

1st ਸਲੋਕ \ Couplet

ਗੁਨ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਗਾਇਓ ਨਹੀ ਜਨਮੁ ਅਕਾਰਥ ਕੀਨੁ ॥
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਭਜੁ ਮਨਾ ਜਿਹ ਬਿਧਿ ਜਲ ਕਉ ਮੀਨੁ ॥੧॥
gun gobi(n)dh gaio nahee janam akaarath keen ||
kahu naanak har bhaj manaa jeh bidh jal kau meen || 1 ||

Literal Meaning: If you do not sing the Praises of the Lord, your life is rendered useless. Says Nanak, meditate, vibrate upon the Lord; immerse your mind in Him, like the fish in the water.

Literal Word Meanings:

ਗੁਨ (gun) = qualities, virtues, praises	ਭਜੁ (bhaj) = meditate on, vibrate upon, remember
ਗੋਬਿੰਦ (gobind) = the Lord	ਮਨਾ (mana) = mind
ਗਾਇਓ (gaio) = sang, sung	ਜਲ (jal) = water
ਜਨਮ (janam) = life, birth	ਮੀਨੁ (meen) = fish
ਅਕਾਰਥ (akaarath) = useless, fruitless	

We have explored the literal meanings of the verse, along with the word-by-word breakdown. Now, we begin a deeper journey — to understand what the verse is pointing toward. The following exercises are designed to encourage out-of-the-box thinking. They may feel open-ended, and at times even challenging — that is intentional. Growth often begins where certainty ends.

Exercise 1: Common Understanding (Surface Reading)

Most people read this Salok as:

- ☐ A command to sing religious hymns
- ☐ A warning about afterlife punishment
- ☐ A moral instruction to pray more

Pause and reflect:

Is Guru Sahib only talking about *singing with the mouth*?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Exercise 2: Question the Idea of “Wasted Life”

A person who owns:

- ☐ Money ☐ Property
- ☐ Gadgets ☐ Status

But feels empty, anxious, or restless inside

Is that person truly living or just functioning?

- ☐ Living ☐ Functioning like a machine

What do most humans spend their life accumulating?

- ☐ Permanent truth ☐ Temporary, conditional things

Exercise 3: What Does “Not Singing Divine Qualities” Really Mean?

Think deeper:

What if someone talks about peace but lives in fear ?

What if someone speaks about love but lives in ego ?

What if someone knows Gurbani but does not *live it* ?

Have the divine qualities truly been acquired?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Then what is missing?

- ☐ Awareness ☐ Alignment
- ☐ Inner transformation ☐ All of the above

Exercise 4: The Urgency Guru Sahib Is Pointing Toward

Fill in the blanks:

When life is lived only on habit and reaction, it feels _____.

When awareness is missing, even activity feels _____.

Living without inner awareness is like living as a _____.

Does constant busyness guarantee fulfillment?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Exercise 5: Understanding the Fish–Water Metaphor

Reflect carefully:

A fish:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Does not search for water | ☐ Does not remember water |
| ☐ Does not visit water occasionally | ☐ Lives inside water constantly |

If a fish is removed from water, it:

- ☐ Survives
- ☐ Suffers
- ☐ Dies

Now apply this inward:

If awareness of the Divine is removed from life, what happens to the human experience?

- ☐ Peace disappears
- ☐ Meaning disappears
- ☐ Life becomes mechanical

Exercise 6: Living Awareness vs Robotic Living

✓ Tick what feels true:

Living with awareness means:

- ☐ Presence in actions
- ☐ Inner stability
- ☐ Joy without condition

Living without awareness feels like:

- ☐ Constant doing
- ☐ Inner void
- ☐ Repetition without fulfillment

Are you *living life* — or *being carried by life*?

Spiritual Meaning (Word → Wisdom)

ਗੁਨ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ (gun gobi(n)dh) = Divine virtues of the Creator—qualities to live, not just know
ਗਾਇਓ ਨਹੀ (gaio nahee) = Not embodied—life missing the practice of virtues
ਜਨਮੁ (janam) = Human life—this rare opportunity for inner awakening
ਅਕਾਰਥ ਕੀਨੁ (akaarath keen) = Made fruitless—busy life without spiritual awareness
ਹਰਿ ਭਜੁ (har bhaj) = Live in steady inner remembrance—make the Divine your anchor
ਮਨਾ (manaa) = O mind—this is an inner correction, not a lecture to others
ਜਿਹ ਬਿਧਿ (jeh bidh) = In the same way—as natural, constant, and effortless
ਜਲ (jal) = Water—life-supporting presence you don't “think about,” you live in
ਮੀਨੁ (meen) = Fish—remembrance should be as continuous as a fish's dependence on water

Write Your Own Interpretation:

Take Action → Living the Wisdom

Follow these practical action examples to bring the teaching into your daily actions and choices.

Practice honesty in small things – Don't exaggerate achievements, don't hide mistakes. Speak truth respectfully, even when it's uncomfortable.

Stop comparing, start growing, and stay calm – Celebrate others' success instead of feeling jealous, focus on bettering yourself, and when someone upsets you, take a breath before you respond.

Serve without recognition – Help a colleague, family member, or stranger without expecting appreciation or credit.

End each day with reflection – Ask yourself: *Did I act with humility, compassion, and integrity today?* Identify one improvement for tomorrow.

Reflect and Explore

These discussion questions can be explored alone or in a group to encourage reflection, learning, and honest sharing, with no right or wrong answers.

Which virtue—contentment, humility, or compassion—is hardest to keep at work? How can you still practice it?

Have you ever reached a goal but still felt empty? What was missing?

A fish lives in water all the time. What would it mean to live with virtues every day, not just talk about them?

When chasing money or success, what does forgetting your values look like in daily life?

Many people are busy but still unhappy. How does this Salok explain that?
