

Economic Model in Sikh Religious Scripture Sri Guru Granth Sahib



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1. Introduction

An economic model is a simplified representation of a real-world economic situation, analyzed to understand and predict economic behavior. (1) According to the Cambridge Business English Dictionary, it is a principle used to calculate the effect of something on the economy. (2). The world's two main models are based on demand and supply; and "microeconomics." Supply and demand models show how prices adjust in response to market forces. Macroeconomic models (IS-LM framework) help in understanding the interaction between interest rates and national income. But none of these models meet global human needs and wants. As a result, the world economy is in a shambles. In its World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025; report on the global economy, the UNO has observed that "global growth will remain subdued amid prolonged uncertainty. Low inflation and monetary easing offer relief, but trade tensions, high debt, and geopolitical risks dampen the outlook. (3)

The global economy continues to face multiple crises, jeopardizing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). (4) Issues such as unemployment, scarce resources, and unsatisfied aspirations, along with a decline in core human values, are trapping society in a dangerous cycle. From cyber scams to white-collar crimes, the cycle is only getting worse, promoting belligerency over complacency and competition over consumerism. The problem is not just about not having jobs or money, but about losing our moral guide while pursuing social success and status. Cybercrime, economic scams, and youth disenchantment cannot be separated from the emotional stress and unrealistic expectations created by today's consumer-driven society. (5) As the UNO has also acknowledged that the current economic models have failed to address this critical situation, there is now a need for a model that can provide solutions to the current difficulties.

Wealth is created from agriculture, industry and business processed and these remain the mainstay of the economy. Wealth however, cannot be created without sinning (Sri Guru Granth Sahib: Ang 417) and in these sins lies greed where the truth has to be hidden. Lust, anger, greed, pride are the result of earning these sins and the disease of the ego is such that the person does not care for his own internal consciousness. Look at the powerful nations of the world who are engaged in every battle in the world to dominate the entire world and by producing and selling war material their business grows further leaving the economy of the remaining world is in shambles. Instead of love and social equality, it is influencing world domination through the use of weapons. Differences like inequality, poverty, affluence, rich and poor increase which are not in the interest of society.

9/10 of the world's richest people are these bigger nations. Each of these is worth 50 billion or more, up from 43 billion last month. (Global Billionaires Ranking, 2025). As of September 18, 2025, Elon Musk is the richest person in the world with an estimated wealth of \$471.1 billion. He is followed by Larry Ellison, who has a net worth of \$363 billion, followed by Mark Zuckerberg with 61 billion. The top 20 richest individuals have a combined net worth of more than .5 trillion. By 2024, 839 million people lived in extreme poverty - nearly 22 million more people have fallen into a state of poverty and hunger than in June 2025. Such an unbalanced division of the social economy cannot be according to any economic model.

There is a story related to removal of hunger. The actress of French nude films' Bella Bells' became very rich in a short span of time. She visited many countries of the world. But when she went on a trip to Africa and saw the poverty of the people there, she donated all her wealth to an international charity in Africa. She passed away penniless but happy in 2016 at the age of 30. She had many books and papers on her desk. The last sentence of an incomplete text was: "Here people pay millions to have their bodies naked, but no one spends a single penny to cover the naked body of a poor person." A real lesson for those who go blind in greed.

Punjab, a state of India is known for free food for all and assistance to all needy. Its people will never see anyone going to bed hungry with the Guru's blessings because it follows the teaching of the Gurus whose teaching are preserved in Sri Guru Granth Sahib the most revered scripture of Sikh. This was so even in the kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who governed according to the teachings of the Gurus, and all the subjects were treated equal, and no one slept hungry or begged. There is a unique guidance in the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji which believes in serving the interest of all or welfare of all through institutions like free kitchen for all (*Langar*), all sitting in line together while food is served (*Pangat*), all praying together on large mats (*Sangat*), service each one (*Seva*) and remembering God (*Simran*).

World watch helplessly where hunger is being used as a weapon of war. This is crossing all limits of humanity. That is why UNO and UNESCO have also been passing resolution to this war but their calls are not being acknowledged. Does the world

need such a model? No, the world needs a model of brotherhood, equality, love, sharing, harmony, comfort, peace, where there is no hunger, there is a suitable place to sleep in peace. There is no fear but love for all.

A good economic model meeting all the above requirements is available in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the central religious scripture of the Sikh religion, regarded by Sikhs as the religion's primary source Guru, an eternal source of guidance and wisdom. It consists of 1430 parts with 5,894 words of 6 Sikh Gurus, 15 saints (*Bhagats*), 11 ballad singers (*Bhatts*) and 4 followers (*Gursikhs*) which contain not only spiritual but also worldly knowledge for the whole world. (6) This model will now be considered in the context of world economy.

Community-based Economic Model

Therefore, when we go to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, we find the basis of the economic model from the very first word 1 Omkar (7), which means "One Creator," reflecting the belief in the existence of one God (Vahiguru) as the creator of all and present in the entire creation. It emphasizes the importance of treating all individuals with equality and respect, regardless of social status, ethnicity or gender. The Guru Granth Sahib teaches Sikhs how to live their lives. 'I must not forget that there is only One Creator God of all (*sabhma jia ka eko data so mainvisar na jaee*)'" "(Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) Japuji, p. 5) teaches them to get together and discuss as brothers *Hoi iktar milho mere bhai*" "(SGGS pp. 1122, 1285) and teaches them about the unity of humanity, sharing, collaboration, collective community, living together, sharing, helping others in times of need, cooperating with each other, working, taking decisions unanimously and discussing together." The Bani or Gurbani of Guru Granth Sahib reflects the importance of equality and non-violence of all human beings. She also highlights the importance of faith and God in monotheism. Overall, the economic model of the Guru Granth Sahib emphasizes the importance of leading a virtuous life, balancing individual needs with social welfare, and promoting a more equitable distribution of resources. It does not speak only of human development (*vikas*) but also internal happiness and ecstatic life (*vigas*).

If we consider the economic model as a series of principles with which we can evaluate the results of future data on the basis of the past and the present and try to improve the future, then it will be necessary for us to solve the problems of every person in the world and evaluate the availability of decent living resources so that not only a select few rich people or governments but every living being in the whole world gets peace of mind and the main issue is the benefit of every person and the measures of progress.

The Economic Model of Sri Guru Granth Sahib

In the Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Nanak begins with the name Ek Onkar Satnam - "There is one God, whose name is Truth." At the very outset, the Guru tells us that Sat (truth) is the essence of God, which is eternal. For Guru Nanak, truth was not abstract, it was alive, breathing and vibrant. It was the way to experience the divine in every moment of life, every conversation and decision. In the Guru Granth Sahib, the Guru says: "Truth is higher than everything, but still true life is higher (5. SGGS, p 62). If God is the Creator of all, then all are brothers and sisters and all have equal right to life. Equality and partnership are the main principles in all his creations, which have been received from the doer, He has been True beyond start of ages, True when the ages started, True even now and will be true ever hereafter (*Adi Sachu Jugadi Sachu Hai Bhi Sachu Nanak Hosi Bhi Sachu*. 1 (Part 1)). Its internal meaning is God is ever existent with relation to man who has a limited life. Truth is the foundation of creation and creation should be based on truth. Thus, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, has kept its origin based on truth and has rejected falsehood. He also preached and practiced self-expression of labour, division and name chanting, along with which he laid the foundation of service meditation.

Here the meaning of labour is from Sukrit which is earned by hard work based on truth, truth and not earned by falsehood. Do true labour (*Sachi Karni Kar Kar*) (SGGS, p. 1344) become a true business with business of truth (*Sacha Sahu Sache Vanjare*) (Issue 117). In the fields of truth sow seed of truth (*Sachi Khet Sachu Bijana*, SGGS 565) By sowing truth, truth grows (*Sachu Bijai Sachu Ugvai*, SGGS, p.1243). According to Sikhism, a person's life is successful by earning honest labour along with the truth. It is the spirit of a meaningful, spiritually rich life. From the very first teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Sikhs were called upon to live in the light of truth, to connect their words, deeds and intentions with the divine, whose essence is pure truth. In this context, honesty becomes not just a rule, but a lifelong commitment to oneself, to others, and to God. The teachings of honesty and truth form the heart of the Sikh way of life and resonate deeply. Those who have truth in the form of fasting, contentment in the form of pilgrimage, spiritual knowledge and meditation in the form of the bath of purity, their life is successful. (*Sach vratu santokhu tirthu gyanu dhyanyu isnanu*. (SGGS, p.1245) 1245)

Guru Granth Sahib's economic model emphasizes on a balanced and ethical approach to economic activity, prioritizing both individual and societal needs. The main principles include:

Rejection of Craving and Delusion (*Trishna and Maya*) for Wealth and Worldly Pleasures

The Guru rejected the sour earnings based on Craving and Delusion (*Trishna and Maya*) and said that craving (*Trishna*) was not understood by the kings, maharajas and shahanshahs. Those attached to delusion (*Maya*) tried to accept colour but stayed away from inner happiness. The mind is never satisfied with sin and corrupt earnings. No matter how much oil is put in the fire, fire is not satisfied because when you stop putting oil, it is extinguished. In order to quench the thirst, it is necessary to invoke the name of God. Every day a person tastes different delicacies but his hunger never dies. To get rid of this hunger, man wanders around like a dog. The victim of lust leaves the woman of the house and eats crap with other women and peeps into the houses of others but his lust never fades away. In the fire of lust, he burns down the house and then repents when he is left with nothing. His cure is in the name of God, who is above all treasures. True happiness can only come from the Guru.

Honest Labour

Earning livelihood through hard work and honesty, as emphasized in Guru Nanak Dev's saying, "Only a person knows the way who earns by sweat and then shares it with others." Conduct business with honesty, dedication and integrity. When we act honestly and share, we become part of a circle of kindness and trust, which resonates with God's love for each of us. Living truly creates integrity, a real connection with others, and a sense of inner peace that only honesty brings. Work of Values: To regard labour as a sacred activity and a means of attaining spiritual development. Wealth is to be used for the benefit of society rather than for personal gain. It involves donating a portion of one's income, known as "*dasvand*," (10% of individual income) where Sikhs consider it their duty to donate 10% of their income to the house of God as per SGGS dictum: Earn and eat from honest labour and share part of it with others. (Ghal(i) khai kichh(u) hathh(u) dei (SGGS p. 1245)) Free kitchen (*langar*) in Gurdwaras world over functions on this principle.

Guru Ji says that earning should be noble, should be done honestly, should be for the welfare of all and should not be only for oneself. He disagrees with earning from evil ways. He says:

Bhukhe Mulan ghare maseet(i). Makhato hoi kae kan padae. Fakar(u) kare hor(u) jaat(i)gavai. Gur peer sadai mangan jai. Ta kae mool na lagai pai. (SGGS p. 1245)

Means that if a hungry priest turns his home as a religious place for earning; a good-for-nothing person becoming Yogi by getting his ears pierced; penniless changing his religion for earning; a beggar calling himself Guru and getting share from other beggars are not worth honour. He advises that, "One should lead a simple life, free from greed and materialism, and focus on spiritual growth and service to others".

Social Welfare

Prioritizing the welfare of the society, especially the poor and needy through initiatives like '*Dasavand*' and '*Langar*', where free food is served to all irrespective of background or social status. Sri Guru Granth Sahib inculcates the spirit of social harmony, self-reliance and togetherness through common activities and mutual help. Encourages individuals to become self-reliant as well as contribute to the welfare of others.

The best people are those who consider mercy and forgiveness as the most divine. Forgiveness the god of mercy, is the patron saint of mankind. (SGGS, p.1245)

Selfless Service for the Community

'Service' here means selfless service. It involves working selflessly without any reward or personal gain and helping others in various ways. It is a way of life for many Sikhs and is part of their daily routine. Sikhism teaches that service as an act of service to God and therefore should be done regularly to become closer to God. It helps Sikhs to become true followers of Guru (*Gurmukhs*) and to show their faith in God. Sikhs serve in many ways, such as helping the congregation and the local community. Many Sikhs do most of their service by helping out at the gurdwara, including cleaning, washing utensils, polishing shoes, cleaning the floor or serving at the langar.

Congregation of Good People (Sangat)

The word 'Sangat' means' congregation of good people '. A true congregation is a meeting of saintly persons that sits to discuss the Great Qualities of the Creator, recites His Name and considers ways for the betterment and welfare of all beings. (Satsangat(i) kaisi jaanie. Jithe eko naam vakhanie (SGGS, p. 72); Satsangat(i) melaa(u) jithai kar(i) gun sada vakhanie (SGGS,p. 83); Santam sant saadh milap(i) rahiae gun bolh(i) pariupkarai (SGGS, p.22)

Equality

Guru Nanak Dev Ji has explained that "I must not forget that there is only One God of entire beings. 'Sabhna jian ka eko data so main visar (u) na jaai; SGGS p, 2)" There is only one Giver to all beings and I should never forget this. All are created by God hence all are equal and no one is superior or inferior. All divisions are created by man.

2. The Unity of Mankind

Guru Ram Das Ji explained that there is only one breath; all are made of the same soil; all have the same light within. One light pervades in all many and varied beings. Gurbani believes in the unity of humanity. It is the belief that all human beings are equal because they were all created by One and only One God. God is present in every person in the form of spirit or divine light. All human beings should be treated with respect and they should not try to convert others to their faith. This belief is called egalitarianism.

After bathing in Vein River, Guru Nanak Dev Ji said, "God is neither Hindu nor Muslim and the path I take is God's. "Na Hindu na Musalman" From this point on, he discarded his Hindu traditions and lived a life practicing equality. He voiced strongly that "It is wrong to divide people on the basis of religion when all are equal". Sri Guru Granth Sahib teaches that all beings were created by the command of God. All human beings are one and the same. All animals should be treated equally. All should be treated with dignity and respect. Humans are different from all other species. This is because humans can make moral judgments and decide what is right and what is wrong. They can do this because they have the divine light given by God within them.

Eko pavn(u) maati sabh eka sabh eka jyot sabhaia. Sabh ika jot(i) vartai bhin(i) bhin(i) n ralai kisai di ralaia (SGGS, p.96) naari purkh(u) purkh(u) sabh naaree sabh(u) eko purkh(u) murarae (SGGS, p.983) Never say anyone low since all are equal and bretheren.

Sharing Sources and Resources

Sources and Resources must be shared equally. Some promote a more equitable distribution of resources rather than the accumulation of wealth by a select few which leads to a worsening of the balance and widening the rich-poor gap. Sri Guru Granth Sahib says to avoid excessive materialism.

Eliminating Hunger

God has kept hunger for food in every and ego in every mind; which is never satisfied., Fill the stomach in the morning and it will be emptied by noon; fill it at noon and it will be emptied by evening; fill it in the evening and it will be found empty the next morning. To remove this hunger, the creator has spread nature, which goes on giving food when in need. How ever you cannot store food for your life nor your hunger will ever be removed once for all. You may try your mind skills to find a way out you will find no way out. *Bukhia bhukh n utri je bana puria bhaar. Sahas sianpa lakh hoh(i) t ik n chalai naal (i): SGGS, p.1*

People earn bread by telling lies or playing tricks. They try to hold large stocks. But, this all is in vain. People try to loot or steal food when they do not have their own. This is all bad; this is all falsehood. Then how to become truly clean and how to get rid of the loot, beatings, and slander that have been built on the foundation of falsehood to avoid increased hunger. It has to be in His way. He wants everyone to be treated equally. Not only taking care of your own hunger, not only thinking of yourself, but also thinking of the hunger of all the other brothers and sisters in the world. We have to come out of the shackles of 'I, Me "and encompass the entire world. It should not be that I collect goods for my hunger and everyone else sits hungry. Here is a true story of Guru Nanak. He was sent by his father to the nearby city to buy grocery for the shop which he was to run. He was asked to do a True Deal. While going to city he encountered some yogis sitting in a barren land. He found them too hungry. He went to the city and with all the money given to him he bought the food for the yogis rather than purchasing grocery. When asked by his father where he had spent the money he softly said, "I did a tru deal. I fed the hungry with all that money." His father was certainly very angry but Guru Nanak was satisfied with what he had done. Removing the hunger of others is also God's commandment. The whole world is bound under His command of equality because all are His equal creation.

Shed Ego

To collect so much for oneself and then to be proud of it and to show to the world that I have so much is puffing up one's ego. This ego is against this commandment of equality and removal of hunger. No one is exempt from His commandment of equality, fraternity and brotherhood. If one understands God's commandments, no one will be egoistic. (*Nanak hukmai je bujhai ta haumai kahe na koi SGGS p.1*) The one who obeys his command is very humble and and helpful to all. He will be never be arrogant and selfish. He will have no ego as you see some of the world leaders behaving. They cry: "I did this, I did that." "It is the ego that does not come from equality, it creates a difference between the high and the low; it makes a difference between the strong and the bad.

Communal Harmony

Guru Nanak in his hymns in Sri Guru Granth Sahib believed that being part of a community would help individuals come closer to God. Community is an important part of their personal journey toward God. Guru Nanak established many practices that convinced Sikhs of the importance of community. Guru Nanak Dev Ji rejected the caste system and taught about the unity of humanity. This means that everyone should be treated equally.

Guru Nanak Dev called upon all people, irrespective of caste, creed or gender, to come to his house for mass congregation. All of them sat in the same room on the ground. There was no high platform for anyone. Members of different castes used to sit next to each other, which many had never done before. Guru Nanak appealed to the people to join this group of individuals to find God and to follow teaching of the Guru which are now found in Sri Guru Granth sahib. There was total harmony between people of all religions who followed his path of Truth.

Society Sans Divisions

The Hindu tradition believes in caste division in which the Brahmin is considered most superior and the other castes are considered lower in status. This is the root of high and low in Hindu society which is contrary to the principle of equality. Similarly, the Mughals considered the Hindus of India inferior to them and imposed a Jizya tax on them. In the groups of high and low these feelings were filled which used to deny equality. Gurbani denies this concept and gives equal status to all human groups. Guru Sahib taught that everyone is equal and there should be no discrimination on the basis of caste system or religion. Sikhs believe that that all paths lead to the one true God and all religions are inclusive and should be treated with respect and equality.

Accepting the Truth in Life

Honesty may seem difficult today when we are often encouraged to be something we are not. But Sri Guru Granth Sahib reminds us that truth strengthens our spirit and bonds. For followers of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, honesty is not just a value; it is a constant practice that brings us closer to God. When we embrace the truth, we invite divine wisdom into our lives, creating a space for peace, clarity, and purpose. It's not just about personal gain; it's a way to bring light into the lives of others, inspiring those around us to live honestly and compassionately.

The teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and the legacy of every Sikh Guru remind us that by living with the truth, we build a world of justice, love and respect for humanity. We hold our heads high, guided by *sat* (truth) and walk on the path of integrity for ourselves and for future generations.

The Economic Model in Sri Guru Granth Sahib vis-a-vis existing Economic Models

The modern economic model is based on market economy. Profit remains its main objective. It means one must get more than the other. There is no principle of equality in it. There is no principle of sharing and selfless service in this. Self-ego, craving and greed determine divisions of the high and low. This leads to falsehood, excessive consumerism, excessive storages, amassing wealth, theft, looting, murders, adulteration and all the crimes. When falsehood takes over, the truth hides behind curtains. Falsehood causes darkness and there is no truth to create light. This is how gloom is spread as quoted in UNO and Unesco reports. Poverty is increasing. The principle of equality is gone. In the market economy, everything is related to profit. No one wants to make a loss. On the other hand, Sri Guru Granth Sahib teaches the trade of truth. This is the real deal. Gurbani's message of equality to all and removing hunger from the world are most appropriate in the present world.

This reminds me of an incidence. Several monks came to visit Guru Nanak. Just outside the locality they sought to know the identity of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's home since they were traveling to Kartarpur after hearing about his grandeur. They observed several folks chanting the name of God while they worked in the fields. The workers labouring in the fields were requested by the monks who lived at Baba Nanak's residence. "Please be seated; we will arrange for a guide for you," stated the older member of the group. In the meantime, the elderly person's wife arrived bringing meals for the farmworkers.

"Please come over," the elder said, calling the sadhus. "You will undoubtedly be hungry because you seem to have travelled long. We all will have food first. This woman will take you to Baba Nanak's house after the supper". It astonished the monks. "While labouring, the folks are repeating the name of God. They are also giving us free meals. It is all according to the teaching Guru Nanak. We shall check the facts on meeting Guru Nanak". After the meals, the woman led these monks to Guru Nanak's house. The elder person, who also happened to be Gu He washed his face, hands, and feet before wishing the sadhus who were waiting in a room. Meanwhile, sadhus realized that the same elderly person was, in fact, Guru Nanak. They were astounded. He spoke with them in a very kind and humble manner. Throughout his conversation, he answered all of their questions. But the fact that Guru Nanak demonstrated practically what he taught created the biggest effect on Sadhus. Guru Nanak Dev Ji did not take long to impart this excellent lesson. "The modern world does not remember the name of God, does not work honestly, and does not share the way Guru Nank did," they began to ponder among themselves. "Everyone wants to amass wealth for themselves. Nobody thinks of others. No one is considering loss; everyone is discussing profit. Falsehood, deceit, looting, and wealth gain are all too common; truth and honesty have vanished. The affluent are blinded by greed. The poor are getting poorer and the affluent are getting richer. The rate of poverty is rising. It is impossible to demand equality in this circumstance. That ought to be the world's actual concern, not the current situation. Guru Nanak did not take long to show and convey this excellent lesson. They became Guru Nanak's followers after learning from him the importance of truth, hard work, sharing, and remembering God.

Not only this, Guru Sahib talks about the eternal development (*vigas*) of the world, not the present human development. In Sikh literature *vigas* means delight (*khera*). From the spiritual point of view, it means to bring happiness to the soul. The flower blossoms and withers, the leaf blossoms and falls, the mind blossoms and falls; but when the soul blossoms, it always it is in ecstasy and that is the real *vigas*. It never fades. The source of such eternal bliss is God, who is *sat* (True existence), *chit* (consciousness) and *anand* (bliss). Bliss is another name of God's pleasure which does not fade with time. All other types of happinesses are temporary. Guru Amardas ji said, "I am in bliss that I am linked to God. I am linked to him naturally and my mind was congratulated from inner self". Happiness can take different forms and represents a spectrum of satisfying emotions that contribute to emotional and physical well-being. When you think of happiness, it might stem from joy, excitement, gratitude, pride, optimism, contentment, or love. However, self-actualization and transcendental bliss can only be known from a true guide who has experienced it. "*Ananda Ananda sab ko kahin Ananda Guru te jania* (Ramkali Mahal 3, Ananda p. 917) Once he himself is connected to the source of joy; he inspires others to struggle and enables them to connect. Those who are united with the God are always in bliss. '*Nanak bhagta sada vigas, suniye dukh paap ka naas.*' When there is joy, all sorrows and sins are washed away. A man is always on the move. When one is absorbed by the Guru's words, the soul is always in the circle of *vigas*. "The Guru is always present within the devotees. (Sloka Mahala 3, page 145) Then the whole body, mind, heart, soul and spirit of the Gurus remain filled in a perpetual abyss. The state of "*Nanak-bhagta-sada-vigas*" remains. The spiritual state of ever-expanding comes to be a continuous, unbroken state, then it seems as if the whole bliss of connecting with the God is confined to the soul. In such spiritual fields religious flowers also blossom and flowers of knowledge also blossom. This bliss, this Anand, this *Vigas*, was the Guru Sahib's actual medicine for the world in distress; to get rid of the attachment of wealth and worldly achievements and join God and attain salvation. However, the direction in which the world is moving now, there is no bliss, no *Vigas*; only wandering in wilderness. The whole world should know its real path which has been shown in Sri Guru Granth Sahib which will lead to the bliss.

3. Conclusion

The economic model expounded in Sri Guru Granth Sahib emphasizes on a balanced and ethical approach to economic activity, prioritizing both individual and societal needs. The main principles include accepting and following the truth in life, work sincerely and earn truthfully, share with others, social service, equality, love, society without divisions by caste, creed, religion, status, sex, wealth or otherwise, equal distribution of means, sharing of sources and resources, eliminate hunger and poverty, communal harmony, unity of mankind, rejection of ego, craving, delusion and greed for wealth and amassing wealth for worldly pleasures and above all to be always getting attached to the Creator's Name and attain bliss.

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