

5 Vices Series: Kaam

Introduction

The Gurus' teachings, known as Gurbani, frequently mention five key obstacles to inner peace – the five vices. While we all seek peace and tranquility, these vices can create constant challenges in our lives. Over the next few editions, we'll delve deeper into these "Panj Chor" (Five Thieves) that appear throughout Bani: Kaam (Lust), Krodh (Anger), Lobh (Greed), Moh (Excessive Attachment), and Ahankaar (Ego).

What does Sikhi and Bani have to say about them and how does Bani guide us in managing them? We start the discussion with Kaam (lust).

Meaning of Kaam: The word "Kaam" in Gurbani holds multiple meanings. It often refers to "Kaamna," which denotes a desire for sensual pleasures. In most cases we translate it as 'lust'. Interestingly, "Kaam" can also take on the meaning of 'work' or 'action' which are in pursuit of sensual pleasures. Gurbani frequently places Kaam at the forefront of the five vices (Panj Chor). This is because unchecked desires, particularly lust, are seen as the root cause of many other ruinous consequences. It can lead to anger, greed, attachment, and ultimately, egotism.

Kaam brings pain and regrets: A fleeting moment of pleasure fuelled by lust can lead down a path of regret and hardship. Unmanaged desires can damage your body and mind, just like a powerful chemical can dissolve something precious like gold. Driven by such desires, a person might make poor choices with lasting consequences. These choices can bring not only regret but also a multitude of problems and pain.

ਨਿਮਖ ਕਾਮ ਸੁਆਦ ਕਾਰਣਿ ਕੋਟਿ ਦਿਨਸ ਦੁਖੁ ਪਾਵਹਿ ॥

Nimakḥ kam suad karanḥ kot dinas dukh pavahi.

For a moment of sexual pleasure, you shall suffer i pain for many of days. SGGGS Ji Ang 403

Finding Balance in Sikhi: Sikhi emphasizes managing Kaam, or desires, including lust and sexual urges. This is achieved through fidelity within marriage and respectful boundaries outside of it. Sikhi promotes a strong and loyal marital bond. Guru Gobind Singh Ji instructed married men to remain faithful even in their thoughts. Eyes should not gaze upon the beauty of others' wives. Bhai Gurdas, a revered Sikh scholar, advised that with the exception of one's wife, one must regard all other women as, daughters, sisters and mothers. This fosters a culture of respect and discourages inappropriate desires.

ਦੇਖਿ ਪਰਾਈਆ ਚੰਗੀਆ ਮਾਵਾਂ ਭੈਣਾਂ ਧੀਆਂ ਜਾਣੈ । ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਦਾਸ ਜੀ

Dekh parayian changian maavan bhainan dheeyan jaane.

The Sikh ought to treat other women as his mothers, sisters, and daughters. (Vaar 29, Pauri 11)

Conclusion: Kaam, in the culture we are living in, is one of the most difficult vices to overcome. However, by turning to Bani for guidance and support as well as making a concerted and single-minded effort to manage kaam, we can gain control over it and be released from its clutches.

ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਕਿਲਬਿਖ ਗੁਰਿ ਕਾਟੇ ਪੂਰਨ ਹੋਈ ਆਸਾ ਜੀਉ ॥੩॥

Kaam krodhh kilabikh gur kaattae pooran hoee aasaa jeeo

The Guru has cut out the sinful mistakes of sexual desire and anger, and my hopes have been fulfilled.

SGGS Ji Ang 108