

Bhagat Namdev – Sabad 17
koiee bolai niravaa koiee bolai duur ||
Raag Todi, Bhagat Namdev, Guru Granth Sahib, 718

koiee bolai niravaa koiee bolai duur ||
jal kee maachhulee charai khajoor ||1||
kaa(n)i re bakbaad laio ||
jin har paio tineh chhapaio ||1|| rahaau ||
pa(n)ddit hoi kai bed bakhaanai ||
moorakh naamadeau raameh jaanai ||2||1||

Summary: True understanding emerges from direct experience rather than mere intellectual knowledge. Someone might speak eloquently about the truth yet remain disconnected from it in practice. The difference between savouring a fruit and simply describing the tree illustrates the gap between lived experience and theoretical knowledge. This emphasises how easily language can become mere noise when it overshadows genuine understanding. Real self-knowledge must be felt internally, not just articulated externally. Consequently, wisdom lies in embodying its essence rather than merely explaining it.

koiee bolai niravaa koiee bolai duur ||
Some speak of it as close; others speak of it as distant. This highlights how illusion can distort the unified reality of the omnipresent force, turning an intrinsic oneness into divisive viewpoints.

jal kee maachhulee charai khajoor ||1||
Fish from the water are trying to climb a date palm tree. This metaphor symbolizes the futility and impossibility of attaining truth through duality, which cannot yield clarity about our inherent unity. (1)

kaa(n)i re bakbaad laio ||
Why are you continuing this unproductive and superficial conversation? This shows that discussions based solely on theory, without real-world experience, provide no value.

jin har paio tineh chhapaio ||1|| rahaau ||
Those who have attained the all-pervading essence remain unseen. This highlights the silence of realization, becoming inward, free from proving or seeking social recognition. (1)(Pause)

pa(n)ddit hoi kai bed bakhaanai ||

One becomes a scholar and expounds the spiritual scriptures.

This reflects knowledge that remains performative, missing insights to transform the conscience.

moorakh naamadeau raameh jaanai ||2||1||

But the simpleton Namdev says, he has realised the all-pervading reality. This suggests that simplicity can touch what knowledge can miss; unpretentious knowing is superior to pretentious intellectualism (2)(1)

Essence: Bhagat Namdev uses the image of a fish trying to climb a date palm to highlight the absurdity of misplaced effort. This metaphor shows that the complexity of knowledge often misses what simple awareness can grasp. True insight comes from quiet realization and sincerity, not from intellectualization. Those who truly understand the essence do not need to prove it; their humility reflects their wisdom.

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