

1. 'Karam Naam' or names which are qualitative or attributive in nature such as merciful, all-pervading, compassionate etc. The most common one used by Sikhs is 'Vaheguru' which means 'Wonderful Lord'.
2. 'Pura Purbala Naam' or personal names which are all-comprehensive, ancient and eternal. The eternal name used by Sikhs is 'Sat Naam' which means 'Truth is Your Identity'.

### Receiving Naam from Khalsa (Master Souls)

When an individual chooses to consciously become a Sikh and shine as a Khalsa (pure) light they are given Amrit which is prepared by five baptised Sikhs who will recite five specific Gurbani meditations in order to infuse the Holy Naam into the water. This will then be given to the new Sikhs to give them a head start in their spiritual practice.

### What is the best time to Meditate on Naam?

All times are great for meditation but Amrit Vela, which is from 3am till 6am, is the best and will provide the greatest fruit. This is due to the serenity of the environment at that time of day and the idea that during this time, the power of your meditation is multiplied by many times.

### Naam in Other Faith Systems

Naam is not unique to the Sikh way of life. Naam is ancient and eternal and it is an underlying belief in all the major world religions. Some examples of Naam in other faith beliefs are given below.

#### Hinduism

Hindus believe that the whole of creation was made through Naad (Naam). They also refer to Naam as Akash Bani. The Amritbind Upanishad read, *"Like the butter hidden in milk, the Pure Consciousness resides in every being. That ought to be constantly churned out by the churning rod of the mind."*

#### Buddhism

An extract from the Tibetan Book of the Dead reads *"...vibrating and dazzling like coloured threads, flashing, radiant, transparent, glorious and awe inspiring...will strike against thy heart, so bright that the eye can not bear to look upon them...Be not*

*afraid of that brilliant radiance of five colours, nor terrified; but know that Wisdom to be thine own."*

#### Christianity

An extract of the bible states, *"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God."*

### What Happens if you don't commune with Naam?

#### Human Life is Wasted

Guru Nanak Dev Ji says, *"Everyone in the world is a unique gambler. They wish for all material joy at the cost of Naam."*

#### Truly Dead

Guru Amar Das Ji says, *"That person alone wakes up to the reality whom God may so desire and meditates on the Word of the Master. Says Nanak, they indeed are dead who do not commune with Naam."*

#### Enlightenment and Life is Harder

Guru Arjan Dev Ji says, *"Always sing the praises of God and your sorrows will vanish. By forgetting the Naam, says Nanak, one is behest with difficulties"*.

### Summary

- Naam or Anhad-Bani is the creative, destructive and sustaining power of God
- Naam is characterised by five sets of unique sounds and light patterns called the 'Panj Shabad' which are S, T, N, M and A, all contained within the Guru Mantra 'Sat Naam'
- Gurbani and Guru Mantras are used to focus our spirit at the third eye. This is where we will taste the sweet internal nectar called 'Amrit'
- From the third eye onwards, Naam carries us safely, one step at a time, across the five realms of existence (Khands) up to the highest realm of truth or 'Sach Khand', which is our true home



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# What is Naam?

Sikh Dharma

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## Introduction

Naam, Shabad, or Word, is the quintessence of Sikh spirituality and is mentioned 2546 times in the Sikh holy scripture. But what exactly is Naam and why is it so important? This noble Truth shall now be examined.

## What is Naam?

### Naam as a Controlling Force

Naam is the great creative and controlling power of God. Naam has no beginning and no end. It is unchanging, ancient and eternal and it is the life current which pervades the entire creation. The withdrawal of Naam from creation would lead to its decay and destruction.

### Attributes of Naam

Naam is characterised by sweet strains and melodious tunes and powerful light which can be seen and witnessed. This sound current is active in the whole of creation. This is one of the ways humans experience this phenomenon within themselves.

### Why is Naam Inaudible?

Our mind is always in a state of oscillation and all the time our mental faculties are always flowing outward into the world. Never for a moment have they known any rest. Until we internalise our focus and allow the mind to become purified and stilled, one cannot listen to the reverberations of the sound current.

### The 5 Shabads (Melodies)

Naam, the primal sound current is in fact only one continuous vibration. However as it steps down through 5 different planes of existence, with their varying degrees of density, the frequency of Naam changes and this creates the 'Panj Shabad', the five distinct melodies, which are contained within the mantra Sat Naam and are S, T, N, M and A. These five melodies come from God and become the means of re-uniting us back with God. It is this internal experience of the 5 shabads that inspired the Sikh Gurus and Yogis to create instruments like the Dilruba, Saranda, Taus, Sitar and Rabab which re-created the sounds of Naam to enable common people to experience these sounds.

Bhai Gurdas Ji, the great Sikh philosopher, tells us that it is only after one transcends body-consciousness that one gets contact with the five primal sounds.

### The 5 Khands (Planes of Existence)

The five planes of existence are mentioned at the end of Jap Ji Sahib which is the first poem in the Sikh Holy Scripture. The five planes include:

- 1) 'Dharam Khand' or the Realm of Action
- 2) 'Gyan Khand' or the Realm of Knowledge
- 3) 'Saram Khand' or the Realm of Ecstasy
- 4) 'Karam Khand' or the Realm of Grace
- 5) 'Sach Khand' or the Realm of Truth

## Relationship between Naam, Anhad-Bani and Gurbani

'Anhad-Bani' refers to the five primal sounds of the universe and their mesmerising sounds. So, in actual fact Anhad-Bani is just another word for Naam, as it flows through the different planes of existence.

'Gurbani' is made up of two words, which are 'Guru' and 'Bani', literally meaning 'Word of the Guru'. Gurbani refers to the chants (Mantras) in the Sikh Scripture, and it is Gurbani which a Sikh will use to connect to Anhad-Bani or Naam.

## Greatness of Naam

In Sukhmani Sahib, a meditation to create 'Peace of Mind' contained in the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, there is a wonderful account of the greatness of Naam:

*"The rosary, the penances, knowledge and thinking. The study of shastras, simritis and scriptures. The yogic practices and the performance of rites and rituals. A life of solitude in the deep recesses of the forests. All endeavours of various types, including deeds of charity for name and fame, cutting the limbs in self conceit. All these and more still do not come up to the merit of Naam. Says Nanak, a beloved of God is ever engaged in communion with the Word/Naam."*

Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Sikh Master, in the eighth to the eleventh stanzas of Jap Ji Sahib, enumerates the many advantages that accrue from the hearing and acceptance of Naam by saying:

*"By communion with Naam, one can attain the status of a super human being with spiritual powers, a god and a yoga master. By communion with Naam, the*

*earthly regions, the heavens and the nether regions stand revealed. By communion with Naam one becomes immortal. Says Nanak, God's devotees live in perpetual ecstasy for the Naam washes away all sin and sorrow."*

## How is Naam Obtained?

### The Quickest Route to Nirvana

Guru Nanak Dev Ji has said that the practice of Naam is the quickest and easiest method for self awakening. Guru Arjan Dev Ji confirms this by saying:

*"In this age, Kirtan (singing the praises of the Lord) occupies the highest place among spiritual practices."*

### Traversing Spiritual Planes

It is with the assistance of Naam that a soul can traverse through higher spiritual regions (Khands). It serves as an electric lift that can safely carry a spirit yearning for God realisation back to its true home (Sach Khand). The sounds of Naam become the "yellow brick road" leading the way back home.

### Controlling the 10 Doors in the Body

The human body has nine visible doors which include two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, one mouth, one sex organ and one rectum. The tenth door is hidden and is located at the crown. Guru Ram Das Ji says:

*"The Master manifests the Water of Life (Amrit) at the tenth gate. And listening to the divine music (Naam) one is led to stillness absolute."*

### The Seat of Naam

The body is the Temple of God, for God made people in his own image. One way that an individual can contact and become one with Naam and hear the divine melody is by meditating with focus at the sixth chakra (energy centre), also known as the third eye or brow point, located at the roof of the nose between and behind the two eyebrows, whilst repeating a Guru Mantra like "Satnam" or listening and singing Gurbani.

### Names of God

A Guru Mantra (chant) can be used for meditation and there are two categories of Guru Mantras which are namely: