

14th ਸਲੋਕ \ Couplet

ਉਸਤਤਿ ਨਿੰਦਿਆ ਨਾਹਿ ਜਿਹਿ ਕੰਚਨ ਲੋਹ ਸਮਾਨਿ ॥
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨਿ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਤਾਹਿ ਤੈ ਜਾਨਿ ॥੧੪॥
usatat ni(n)dhiaa naeh jeh ka(n)chan loh samaan ||
kahu naanak sun re manaa mukat taeh tai jaan || 14||

Literal Meaning: One who is beyond praise and slander, who looks upon gold and iron alike says Nanak, listen, mind: know that such a person is liberated.

Literal Word Meanings:

ਉਸਤਤਿ (usatat) = praise
ਨਿੰਦਿਆ (ni(n)dhiaa) = slander
ਨਾਹਿ (naeh) = not
ਜਿਹਿ (jeh) = who
ਕੰਚਨ (ka(n)chan) = gold
ਲੋਹ (loh) = iron
ਸਮਾਨਿ (samaana) = alike

ਸੁਨਿ (sun) = listen
ਰੇ (re) = O
ਮਨਾ (manaa) = mind
ਮੁਕਤਿ (mukat) = liberated
ਤਾਹਿ (taeh) = that one
ਤੈ (tai) = know
ਜਾਨਿ (jaan) = know

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: Praise vs Criticism — Be Honest

Answer from real experience.

When someone praises you, what happens inside?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Mood lifts instantly | ☐ Confidence increases |
| ☐ Attachment to praise grows | ☐ Need for more praise arises |

When someone criticizes you, what happens inside?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Mood drops | ☐ Defensiveness appears |
| ☐ Anger or hurt arises | ☐ Overthinking begins |

Reflection Question:

Why do two words from others have so much power over your inner state?

Exercise 2: The Inner Duality

Do you treat praise and criticism as:

- ☐ Two opposite forces
- ☐ Reward and punishment
- ☐ Approval and rejection

Question:

Is this duality created by others — or by your own attachment to identity?

- ☐ Others
- ☐ My own identity

Exercise 3: Gold and Iron Analogy

Guru Sahib says

“ਕੰਚਨ ਲੋਹ ਸਮਾਨਿ” “ka(n)chan loh samaan ”

Ask yourself:

If there were no greed for gold, would iron feel inferior?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If pride disappeared, would praise feel sweeter than criticism?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Reflection:

Is the value in the object — or in the mind that desires it? _____

Exercise 4: Using Both to Grow

Think of mature, grounded people. How do they treat:

Praise

☐ Validation of superiority ☐ Ego Boost ☐ Evidence of skill and room to grow further

Criticism

☐ Statement of Inferiority ☐ Personal attack ☐ Useful information and something to work on

Question:

When both become tools for growth instead of identity, what changes?

- ☐ Ego reduces
- ☐ Learning increases
- ☐ Stability grows

Exercise 5: Taste Freedom Mentally

Pause for a moment and imagine:

Praise does not inflate you.

Criticism does not deflate you.

✓ Tick what this state feels like:

- ☐ Lightness ☐ Calm
- ☐ Inner independence ☐ Clarity

Reflection:

Does this feel closer to freedom than emotional ups and downs?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Exercise 6: What Is “ਮੁਕਤਿ” “mukat” Here?

“ਮੁਕਤਿ ਤਾਹਿ ਤੈ ਜਾਨਿ” “mukat taeh tai jaan”

Does liberation mean:

- ☐ Leaving the world
- ☐ Escaping people
- ☐ Being unaffected while living fully

Exercise 7: Final Reflection (Write briefly)

Which affects me more — praise or criticism? _____

What happens when I stop reacting immediately? _____

How would my life change if both felt equal? _____

Spiritual Meaning (Word → Wisdom)

ਉਸਤਤਿ (ausatat) = external approval; affirmation that feeds ego

ਨਿੰਦਿਆ (ni(n)dhiaa) = external criticism; judgment that disturbs the mind

ਨਾਹਿ (naeh) = absence of inner disturbance or reaction

ਕੰਚਨ (ka(n)chan) = objects of high value; success, reward, status

ਲੋਹ (loh) = objects of low value; loss, rejection, or insignificance

ਸਮਾਨਿ (samaan) = equal inner response; balanced perception

ਮੁਕਤਿ (mukat) = freedom from emotional dependence and mental slavery

ਜਾਨਿ (jaan) = know through experience, not belief

Write Your Own Interpretation:

Take Action → Living the Wisdom

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

Question quick labels - Before calling something “good” or “bad,” pause and ask what you might be missing.

Look for context - Try to understand circumstances before forming conclusions.

See growth in mistakes - Treat failures as learning opportunities instead of permanent judgments.

Hold balanced perspectives - Accept that situations can carry both challenge and opportunity.

Respond with awareness - Choose thoughtful action instead of reacting from conditioned bias.

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 praise or criticism affect your confidence at work or on social media?

What does it mean to treat “gold and iron the same” in a world focused on status and comparison?

Which labels—success/failure, important/unimportant, right/wrong—shape your thinking the most?

How can reacting less to others’ opinions help you think more clearly and freely?

What small habit can help you stay calm and balanced when you are praised or judged?
