

MODULE 1 – Root Principle (MOOL MANTAR)

There comes a time in a seeker's quest when the ordinary rhythm of living no longer feels enough. Not because anything is wrong, but something begins to shift inside to attain what is more holistic and satisfying. Many questions appear. Is there more to life than this constant chase of gaining and fear of losing? Why do clarity and confusion keep alternating like sunlight and shade? Why do the moments when I feel most true to myself seem to come and go so quickly? And why does a faint sense of longing linger, even amid comfort and success? These questions are not a sign of weakness. They are the first signs of inner awakening. When they arise from within, one is ready for *Jap*.

Jap is an invitation to explore the essence of reality and, more importantly, the nature of oneself. *Jap* is not just a sacred text to recite, a mere ritual to perform, nor a password to salvation. It is a doorway into the deepest layers of human experience, and once opened, it guides the seeker inwards to a transparent and honest way of living with the outside world.

Jap composition is preceded by *Mool Mantar*, in which Guru Nanak introduces one of the most profound philosophies: the concept that everything in existence emerges from one indivisible field of awareness. *Jap* is the journey for this discovery. A moment of euphoria arises when a simple concept organically rearranges our perceptions. While navigating identity, uncertainty, or the search for reality, *Mool Mantar* offers a grounding principle that clarity begins when duality ends.

The *Mool Mantar* is an expression of Guru Nanak's spirit of Oneness. It is a short composition encompassing the vastness of universal concepts for spiritual and social growth. The verses of diverse spiritual masters enshrined in the *Guru Granth Sahib* are an elaboration of the *Mool Mantar*.

Mool means fundamental. *Mantar* comprises two words: *Mann*, meaning mind, and *Tar*, meaning tool.

Mool Mantar can be summarised as a tool for critical thinking that unlocks the mind to access the awareness that identifies the entire creation as One singular composite phenomenon.

The opening words in the *Mool Mantar* exemplify Guru Nanak's primary creed of Monism, the principle that the substratum of all life forms is a singular energy that manifests and expresses its presence through the plurality in Creation. It affirms the presence of the invisible, all-pervading energy, also referred to as

consciousness. This energy emerges as creation, sustains for a period, and then disintegrates to merge within itself. It is like water that evaporates to form clouds, then transforms into rain droplets to merge as water with water to nurture growth.

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

ikOankaar (ੴ) sat naam karataa purakh nirbhau nirvair akaal moorat ajoonee saibha(n) gur prasaad ||

ੴ

ik Oankaar

ik (One), *Oan* (Trilogy), *kaar* (Manifestation)

The singularity of the source of creation, the unseen all-pervading awareness, is expressed through *ik*, the numeral One affixed before *Oan* + *kaar*. The syllable *Oan* represents a Trilogy, the three faculties of existence, which are the powers of Creation, Sustenance, and Dissolution. *kaar* is derived from the word *Aakaar*, meaning manifestation of the unseen all-pervading singular awareness. Often, *Ik Oankaar* is interpreted as Monotheistic concept that ‘God is One’, which means that the creator is a distinct entity, separate from the creation. Philosophically this implies duality as the creator and the creation become separate entities. However, Guru Nanak’s expression of adding the numeral *Ik* before *Oankaar* implies Monism and not Monotheism. Monism implies that the creator and the faculties creation are a one composite phenomenon.

ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ

sat naam

sat (Truth), *naam* (cognizance)

The principal notion of existence is an unseen, omnipresent awareness that is all-pervading within the observer and the observed. The Truth, *sat*, about this entity unfolds through uninterrupted cognizance, *naam*. *Ik Oankaar* is revealed through *sat naam*, the mind’s ability to remain aware of the underlying connectivity, the reality that the creation is a continuous expression of Oneness. It is not a dogmatic practice of rote memorization, often referred to as ‘truth is the name of God’.

ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ

kartaa purakh

kartaa (creator), *purakh* (substratum)

The activities and laws of nature are executed by unseen, omnipresent awareness, the all-doing singular entity embodied in diverse forms constituting the same substratum. Through *sat naam*, the presence of *kartaa purakh* is recognized as the creative substratum, the source that is operating through all processes of existence. This is a powerful monist perspective: the underlying consciousness manifests in all forms of creation, rather than a separate being serving as the creator.

ਨਿਰਭਉ

nirbhau

nir (bereft), *bhau* (fear)

Recognizing the presence of the unseen, omnipresent awareness as the singular entity residing in the entire creation instills fearlessness from the unknown and the concept of otherness. The unfurling of *kartaa purakh* enables the state of *nirbhau*, in which the mind is cognizant not to engage in reckless actions lacking reflection. This realm of fearlessness flourishes as the illusion of duality fades.

ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ

nirvair

nir (bereft), *vair* (discrimination)

Unity in diversity is the absolute truth that the entire creation is connected through the unseen, omnipresent awareness; this entity sees no stranger, endorsing that Oneness is devoid of discrimination. Acquiring the state of *nirbhau* enables one to be *nirvair*, an attribute that dissolves enmity. This eases judgment, where an innate bond develops with the unity beneath diversity, removing opposition and the sense of duality.

ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ

akaal moorat

akaal (eternal), *moorat* (form)

The continuity of time and the inevitability of change are constants of nature. They present the reality of the eternity of the unseen, omnipresent awareness that creates, sustains, degenerates, and regenerates as diverse forms in nature. Embodying the attribute of *nirvair* connects to the concept of the *akaal moorat*,

the timeless phenomena of the universal awareness. Encouraging to recognise that everything is in constant motion, transcending time, change, and decay. Just as waves change while the ocean remains constant, so do forms emerge and fade. It is the source revealed through nature as consciousness, rather than an immortal celestial figure.

ਅਜੂਨੀ

ajoonnee

ajoonnee (beyond birth & death)

Birth is inception; death is an end. The past is a memory, and the future is unknown. It is in the present that life flows beyond birth and death, where the infinity of the unseen, omnipresent awareness, unfurls. Accepting *akaal moorat* reveals the essence of existence as *ajoonnee*, a force beyond birth and death, experienced only in the present, highlighting that the past and future are mental constructs. This insight fosters a carefree yet conscientious way of living, a shift in identity from the transient body to the enduring consciousness, which is continuous, unbounded, and vibrant.

ਸੈਭੰ

saibha(n)

sai (self), *bha(n)* (existent)

Self-actualization illuminates the truth of self-existence, the serene yet dynamic attributes of the unseen, omnipresent awareness that manifests, sustains, or disintegrates on its own accord. Understanding the concept of *ajoonnee* presents the reality of *saibha(n)*, the self-sustaining awareness that needs nothing outside itself to be what it is. It is self-existent, arising, sustaining, and dissolving from its own inherent attributes, independent of any external cause or influence. It represents that existence is complete within itself.

ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

gur prasaad ॥

gur (wisdom), *prasad* (grace)

Interactions with nature facilitate experiential wisdom, which graces the transition from ignorance to realizing the omnipresence of the unseen, all-pervading awareness. Comprehending the inherent *saibha(n)* unfolds the power of *gur prasaad*, the grace of clarity. The insights gained from interactions with various facets of life become the teacher that offers clarity on the unity in diversity, a gift that blossoms through sincere receptivity, not a reward granted

by an external deity. *Mool Mantar* concludes with *gur prasaad*, the epitome of being blessed when the essence of the unseen awareness becomes clear, guiding us toward universal harmony and enlightenment, the ultimate achievement of existence.

Guru Nanak says that Oneness is not a mere experience but an immaculate state of existence. Ignorance, engrossed in duality, creates division; intellect, focused on salvation, accumulates knowledge; and enlightenment, anchored in Oneness, gains awareness of Unity in Diversity.

<LISTEN TO SABAD *ik Oankaar*>

In a world conditioned by division, driven by comparison, and propelled by an unending race to outpace others, the *Mool Mantar* offers a refreshing reorientation — a lucid and centring way of perceiving life as an awareness and lived experience rather than inherited assumptions. In this light, the *Mool Mantar* is an approach to living in unity that quietly binds all forms of life. It illuminates a deeper understanding of who we truly are and reintroduces the essence of our collective source. For anyone beginning *Jap*, this opening *Mool Mantar* serves less as an introduction and more as the lens through which every other insight is meant to be understood. It reveals that we emerge from a vast continuum and remain intrinsically connected to the living fabric of existence.

Mool Mantar, the tool for opening the mind, is followed by the *Jap* composition that guides the seeker towards awareness through an introductory *Salok*, 38 *Pauris* and concluding *Salok*.

Let us now begin our exploration of Guru Nanak's *Jap* composition.

REFLECTION POINTERS FOR MODULE 1 – Root Principle

- When the idea of an all-pervading, self-existent awareness is explored, what habitual patterns in your thinking do you begin to reflect upon?
- If existence is a composite of one awareness, how does this perspective challenge inherited notions of otherness, success, control, or divine authority?

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