

Elements of Meditation in Gurbani (1):

What Should Not You Seek ¹

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It is a common observation that many seekers take on meditation with a purely materialistic outlook on life. Some wish to start it as an exercise so that their heart may beat slower and it may function for many more years, that the digestive and eliminative organs function in a more comforting mode, or that their senility may be postponed. Others wish that there be a victory in a criminal or a tax evasion case, that the check books show ever increasing balance, that their business may produce much more profit, and that the business of their neighbors be doomed. Still others desire a spiritual or occult power in order to enjoy greater harmony in life, enjoy more and better earthly things, and to catch bigger and better fish in the nets. All of these seekers of meditation go on believing that fulfillment can be found in the materialistic world, money brings satisfaction, fame is the answer to their depression, or that fulfillment lies in good health. The purpose of this discussion is to stress that one can never really benefit from meditation so long as one continues to seek it for the purpose of demonstrating its worldly potency, that is, to gain occult or physical powers, or to achieve materialistic gains. Any exercise of meditation to possess an automobile, more money, or a better position at work or in society will only strengthen the grip of illusions and as such will be poisonous to any spiritual life.

ਨਾਮ ਧਨ ਬਿਨੁ ਹੋਰ ਸਭ ਬਿਖੁ ਜਾਣੁ ॥ ³

Without the wealth of (Lord's) Name, consider all other riches as poisons.

The Guru tells us that only those will succeed on their spiritual journey whom do materialistic desires not touch.

ਲੋਭ ਮੋਹ ਮਾਇਆ ਮਮਤਾ ਫੁਨਿ ਅਉ ਬਿਖਿਅਨ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ॥ ਹਰਖ ਸੋਗ ਪਰਸੈ ਜਿਹ ਨਾਹਨਿ ਸੋ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਹੈ ਦੇਵਾ ॥ ⁴

The one who is not affected by greed, the love of illusions, the service of evil, and, affects of pain or pleasure, is the embodiment of God.

Meditation is for the purpose of realizing God consciousness. Through meditation God's kingdom is revealed. God is realized as the apotheosis of all good. In achieving the experience of God, our problems of human life are also resolved but only as a tangible. However, we are distracted to a wrong path if we desire to gain any thing material that is separate and apart from Divinity. Any attempt of meditation that has within itself any trace of desire to get something other than God's gift of meditation, or to acquire something other than love for meditation is no longer the meditation. Rather it is a means to further strengthen the grip of our animal instincts.

ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨ ਨਾਮ ਬਿਨਾ ਜੋ ਦੂਜੈ ਲਾਗੇ ਤੇ ਸਾਕਤ ਨਰ ਜਮਿ ਘੁਟੀਐ ॥ ⁵

O my mind, those who forsake naam and take to the duality fall into the grip of the angel of death.

ਜਪਿ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਿਸਤਰੀਐ ਹੋਰੁ ਦੁਤੀਆ ਬਿਰਥੀ ਸਾਖੀ ॥ ⁶

Only by contemplating on the Lord's Name one is emancipated and the rest is but a vain prattle.

If resolution of materialistic agenda is not the purpose of meditation, should we postpone the spiritual journey until those agendas are completed. Desire for meditation can not be postponed until our materialistic problems are resolved. Often we say: "If only this pain could be stopped, then I really could begin the practice of meditation. I can't do it while I am in such a pain." "If I can afford a retirement sooner, I could devote more time to meditation, or "if only my children get married, I could be free and at peace and would be able to commit to meditation." In other words, people infer that the drive for meditation is hindered by some physical, social or financial condition. Evidence is to the contrary. For example, those who do not undertake meditation in youth, often do not do so when they are old.

¹ The verses from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib are cited with the author, source, page and line numbers according to the Granth published by Shiromni Parbhandak Committee, Amritsar. Each verse is followed by a brief commentary relating to the subject of this discussion and may be distinct from an exact translation.

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³ Das, Guru Amar, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 664, l.2

⁴ Bahadur, Guru Teg, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 220, l.5.

⁵ Das, Guru Ram, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p.170, l.10

⁶ Dev, Guru Arjan, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 1227, l. 14.

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਕਾਲੀ ਜਿਨੀ ਨ ਰਾਵਿਆ ਧਉਲੀ ਰਾਵੈ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਕਰਿ ਸਾਂਈ ਸਿਉ ਪਿਰਹੜੀ ਰੰਗੁ ਨਵੇਲਾ ਹੋਇ ॥⁷

One who enjoys not his union with God in youth, rarely does one so in old age. So, get in relationship with your God right now, and turn a new leaf in your life!

There are people with millions of dollars who have not discovered divine consciousness; there are people in perfect health, or enjoying highest glory of public acclaim who have neither known spirituality, nor have they found peace or fulfillment. Therefore, the Guru poses this question to answer our riddle.

ਕਿਨ ਬਿਧਿ ਕੁਸਲੁ ਹੋਤ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਾਈ ॥ ਕਿਉ ਪਾਈਐ ਹਰਿ ਰਾਮ ਸਹਾਈ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਕੁਸਲੁ ਨ ਗ੍ਰਿਹਿ ਮੇਰੀ ਸਭ ਮਾਇਆ ॥ ਉਚੇ ਮੰਦਰ ਸੁੰਦਰ ਛਾਇਆ ॥ ਝੁਠੇ ਲਾਲਚਿ ਜਨਮੁ ਗਵਾਇਆ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਹਸਤੀ ਘੋੜੇ ਦੇਖਿ ਵਿਗਾਸਾ ॥ ਲਸਕਰ ਜੋੜੇ ਨੇਬ ਖਵਾਸਾ ॥ ਗਲਿ ਜੇਵੜੀ ਹਉਮੈ ਕੇ ਫਾਸਾ ॥ ੨ ॥ ਰਾਜੁ ਕਮਾਵੈ ਦਹ ਦਿਸ ਸਾਰੀ ॥ ਮਾਣੈ ਰੰਗ ਭੋਗ ਬਹੁ ਨਾਰੀ ॥ ਜਿਉ ਨਰਪਤਿ ਸੁਪਨੈ ਭੇਖਾਰੀ ॥ ੩ ॥ ਏਕੁ ਕੁਸਲੁ ਮੇ ਕਉ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਬਤਾਇਆ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਜੋ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਰੇ ਸੁ ਹਰਿ ਕਿਆ ਭਗਤਾ ਭਾਇਆ ॥ ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਉਮੈ ਮਾਰਿ ਸਮਾਇਆ ॥ ੪ ॥ ਇਨ ਬਿਧਿ ਕੁਸਲੁ ਹੋਤ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਾਈ ॥ ਇਉ ਪਾਈਐ ਹਰਿ ਰਾਮ ਸਹਾਈ ॥⁸

How shall I be in joy, O my sibling? How shall I find the Lord, the mainspring of my life? Due to the love of Maya, my mind is not at peace, and my high mansions are just a beautiful shadow. In vain have I wasted my life in greed. I am exulted at the sight of the horses, the elephants, the gathering of the armies and the royal assistants. (But) they are like a noose of vanity around my neck. One may have sway over the entire world, may revel in all kinds of joy, and enjoy many sensuous women. In actuality, this person is like a king turned beggar in a dream. The True Guru showed me the way to bliss. Whatever the Lord does must be pleasing to God's devotees. Stilling one's ego, one merges in the Real. Thus is the Bliss attained, O my sibling. Thus is experienced the Divine, the supporter of all.

Whatever is achieved without the touch of God will not be right for us and it is the life experience of meditation of God's Name that makes one realize.

ਨਾਨਕ ਆਣੇ ਆਵੈ ਰਾਸਿ ॥ ਵਿਣੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਸਾਬਾਸਿ ॥⁹

O Nanak, as God wills, God makes things right. Without the Name, no one will receive approval.

We must be aware that when most of us start on the spiritual path, our state of consciousness is materialistic. Only on the path of Gurmat, the Guru's way to God, we are trained to reverse the picture. Then we begin to inculcate the meditation in our heart instead; and in the process of meditation, we see the desire for material goods, or relief from the worldly pains to disappear; lust, greed, and urge to worldly fulfillment vanish. In the composition of Sukhmani, Guru Arjan spoke the following for those who do not know how to stop nurturing their worldly desires.

ਚਾਰਿ ਪਦਾਰਥ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਮਾਗੈ ॥ ਸਾਧ ਜਨਾ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਲਾਗੈ ॥ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਆਪੁਨਾ ਦੂਖੁ ਮਿਟਾਵੈ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਰਿਦੈ ਸਦ ਗਾਵੈ ॥ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਆਪੁਨੀ ਸੋਭਾ ਲੋਚੈ ॥ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਇਹ ਹਉਮੈ ਛੋਚੈ ॥ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਜਨਮ ਮਰਣ ਤੇ ਡਰੈ ॥ ਸਾਧ ਜਨਾ ਕੀ ਸਰਨੀ ਪਰੈ ॥ ਜਿਸੁ ਜਨ ਕਉ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਦਰਸ ਪਿਆਸਾ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਤਾ ਕੈ ਬਲਿ ਬਲਿ ਜਾਸਾ ॥¹⁰

One, who desires for the four cardinal possessions, should commit oneself to the service of the Saints. If you long to erase your sorrows, you must ever sing the praises of the Lord in your heart. If you seek praises for yourself, learn to forsake ego by joining the society of the holy. If you dread the pangs of birth and death, take refuge of the Saints. One who only seeks the vision of the Lord, Nanak is sacrifice unto that person.

It is true that when we seek, we receive materialistic benefits from the meditation. Reduction of stress, satisfying relationships with others, healthy body, abundant supply of materials, success in business, and creativity in worldly endeavors, are some of the tangible benefits of achieving the Divine consciousness through meditation. Guru Arjan described the tangibles that were given to him when he practiced meditation on god's Name.

⁷ Farid, Shaikh, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 1378, l. 10.

⁸ Dev, Guru Arjan, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 175, l. 19.

⁹ Dev, Guru Nanak. In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 25, l. 15

¹⁰ Dev, Guru Arjan, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p.266, l. 4

ਸਿਮਰਉ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਵਉ ॥ ਕਲਿ ਕਲੇਸ ਤਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਮਿਟਾਵਉ ॥¹¹

I meditate continuously in remembrance of the Lord, and attain harmony; anguish and ailments are dispelled from my body.

However, we must realize that the inner fulfillment must come first before the comforts of this world may be added. When they are achieved, it is without asking, and more importantly, after satiating any hunger for those. We do not ask for or desire for them. Rather, we learn that asking for any thing other than the gift of God's Naam, is asking for a Pandora box of troubles.

ਵਿਣੁ ਤੁਧੁ ਹੋਰੁ ਜਿ ਮੰਗਣਾ ਸਿਰਿ ਦੁਖਾ ਕੈ ਦੁਖ ॥ ਦੇਹਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੀਆ ਉਤਰੈ ਮਨ ਕੀ ਭੁਖ ॥¹²

To ask for anything or any body other than You, Oh Lord, is inviting the most miserable of miseries. Kindly bless me with your Naam, which is the fulfillment, and make me content that way so that may the hunger of my mind be satiated.

As long as we are merely trying to exchange physical discord for physical harmony, we do not have any concept of what the spiritual riches are, or what the spiritual health is. Therefore, we must begin our meditation with the recognition that neither physical health nor material wealth is the object of our search for Divine. Any desire for things or persons will prevent, or delay our entrance into the spiritual kingdom. Only the steadfast focus on the goal of seeking solely the God-realization will open the way to reaching the higher consciousness. In that consciousness, we will find all things other than experience in divinity to be tasteless, or to be more accurate, we will find all desires within us satiated. When we will no longer search for the satisfaction that the outside world can give, but seek only eternal peace, we will open the gates to the spiritual life.

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੋਈ ਨਰੁ ਸੁਖੀਆ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਵੈ ॥ ਅਉਰ ਸਗਲ ਜਗੁ ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹਿਆ ਨਿਰਭੈ ਪਦੁ ਨਹੀ ਪਾਵੈ ॥¹³

Says Nanak: "One who sings the Lord's Praise will alone be in harmony. The rest of the world is lured away by illusions and attains not to the state of divine consciousness."

As a seeker, as we Sikhs are of spiritual wisdom, an important question is what is the motivation for persuasion of our true spirituality? Is there an urge for God-realization, an urge that can be trodden here on earth? Can it be achieved here on earth? Is there any short cut? The answer to all these questions is a yes. Not only there is a way of accomplishing these objectives, but there are short cuts too. One short cut, so simple and yet so very difficult, is to perform a bit of mental surgery on ourselves and reshape our materialistic appetite. Let us take a sharp scalpel and cut out cravings for person, place, thing, circumstance, or condition. Every craving must be cut away in order that only one remains. It is to reach divine consciousness and to fall in love with it alone. We will reach the life eternal without cutting of any worldly activity.

ਗਈ ਬਹੋੜੁ ਬੰਦੀ ਛੋੜੁ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ ਦੁਖਦਾਰੀ ॥ ਕਰਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ਧਰਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ਲੋਭੀ ਮਾਇਆਧਾਰੀ ॥ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਰਿਓ ਭਗਤੁ ਗੋਵਿੰਦ ਕਾ ਇਹੁ ਰਾਖਹੁ ਪੈਜ ਤੁਮਾਰੀ ॥¹⁴

O' the Restorer of what was taken away, the Liberator from captivity, the Formless Lord, the Destroyer of pain, I do not know about karma and good deeds, I do not know about dharma and righteous living, I am so greedy, chasing illusions. As I choose to go by the name of God's devotee; please, save this honor of yours.

Awakening of Divine within is the main purpose of meditation. Thus, any objective or exercise for material things or persons defeats the purpose of meditation. To experience Divinity itself is the only good that we must seek from our meditation.

¹¹ Dev, Guru Arjan, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 262, l. 10.

¹² Dev, Guru Arjan, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p.958, l.1

¹³ Bahadur, Guru Teg, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p.220, l.12

¹⁴ Dev, Guru Arjan, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 624, l. 14