

## 35th ਸਲੋਕ \ Couplet

ਬਾਲ ਜੁਆਨੀ ਅਰੁ ਬਿਰਧਿ ਫੁਨਿ ਤੀਨਿ ਅਵਸਥਾ ਜਾਨਿ ॥  
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਭਜਨ ਬਿਨੁ ਬਿਰਥਾ ਸਭ ਹੀ ਮਾਨੁ ॥੩੫॥  
baal juaanee ar biradh fun teen avasathaa jaan ||  
kahu naanak har bhajan bin birathaa sabh hee maan ||35||

**Literal Meaning:** Childhood, youth and old age - know these as the three stages of life. Says Nanak, without meditating on the Lord, everything is useless; you must appreciate this.

### Literal Word Meanings:

ਬਾਲ (baal) = childhood  
ਜੁਆਨੀ (juaanee) = youth  
ਅਰੁ (ar) = and  
ਬਿਰਧਿ (biradh) = old age  
ਫੁਨਿ (fun) = again  
ਤੀਨਿ (teen) = three  
ਅਵਸਥਾ (avasathaa) = stages  
ਜਾਨਿ (jaan) = know

ਹਰਿ (har) = the Lord  
ਭਜਨ (bhajan) = meditating  
ਬਿਨੁ (bin) = without  
ਬਿਰਥਾ (birathaa) = useless  
ਸਭ (sabh) = all  
ਹੀ (hee) = indeed  
ਮਾਨੁ (maan) = know, accept

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: See the Pattern of Life Stages

Pause and reflect honestly:

Which stage of life are you in right now?

- ☐ School / Childhood
- ☐ College / Youth
- ☐ Working Professional
- ☐ Near Retirement
- ☐ Retired

In your current stage, what are you mainly focused on achieving?

- ☐ Grades
- ☐ Career
- ☐ Money
- ☐ Stability
- ☐ Retirement comfort

## Exercise 2: The “For What?” Question

Answer slowly:

Why did you need good grades?

- ☐ For college
- ☐ For job
- ☐ For success later

Why do you need a good job?

- ☐ For money
- ☐ For security
- ☐ For future life

Why do you want money?

- ☐ To relax later
- ☐ To enjoy life later
- ☐ To feel safe later

Notice something:

Are you always preparing for the next stage, but never fully living this one?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

## Exercise 3: Living in the Present or Postponing Life

Think carefully:

How often do you say:

“After this exam...”

“After this job...”

“After retirement...”

☐ Very often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely

Are you living now, or mostly living for later?

☐ Now ☐ Later ☐ Both

## Exercise 4: What About the Inner Life?

While working so hard for the outside, how much time have you given to:

☐ Inner peace

☐ Gratitude

☐ Kindness

☐ Compassion

☐ Awareness

If you had to guess, how much effort have you given to your inner self?

☐ 0–10%

☐ 20–30%

☐ 50% or more

When stress increases, how do you usually react?

☐ Anger

☐ Frustration

☐ Anxiety

☐ Silence

☐ Understanding

## Exercise 5: Signs of Neglected Inner Life

Reflect gently:

Do small interruptions make you irritated?

☐ Yes ☐ No

When plans don't work, do you feel heavy inside?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Even after achieving goals, does dissatisfaction return?

☐ Yes ☐ No

## Exercise 6: A Different Way of Living

Imagine this instead:

What if you worked toward your goals without losing inner balance?

☐ Possible ☐ Impossible ☐ Never thought about it

What activities naturally calm your mind or open your heart?

☐ Helping others

☐ Caring for nature

☐ Spending time with elders

☐ Serving animals

☐ Gratitude practices

If you started doing even one of these regularly, would life feel lighter?

☐ Yes ☐ No

## Exercise 7: Awareness, Not Fear

Reflect deeply (no pressure):

The next moment is not guaranteed—

does this thought make you:

☐ Fearful

☐ Grateful

☐ More present

If this moment was enough, what would you do differently today?

## Exercise 8: Your Inner Reflection:

What stage am I in?

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Am I fully living it?

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What can I start doing **now** for my inner self—without waiting?

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## Spiritual Meaning (Word → Wisdom)

ਬਾਲ (baal) = Childhood—innocence and learning, but still a stage that passes

ਜੁਆਨੀ (juaanee) = Youth—energy and desire, often spent chasing approval and pleasure

ਅਰੁ (ar) = And—every phase is included, none is permanent

ਬਿਰਧਿ (biradh) = Old age—weakness and dependence, a reminder that time wins

ਫੁਨਿ (fun) = Then again—cycle repeats, life keeps moving forward

ਤੀਨਿ (teen) = Three—complete human journey in stages

ਅਵਸਥਾ (avasathaa) = Conditions/states—changing outer life, changing inner moods

ਹਰਿ ਭਜਨ ਬਿਨੁ (har bhajan bin) = Without Divine remembrance—no inner anchor & true purpose

ਬਿਰਥਾ (birathaa) = Empty/wasted—busy years without inner awakening

ਸਭ ਹੀ (sabh hee) = All of it—every stage becomes hollow if the Divine is forgotten

ਮਾਨੁ (maan) = The “self-pride/identity”—ego-based living feels meaningful, but doesn’t last

## Write Your Own Interpretation:

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## Take Action → Living the Wisdom

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

**Accept life’s phases** - Acknowledge that youth, strength, and status naturally change.

**Prepare before decline** - Build inner strength while you still have outer stability.

**Detach from appearance** - Avoid tying identity to age, beauty, or physical power.

**Stay spiritually consistent** - Maintain daily remembrance regardless of life stage.

**Anchor in the timeless** - Connect to the Divine as the only steady presence through every phase.

## 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.

How does thinking about childhood, youth, and old age change the way you set goals today?

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How do you know if your lifestyle is meaningful or just temporary?

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How can you bring purpose into your studies, career, and relationships at every stage of life?

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What habits help you focus on lasting values instead of just achievements?

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How can remembering that life stages pass quickly help you live with more gratitude and compassion?

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