

Elements of Meditation in Gurbani (2):

Self-Orientation is Hindrance ¹

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Self-oriented people are the citizens of this Aquarius age who listen to the human consciousness. They are stuck in the duality and are deep in materialistic mud. In their desires they always want that their materiality be made considerably better and richer. Sikh theologian, Bhai Gurdas, describes such a personality as:

ਮਨਮੁਖ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਂਵਦੇ ਦੁਰਮਤਿ ਦੂਜਾ ਭਾਉ ਦੁਹੇਲਾ॥ ⁴

Manmukh, the self-oriented, conduct their life practices under the influence of an evil-consciousness and they suffer on account of their attachment with the duality.

Scripture tells us that a self-oriented people can neither indulge in meditation⁵ nor be recipient of the Divine Word, their indulgence is always in the ego.

ਮਨਮੁਖ ਨਾਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਨੀ ਵਿਣੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਪਤਿ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਸਬਦੈ ਸਾਦੁ ਨ ਆਇਓ ਲਾਗੇ ਦੂਜੈ ਭਾਇ ॥ ⁶

The self-oriented people (manmukhs) do not know the Naam. Without Naam, they lose their honor. They do not savor the Sabad and are attached to the love of duality.

It is because a self-oriented person is possessed with a egotistic and false selfhood, which prevent him/er from knowing the meaning of meditation.

ਭਗਤੀ ਸਾਰ ਨ ਜਾਣਨੀ ਮਨਮੁਖ ਅਹੰਕਾਰੀ ॥ ⁷

The self-ward egotist knows not the essence of worship

ਮਨਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਅਭ ਭਗਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਸਿ ਹਉਮੈ ਪਚਹਿ ਦਿਵਾਨੇ ॥ ⁸

The self-oriented manmukhs are unable to meditate; they are psychotic, wasting away in their egotism.

Under a spell of the falsehood, a self-oriented person undertakes meditation to be stout or slim or to have more money. The point is that the self-oriented people will indulge in meditation for an improvement or an increase of that very materiality which separates them from the divine and such meditation will never serve the purpose for which they are urged to practice it. Very often their human desires, when fulfilled, would leave them more unsatisfied, because their self orientation deprives them from the wisdom to know what their real needs are. The self-oriented person is ignorant of severe limitations of the human mind and all resourcefulness of God..

ਸੋਈ ਅਜਾਣੁ ਕਹੈ ਮੈ ਜਾਨਾ ਜਾਨਣਹਾਰੁ ਨ ਛਾਨਾ ਰੇ ॥ ⁹

One who claims to know what is good for him/er is ignorant. The ignorant does not realize that God knows all.

Only the Guru oriented knows that it is the Divine within who is all wisdom and may plan better for any individual

ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਹਟੁ ਸੋਈ ਵਥੁ ਜਾਣੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਦੇਇ ਨ ਪਛੋਤਾਇਦਾ ॥ ¹⁰

The God oriented person is given what is right and this person does not regret receiving it. God alone knows what is in store.

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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⁴ Gurdas, Bhai, Var 30, Pauri 1, l. 3.

⁵ Term meditation is used interchangeably for *Naam Jap* and *Simran*. In reality Naam Jap is a behavioral skill and *Simran* is a state of mind.

⁶ Das, Guru Amar. In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 28, l. .8.

⁷ Das, Guru Amar. In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p 429, l.16.

⁸ Dev, Guru Nanak, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 1345, l. 13.

⁹ Dev, Guru Arjan, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 387, l. 1.

¹⁰ Das, Guru Amar. In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 1066, l. 18.

The Divine is within me and the same Divine is within you. That is revealed through meditation. The presence of God and the power of God are within us but on account of our worldly desires we have become self-oriented people. We have built up a state of consciousness that consists of layers and layers of the material illusions. A self-oriented person does not succeed in breaking through these layers to reach the altitude of God. Until we do so, we shall fail in our Meditation and miss the path to fulfillment.

ਬਜਰ ਕਪਾਟ ਕਾਇਆ ਗੜ੍ਹ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਕੂੜੁ ਕੁਸਤੁ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੀ ॥ ਭਰਮਿ ਭੂਲੇ ਨਦਰਿ ਨ ਆਵਨੀ ਮਨਮੁਖ ਅੰਧ ਅਗਿਆਨੀ ॥ ¹¹

The ignorant and blind egocentrics are deluded by doubt and they do not see the veils of falsehood. Ego closed the fortress of our body.

The self-oriented depends entirely on the human sense for guidance. To the human sense, the spiritual way of life seems either impossible, or short-lived and intangible. Such a person does not realize that, in reality, the most tangible thing in the world is the Divine Presence and all worldly objects are symbols of God's presence. Until that is realized, the things of this world are not outer symbols of the Divine Grace. When one becomes the Guru Oriented, these symbols change their meaning and one understands,

ਇਹੁ ਜਗੁ ਸਚੈ ਕੀ ਹੈ ਕੋਠੜੀ ਸਚੇ ਕਾ ਵਿਚਿ ਵਾਸੁ ॥ ¹²

The world is the Abode of the True One and the True One abides in it.

As long as self oriented men and women live by bread alone, by the strife and struggle involved in human activity; as long as they are dependent exclusively on outer symbols or effects, they will be misled. After wasting many efforts they will end up as nothing and discover eventually that these worldly possessions are transitory. We can see the effects of a dependence on material things as we look into the faces of the men and women who are living by these effects placing their reliance only on the health of their bodies, the wealth of their pocketbooks, and other things of this world. In those people, you will see a picture of a self-oriented person. This type of mentality should be discarded under Guru's guidance.

ਮਨ ਰੇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਅਗਨਿ ਨਿਵਾਰਿ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਕਹਿਆ ਮਨਿ ਵਸੈ ਹਉਮੈ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਮਾਰਿ ॥ ¹³

O' my mind, become Gurmukh, and extinguish the fire within. Let the Words of the Guru abide within your mind; let egotism and desires die.

ਮਨੁ ਬੁਧਿ ਅਰਪਿ ਧਰਉ ਗੁਰ ਆਗੈ ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਮੈ ਅਕਥੁ ਕਥਈਆ ॥ ¹⁴

I dedicate my mind and intellect to the Guru. By His Grace I am able to do what was impossible to do.

When we become the seekers, we pledge that we shall obey the scriptural injunction to let the Guru bear our witness. We know not what we should seek, but the Guru makes the intercession for us.

ਮਨੁ ਤਨੁ ਕਾਟਿ ਦੇਉ ਗੁਰ ਆਗੈ ਜਿਨਿ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਮਾਰਗੁ ਪੰਥੁ ਦਿਖਈਆ ॥ ¹⁵

I offer my mind and body to the Guru, who has shown me the way to the God.

When we orient to the Guru to seek the skills of meditation, the Guru becomes our advocate and acquaints us with the Divine way.

ਵਿਛੁੜਿਆ ਮੇਲੈ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਰਿ ਸੰਜੋਗ ॥ ^{੧੬}

The Guru united the separted ones with God acting as an intercessor at the God's Court.

ਅਗਿਆਨੁ ਭਰਮੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਕਟਿਆ ਗੁਰ ਭਏ ਬਸੀਠਾ ॥ ^{੧੭}

When the Guru becomes one's intercessor, the ignorance, doubt, and suffering are dispelled.

ਦਹ ਦਿਸਿ ਸਾਖ ਹਰੀ ਹਰੀਆਵਲ ਸਹਜਿ ਪਕੈ ਸੋ ਮੀਠਾ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਅਸੁਨਿ ਮਿਲਹੁ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਭਏ ਬਸੀਠਾ ॥ ^{੧੮}

All over the boughs are green: but that alone is ripe-sweet which ripens in its own time. Meet Thou me, O Lord, in the month of Asuj: yea, the Perfect Guru is now my intercessor.

¹¹ Das, Guru Amar, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 514, l.9

¹² Dev, Guru Angad, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 463, l. 13.

¹³ Dev, Guru Nanak, In: Guru Granth Sahib(1604), p.22, l.11

¹⁴ Das, Guru Ram, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 834, l. 17.

¹⁵ Dev, Guru Arjan, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 836, l. 3.

¹⁶ Dev, Guru Arjan, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 957, l. 1

¹⁷ Dev, Guru Arjan, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 708, l. 9

¹⁸ Dev, Guru Nanak, In: Guru Granth Sahib(1604), p. 1109, l. 1

The lesson is that to practice meditation successfully, we must discard the guidance from our own intuition or from the devil within. Rather, we should hear the Word of the Guru.

ਮਨ ਕੀ ਮਤਿ ਤਿਆਗੀਐ ਸੁਣੀਐ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ॥ ¹⁹

Shed thy self-willedness, and hear the Words of Wisdom (of the Lord).

ਕਥਨੀ ਬਦਨੀ ਜੇ ਕਰੇ ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਬੁਝ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਘਟਿ ਚਾਨਣਾ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਾਵੈ ਸੋਇ]²⁰

The self-oriented manmukh babbles on and on, but does not comprehend. One whose heart is illumined, by Guru's Teachings, obtains the Name of the Lord.

¹⁹ Dev, Guru Arjan, In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 814, l. 12.

²⁰ Das, Guru Amar. In: Guru Granth Sahib (1604), p. 492, l. 5.