਾਮ ਸਿਮਰਨ. The meanings of the words *Naam* and

*Simran* within the context of Gurbani is as follows.

The GGS on page 803 contains a verse that reads: ਸਿਮਰਿ ਮਨਾ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮੁ ਚਿਤਾਰੇ ॥ Here Guru Arjun is elaborating the meaning of *Simran*. Remembering God within one's mind is *Simran*. This therefore is the Gurbani definition of *Simran*. Yet the question remains that since God has no discernible shape or form to the extent that the human mind cannot even begin to imagine any shape or form, how then does one visualize, let alone remember God? Gurbani thus advises the Sikh that remembrance must center on the ਨਾਮ *Naam*. Hence the verse above delineating *Simran* as a function of the mind (ਸਿਮਰਿ ਮਨਾ) and *Simran* as remembrance (ਚਿਤਾਰੇ) relates to the *Naam* of the all pervading God (ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮੁ ਚਿਤਾਰੇ) Ram comes from the word ਰਮਿਆ – meaning all pervading or present everywhere.

What then is meant by the word *Naam*? The Gurus make clear the meaning of *Naam* within Gurbani. *Naam* does not mean Name. Certainly not proper names that we human accord to other human beings or things – living or otherwise. Our parents who were in existence well before we came into being have determined our names. Parents and elders

undertake naming ceremonies. Those who make or create things also generally name them. Gurbani says God is self created - *Saibhang*. Gurbani also says there was no entity prior to God, He is *Ajooni*. Therefore there could have been no naming ceremonies per se and no proper name as well. Gurbani says that names that we humans accord to God in the path of spirituality, inclusive of *Sat ਸਤਿ* are descriptive and functional attributes (*ਕਿਰਤਮ ਨਾਮ*) of God. *ਕਿਰਤਮ* comes from the word *ਕਿਰਤ* meaning function. A Gurbani verse on page 1083 penned by Guru Arjun makes this clear: *ਕਿਰਤਮ ਨਾਮ ਕਥੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਜਿਹਬਾ ॥ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰਾ ਪਰਾ ਪੁਰਬਲਾ॥* Meaning, the names of Yours that I utter are *ਕਿਰਤਮ* which in turn means functional, descriptive and attributional. In spiritual terms *ਕਿਰਤਮ ਨਾਮ* translate as God's virtues and God's praises as perceived by those who choose to walk His path. So God's names are in essence given by His bhagats, His children, His devoted souls. Such names are innumerable, uncountable, ever increasing and all of equal stature. They are of equal standing because they are given and accorded by us, humans. It cannot be that one attribute of God is higher or lower than another. It is simply a matter of which attribute (s) a particular seeker

finds more fitting in his/her personal spiritual journey. Guru Nanak illustrates this point in the third *pauree* of Japji – the *Gavey Ko pauree*. Individuals perceive God in attributes that are most relevant to their individual spiritual situations, and proceed to “call,” name or refer to God in terms of these attributes, and then to sing these attributes. The Gurbani term for these myriad attributes of God is therefore *Naam*. Consequently, *Naam* refers to the unfathomable virtues, functions, merits, descriptions etc of the Creator-Being. Our Gurus, within their spiritual consciousness, similarly saw a variety of Godly virtues and listen them in Gurbani.

It follows therefore, that in *Gurmat*, *Naam Simran* refers to the process of remembering God's virtues / attributes *ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਦੇ ਗੁਣਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਯਾਦ ਕਰਨਾ*। The ultimate objective of such remembrance on a regular basis and as a constant of life (*ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਕਰਿਆ*) while going about our daily lives is to attempt to understand, appreciate and then acquire some of these virtues within our practical lives. The essence of Sikhi is for the Sikh to be Guru-like and God-like. The like-ness is in terms of virtues and attributes. So if God is *Nirbhau* *ਨਿਰਭਉ* (fearless), the object of the Sikh is to become

fearless. Guru Arjun puts this succinctly in the GGS page 294. ਨਿਰਭਉ ਜਪੈ ਸਗਲ ਭਉ ਮਿਟੈ। By contemplating on the Fearless all my fears have vanished. Guru Teg Bahadur ji epitomizes this virtue in a verse on page 1427 of the GGS: ਭੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਕਉ ਦੇਤ ਨਹਿ ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨਿ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਤਾਹਿ ਬਖਾਨਿ ॥ One who provides no fear to anyone and who fears none - says Nanak, is spiritually wise. Fearing none is a virtue of God (and this is so because God has no equal) and the ninth master is asking the spiritual person to acquire it, amongst other virtues. Such a virtue is to be acquired through the process of contemplation of the virtue itself.

But what is the *process* of *Naam Simran*? The GGS verse on page 1120 says : ਨਾਮੁ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ ਗਾਉ ਗੁਨ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਉਧਰੁ ਸਾਗਰ ਕੇ ਖਾਤ॥ This verse makes clear that singing the unfathomable praises and virtues (ਗਾਉ ਗੁਨ ) of Gobind the provider is the real process of *Naam Simran*. Singing in Gurmat is the primary process of contemplation whereby the mind's faculties are fully applied through the listening uttering part. The question now remains answering is: How or what method should the Sikh use in *Naam Simran*?

A vast majority of Sikhs has accepted that the repetitious recital of *Satnam* or *Waheguru*

is the be all and end all of *Naam Simran*. Nothing more, nothing less. All there is to *Naam Simran* is to sit still and recite it aloud for a fixed period of time or for a fixed number of recitations. Some have added the rosary to the process while others have deployed mechanical counting devices. Some have resorted to singing the words *Satnam* and *Waheguru* to tunes of "*Satnam Ji, Waheguru Ji*" or "*Wahguru Wahguru Wahguru Wahguru*" for considerable lengths of time. Others have created or imported "techniques" from elsewhere – closing the eyes, dimming the lights, coordinating breathing, adopting various sitting positions, pressing the index finger and thumb together, putting the palm to the heart, placing the limbs in a variety of positions etc. Many have laid claim to the "real" method even if drawn from such meaningless techniques. As if these distractions weren't enough, Sikhs now have to contend with the question of where and what to concentrate one's mind upon, when doing *Naam Simran*. The answers are as varied as they can get: put a photo of the Guru in front, focus on the third eye (wherever that is), fix your gaze on a lighted candle, concentrate on your forehead, look intensely at a lamp, or think of the feet of the baba are only

the tip of the iceberg “techniques” that have found their way into mainstream Sikhi.

But what answer does Gurbani provide in relation to the above question? The repetitious utterance of a word or *mantar* (with or without a rosary or counter) is called chanting or “ਚਟਨ” in Punjabi. Chanting has zero value in Gurmat. Repetitious chanting creates three major problems from the Gurmat and Gurbani point of view.

The first problem would be that Gurbani rubbishes repetitious chanting. Bhai Gurdas Ji has an elaborate Kabit as follows: ਖਾਂਡ ਖਾਂਡ ਕਰੈ ਜਿਹਬਾ ਨਾ ਸਵਾਦ ਮੀਠੋ ਆਵੈ, ਅਗਨ ਅਗਨ ਕਰੈ ਸੀਤ ਨਾ ਬਿਨਾਸ ਹੈ॥ Repetitiously chanting / saying “sugar, sugar” will no bring sweetness to ones taste; chanting “fire, fire” will not take the cold away. He goes on to provide four more illustrations – chanting “medicine” will not heal one, chanting “money” will not bring wealth, chanting “sandalwood” will not produce fragrance, and chanting “sun” will not produce light.

The second problem is that chanting Gurbani or any part of Gurbani makes that which is chanted as a *mantar*. A *mantar* by definition is a means to an end. It is chanted to produce some desired effect. Considering

Gurbani as being a means to an end puts the end higher than the means and reduces Gurbani to the level of an instrument, tool and contraption – fit for chanting purposes only. From chanting Satnam Waheguru, Sikhs have progressed to all sorts of other chanting – chanting *Dukh Bhjanjani Shabads*, chanting Japji from 6 am to 6pm, chanting *Chaupai* for 24 hours etc. The objective of each is to bring material gains and remove physical pains. There can be no bigger misconception than to consider Gurbani as a means. Guru Amardas ji is clear in his definition of Gurbani as an end in itself when he says on page 515 of the GGS ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁਬਾਣੀ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਹੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਜੇਵਡੁ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥ Baneer is the highest end – it is God Himself – and there is nothing comparable to it. That nothing is higher than Gurbani is the message of the third Master here.

The third problem is that if repetitious chanting / saying / singing of just one word, or a collection of words, or a *mantar* was the Gurmat way to God, where then does one place the utility of 1430 pages, 5,887 *Shabads* and some 40,000 verses? Of what use is this immense, rich and vast reservoir of spirituality that we call the Guru Granth Sahib which the Gurus took great pains, sacrifices and time to provide for us? If the mere and repetitious

singing of *Satnam* or *Waheguru* is to be considered Kirtan, then what were our Gurus doing composing 5,887 *Shabads* in 48 *raags*, countless sub and *misrat* (combined) *raags*, intricate poetic arrangements (*dohras*, *salokas*, *shunts*, etc) and innumerable *taals*? Did Guru Nanak, together with his musical partner and genius Bhai Mardana do kirtan of only “*Satnam ji, Waheguru ji*”? For what purpose did Guru Nanak compose 2,226 *Shabads* – NONE of which even use the word *Waheguru* even once? As a matter of fact, NONE of the Gurus have used the word *Waheguru* in their Banees. The Bhattas used the word *Waheguru* in the presence of Guru Arjun to refer to the fifth Master and to call out to Guru Arjun. So to a Sikh the word *Waheguru* would mean O Guru, O Wonderous Guru. Our Guru of course is the *Shabad* and the Wonderous-ness of the *Shabad* is within its message. Where does chanting fit into this wonder? It has to be said that if all that mattered was the chanting of one word or a collection of words (*mantar*), then the decision would have been so recorded in the GGS and the Sikh Scripture could have been completed in just one or two pages.

A specific problem relating to the Gurmat definition of Kirtan arises when we start to sing “*Satnam Ji, Waheguru Ji*,” or “*Waheguru*

*Waheguru Waheguru Waheguru*,” as kirtan. The Sikh Rehat Maryada under subsection (ਅ) page 15 defines Kirtan as ਕੀਰਤਨ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਨੂੰ ਰਾਗਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਚਾਰਣ ਕਰਨ ਨੂੰ ਕਹਿੰਦੇ ਹਨ। Translation: Kirtan is the singing of Gurbani in *Raags*. In subsection (ੲ), the SRM dictates: ਸੰਗਤ ਵਿਚ ਕੀਰਤਨ ਕੇਵਲ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਜਾਂ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਵਿਆਖਿਆ ਸਰੂਪ ਰਚਨਾ ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਦਾਸ ਜੀ ਤੇ ਭਾਈ ਨੰਦ ਲਾਲ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। Translation: In the presence of the Sangat, Kirtan is to be performed ONLY from Gurbani and the Gurbani explanatory writings of Bhai Gurdas Ji and Bhai Nand Lal Ji. Consequently when someone starts to sing as Kirtan “*Satnam Ji, Waheguru Ji*,” or “*Waheguru Waheguru Waheguru Waheguru*,” the most serious violation of the SRM occurs in that “*Satnam Ji, Waheguru Ji*,” and “*Waheguru Waheguru Waheguru Waheguru*” is neither Gurbani nor the writings of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal ji. If the excuse is that one of the two Bhaat compositions are being sung, then they must be sung exactly as they are written and in Raag, and without any kind of distortion. The Bhattas did not use the word *Satnam* as a single word. And the Bhatt compositions are not in chanting form and not meant to be chanted. They are meant to be sung in *Raag* and *Taal*. The first Bhatt verse is: ਸੇਵਕ ਕੈ ਭਰਪੂਰ

ਜਗੁ ਜਗੁ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਤੇਰਾ ਸਭੁ ਸਦਕਾ ॥ *Sewak Kay Bharpoor Jug Jug Wah Guru Tera Sab Sadka*. The other verse is ਸਤਿ ਸਾਚੁ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਨਿਵਾਸੁ ਆਦਿ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਸਦਾ ਤੁਹੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਵਾਹਿ ਜੀਉ ॥ *Sat Sach Sri Niwas Aad Purakh Sda Tuhi Wagheguru Waheguru Waheguru Wahe Jio*. The poetic style for both verses is *Swayea* and the **complete** verse should be sung as such in Kirtan – without distortion and without adding one, two, three or four more “Wahegurus” and without prolonged repetition. Cursory reading of both the above verses makes clear that there is no element of chanting in any one. Then there are those who start off by singing a normal Gurbani *Shabad* in *Raag* and *Taal*. Midway, or at any point that pleases them, they start to chant “*Waheguru, Waheguru, Waheguru Waheguru*.” This is clear distortion of the *Shabad*. The words being chanted are NOT contained within the *Shabad* being sung. Oftentimes, in the heat, fervor and energy of the chanting the remainder of the *shabad* is discarded and left unsung!

The process of rosary spinning ਮਾਲਾ ਫੇਰਨਾ has been thoroughly critiqued in Gurbani because it is a ritual. Display of spirituality and ego are just two of the negative (spiritually) traits connected with the rosary. It is of course a different issue that we have created fake photos of Guru Nanak and adorned the false image with rosaries in the Guru’s hands, over

the heads, and in the necks. Such photos are perhaps the creation of those who themselves wished to link to the *pakhand* of the rosary. A vast majority of main-stream Sikhs have equated such chanting to the concept of *Jaap*. This is perhaps the biggest spiritual blunder anyone can make. The equating of chanting “ਰਟਨ” to *Jaap* “ਜਾਪ” is not supported by Gurbani. *Jaap* is contemplation – the application of the deepest levels of spiritual concentration to understand the inner messages of Gurbani and to connect to them in the deepest possible sense. The philosophical underpinning of what constitutes *Jaap* is contained in Guru Nanak’s richly philosophical bane titled *Japji*. The 38 *paurees* and two *saloks* of *Japji* together combine to tell us what *Jaap* is within the Sikhi context. Elsewhere, the GGS defines *Jaap* in succinct terms: ਜਪਿ ਮਨ ਮੇਰੇ ਗੋਵਿੰਦ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ॥ (GGs 192)) namely that the *Jaap* of the Sikh is the application of the mind to the bane of the Guru. This means that *Jaap* for the Sikh is to contemplate the entire bane of the Guru. It certainly is not the repetitious chanting of one word, one *mantar* or one whole *shabad*. It is not even the chanting of the entire GGS. There are those who have taken the meaning of *Jaap* to levels low and beyond logic. They have mis-understood the title of

Guru Nanak's banee Japji to mean – *Japo Jee* – “come let's chant jee”. They thus either repetitiously chant the special composition just before Japji begins on page one of the GGS (*Ek Oankar, Satnam, Karta Purakh, Nirbhau, Nirvair, Akaal Moorat, Ajooni Saibhang, Gurparsaad*) or the salok immediately after Japji begins (*Aad Sach Jogaad Sach, Hai Bhee Sach, Nanak Hosee Bhee Sach*). They have self-created a name for these verses – *Mool Mantar* and (erroneous) concluded that the word “Jap” is a command by Guru Nanak for the Sikh to chant these verses. The very fact that the word “Jap” (with an *aungkar* to the ੴ) is a singular noun (and NOT a verb) and denotes the title of the banee we call Japji escapes such people. *Mantars* are meant to be chanted indeed. That is perhaps the underlying reason why the term *Mantar* is transfixed to these verses. While there is nothing inherently wrong in using the term *Mool Mantar* as nomenclature for the starting verses (just as we have, on our own, named the final banee in the GGS as ਭੋਗਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਲੋਕ *Bhogan Dey Salok*), it is a different thing altogether to allot a spiritual position (*mool*) and a spiritual function (*Mantar* meant to be chanted) where none was intended by the author (Guru) of the verse concerned. The word “*Mool*” or “*Mantar*” or “*Mool Mantar*”

does not appear anywhere within the vicinity of the above two verses. In other words, the authors of the two verses (Guru Arjun and Guru Nanak respectively) did not regard them as “*mantras*” and did not term them as such. They also did not regard them as “*mool*” or root, because to do that would be to classify Gurbani verses in an order of importance. All of Gurbani within the 1430 pages – irrespective of the author – Guru or Bhagat or Sikh – is all “*mool*”.

Then there is the matter of the “*techniques*” – all of which have been critiqued by Gurbani as ritualistic and pretentious *pakhand*. Unfortunately some Sikhs have become entangled in these techniques as the end all of Sikhi. It never fails to surprise the average intellect that while we perform all other important things with our eyes open, the most important aspect of spirituality – *Simran* – is to done with the eyes shut and the lights off. It is Chanting that requires these pre-requisites. But Gurbani says on page 1420 of the GGS: ਨਾਇ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਘਟਿ ਚਾਨਣਾ ਆਨੇਰੁ ਗਵਾਵੈ ॥ (ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਪੰਨਾ ੧੨੪੦) meaning that the *Naam* is such an illumination, that listening to it dispels inner darkness. Why then do we put the condition of outer darkness in our spiritual activity of *Naam Simran*? Is it because we have distorted the

meanings and understanding of the concepts of *Jaap* and *Naam Simran*?

What then is *Naam Simran* in essence? Let's refer to some verses from Gurbani. The fifth Guru says on page 803 of the GGS: *ਸਿਮਰਿ ਮਨਾ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮੁ ਚਿਤਾਰੇ ॥* The first point therefore is that *Simran* is the process of applying the mind to the remembrance of God by contemplation of His virtues. The term *Simar Mna* – is worth pondering over. It is to be done by the mind. There are a myriad of ways in which God can be remembered and contemplated upon. Talking about Him, listening to someone talk about Him, reading about Him, discussing Him are all acts of *Simran*. This essay, because it is discussing Him is *Simran* both in the act of writing and reading. Needless to say, both activities are done with the eyes open and lights switched on. Yet the best and Guru-recommended method of remembering God and to contemplate on Him is to read, listen, sing, discuss, understand, help others understand, and to walk the path as laid out in Gurbani. The GGS has a verse on page 296 : *ਗੁਣ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਨਾਮ ਧੁਨਿ ਬਾਣੀ ॥* Meaning *Naam* is the virtues of God (*ਗੁਣ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ*), and these virtues are found in the reading, listening and singing (*ਧੁਨਿ*) of Gurbani. Another verse on page 973 makes it clear: *ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਮਨਿ ਗਾਈਐ ॥*

*ਇਹੁ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਪਾਈਐ* meaning the singing *ਗਾਈਐ* of Gods virtues with application of the mind *ਮਨਿ ਗਾਈਐ* is *Simran*. And that such *Simran* (remembrance) comes from the True Guru (Gurbani). The second point therefore is that the basis of *Naam Simran* in Sikhi is Gurbani that is contained within the 1430 pages. The third point relating to *Naam Simran* can be found in another verse on GGS page 1222. *ਸੁਵਣੀ ਕੀਰਤਨੁ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਇਹੁ ਸਾਧ ਕੋ ਆਚਾਰੁ ॥* Meaning that the Kirtan of Gurbani is a beautiful method (*ਆਚਾਰੁ*) of undertaking the *Simran* of God. The fourth point can be found in a verse of Guru Arjun on page 262 of the GGS: *ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕਾ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਸਾਧ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ॥ ਸਰਬ ਨਿਧਾਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਰੰਗਿ ॥* Meaning, to join the *sadh sangat* and to do the things that are undertaken in a *sangat* (listen, sing, discuss, understand, appreciate Gods' virtues) is the *Simran* of the Master. The fifth point concerns concentration – what or where to place one's mind *ਧਿਆਨ* while performing *Simran*. Because *Simran* in Sikhi is Gurbani based, and every single verse of Gurbani contains deep meaning, the understanding of which requires full concentration, the mind has to focus on the Gurbani words themselves and not some external object. Guru Nanak says on page 1075 of the GGS: *ਕਲਜੁਗ ਮਹਿ ਕੀਰਤਨੁ ਪਰਧਾਨਾ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜਪੀਐ*

ਲਾਇ ਧਿਆਨਾ ॥ Meaning: within the *Jaap* of the Gurmukh, Kirtan is of highest order (ਕੀਰਤਨ ਪਰਧਾਨਾ) and the concentration (ਧਿਆਨਾ) must remain within the Kirtan itself.

From the above five point discussion it can be surmised that *Naam Simran* of a Sikh is to be undertaken at two distinct levels. The first is as an individualized and personal activity and the second an institutionalized activity within the confines of the sangat. Yet the **basis** of both levels is Gurbani. Personal *Simran* entails reading Gurbani, performing *Nit Nem*, committing as much Gurbani as possible to memory (so as to internalize the message at some point within one's life), researching the meanings of Gurbani, singing Gurbani, discussing and sharing Gurbani messages within the family and circle of friends, contemplating deeply on the messages of Gurbani, putting the messages into daily existence, internalizing the values within Gurbani etc. At the institutional level, *Simran* entails joining the sangat in Kirtan, the discourse of Gurbani (*Katha*) and using the sangat atmosphere (*diwan*) to expand on ones inner understanding, appreciation and contemplation of Gurbani messages.

Equating *Naam Simran* to chanting, labeling it meditation and touting the "benefits"

of such chanting is to miss the point of the spirituality of Sikh *Simran* all together. "I feel peaceful, rested, relaxed, tension free etc" are some of the benefits that one hears about from the practitioners of chanting *Satnam* or *Waheguru* or the *Mool Mantar*. These (and many others) are physical benefits that can come about from chanting just about anything or any word or even nothing, meditating on something or nothing at all. The benefits are the results of reduced brain activity, reduced muscle tensions and slowed breathing that accompany chanting. Repeating the same thing over and over requires little or no mental effort hence the relaxation. Yet these are physical activities with purely physical benefits. Sikh *Simran* is a spiritual activity of a higher realm all together. The benefits of *Naam Simran* are of the highest order - to be Guru-like and God-like.

Sikhi is a journey which is Gurbani-centred. Sikh *Simran* is similarly Gurbani-centred. Gurbani is the soul of Sikhi. The third Guru says on page 982 of the GS : ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਸਾਰੇ ॥ Everything that is Sikhi is within Gurbani. The God of Sikhi is also within Gurbani. ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਹੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਜੇਵਡੁ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥ (ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਪੰਨਾ ੫੧੬)। The *mantar* of Sikhi is Gurbani too, as versed on page 562 of the GGS:

ਸਚੁ ਮੰਤ੍ਰੁ ਤੁਮਾਰਾ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਬਾਣੀ ॥ and again on page 1208: ਬਾਣੀ ਮੰਤ੍ਰੁ ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖਨ ਕੀ ਮਨਹਿ ਉਤਾਰਨ ਮਾਂਨ ਕਉ ॥ ਖੋਜਿ ਲਹਿਓ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਖ ਥਾਨਾਂ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਾ ਬਿਸੁਮ ਕਉ ॥ (ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਪੰਨਾ ੧੨੦੮)। The Jaap of a Sikh is also Gurbani, as versed on page 192 of the GGS: ਜਪਿ ਮਨ ਮੇਰੇ ਗੋਵਿੰਦ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ॥ It thus simply can't be that Sikh *Simran* be anything other than Gurbani or outside of Gurbani. And because Gurbani is spiritual, the benefits of *Naam Simran* are also spiritual.

It would be an irony of ironies to look for the definition, techniques and methods of *Naam Simran* outside of Gurbani. Yet the irony is prevalent. One such ironical occasion witnessed by the author is worth narrating given that it became the inspiration for this essay. An acclaimed *Ragi Jatha* was given an hour to perform Gurbani Kirtan in a local Gurdwara. They rendered 4 *shabads* in the most beautiful melodies, appropriate *raags* and intricate *taals* complete with *parmaans* (illustrations) from the GGS. They completed the final *Shabad* just when there were 3 -4 minutes left and proceeded to announce to the *sangat* ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤ ਜੀ, ਤਿੰਨ ਚਾਰ ਮਿੰਟ ਬਾਕੀ ਹਨ, ਆਉ ਹੁਣ ਸਿਮਰਨ ਕਰੀਏ। Sadh *sangat* we have 3-4 minutes left NOW lets do some *simran*. They then proceeded to chant *Waheguru Waheguru, Waheguru Waheguru* inviting the

*sangat* to join their chanting. If this is indeed *Simran*, then what was it they did for the 57 minutes where they sang Gurbani? When I pointed out to them privately later that the REAL SIMRAN was within the 57 minutes of their Kirtan and not the final 3-4 which was ਰਟਨ or chanting, their response was feeble, shabby and pathetic: that is how the *sangat* understands *simran*, the *sangat* wants it that way, it pleases the *sangat* etc. I proceeded to ask if it was too much effort on their part to ask if that was how Gurbani explained *simran*, how the Gurus wanted *Simran* to be, and if the chanting pleased the Guru. Their final response: that is how they had been doing it all along. My final response: if spiritual beings are going to keep doing what they have been doing all along, there would be no need for our Gurus, their Gurbani and Sikhi even. Irony has to have its limits.

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