

Naam Mantra Jap

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Naam Mantra jap is a spiritual practice primarily intended to bring about spiritual advancement of an individual. It consists in the person choosing a word or stanza and sitting in quiet solitude, repeating the same. Our mind, normally, has a tendency to keep on shifting from one thought to the other at random; it should be gently brought back to the process of repetition of the chosen word or stanza. The aspirant should try to listen to the *Naam mantra* being uttered within, even though inaudible; it will help him in keeping the mind focussed on the process and thus make the *jap* much more effective. The *mantra* should be practiced daily for a minimum period of about half an hour, preferably twice – morning and evening. Gradually, however time for *mantra jap* should be extended to other parts of the day so as to fill gaps or spare time between other normal activities, or when engaged on such activities

as do not require any mental work e.g. bathing, dressing, walking, waiting, resting, and before sleep.

The chosen word for the *Naam Japna* should represent the Divine Reality or Deity of the individual according to his religious belief or the chosen stanza should reflect the ethical and spiritual values of the individual. The word is so chosen that it draws aspirant's attention to the Spiritual Reality during the *jap*.

When *Naam mantra* is practiced regularly for some time at conscious level, gradually the sub-conscious takes over, and the *jap* goes on even when the conscious mind is engaged in other activities. As soon as a gap occurs in an activity *Naam* will surface up at conscious level of its own. Thus the *jap* becomes, so to say, automatic called '*ajapa jap*' or *simran*. If a person goes to sleep over the *mantra*, whenever he happens to wake up at night, he will find that the *jap* is going on in his mind.

Gradually, this practice slows down the wandering tendency of the mind and increases the power of mental concentration of the aspirant. The practice purifies the mind and reduces the inborn tendencies for lust, anger, greed, selfishness and pride, sanctifies his outlook towards life, increases awareness, raises level of consciousness and brings about all round spiritual advancement. The aspirant becomes honest, truthful, considerate, caring, loving, kind, forgiving and humble. He gets a feeling of bliss and joy during the *jap* and that keeps him hooked to the practice. The *mantra* completely transforms the individual and religion becomes a part of his daily life. What is important is regularity of practice, persistence and an inner urge for self-realization.

In the advanced stages of this practice, the aspirant should, during the course of his *Naam jap*, mentally fill his mind with God-consciousness and subjectively feel the presence of God as a Spiritual Reality within him and all around him. He begins to see

‘beauty’ and a ‘touch’ of His presence in everything around him. *Gurbani* says:- ‘*so antar so bahir anant, ghut ghut biap raiha Bhagvant.*’ - that is : the same Infinite which is outside is inside you ; He is all pervading and in every being. This is what is termed as a state of communion with God. Aspirant’s concept of God also, gradually changes from Personal to Impersonal. A spiritualist addressing Him says:

Thou Life within my life, than self more
near,

Thou Veiled Presence, infinitely clear,

From all illusive shows of sense I flee,

To find my Centre and my rest in Thee.

How does *Naam mantra* work? *Mantra* slowly develops the four ‘D’s of mind-culture namely: **discrimination, determination, discipline and detachment**, as follows:- (a) **Discrimination** – the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. **Mantra** makes the aspirant more

receptive to the inflow of Divine Intelligence that pervades the entire universe; this inflow enhances the ability of the individual to know what is right and what is wrong, and he is thus in a position to make right choices and take correct decisions. (b) **Determination** – the ability to implement one’s decisions. For practicing *jap* the aspirant makes use of his faculty of **will**; it is a law of life that any organ of body or faculty of mind that is used regularly gets strengthened. In the practice of *mantra jap* the individual makes use of his faculty of ‘will’; this enables him to strengthen his will power and to gradually extend its domain to subconscious, so as to be able to free his ‘self’ from conflicts, fears, selfishness, greed, lust and cravings which are rooted in the subconscious. (c) **Discipline** - A person with a strong will is well-disciplined and he is able to exercise better control on his mind and resist temptations. (d) **Detachment** - the ability to keep the mind off from all that is unimportant and irrelevant in life. This quality follows the earlier qualities (a), (b) and (c) An individual who is regular in practicing *mantra jap* gets

tuned to the Infinite within and gets Divine guidance for living a good life.

Indeed *Naam Mantra jap* as a religious practice, forms the core of most of the religions of the world, including Sikhism. There is another form of practice which makes use of the principle of **auto-suggestion**; it consists in, while sitting in a meditative pose, repeating mentally selected *shabads*, *bhajjans*, psalms, inspiring poems, passages, etc. This form of meditation brings about desirable changes in the sub-conscious. Some spiritualists recommend combining the above form of meditation for daily formal sittings in the morning and evenings and *mantra jap* to fill gaps in normal activities during the day, whenever feasible, and at night when lying down for sleep. In Sikhism *mantra jap* is combined with recitation of *gurbani* at personal level and listening to *shabad-kirtan* at community level.

Other benefits of Naam mantra jap

Regular practice of *Naam mantra jap* has, apart from spiritual, many other uses and benefits. It brings about physical relaxation, slows down breathing rate, reduces blood pressure, slows down aging process and brings about a general feeling of well-being. It serves as an anti-stress measure and boosts up immune system. During illness it aids healing and promotes early recovery. Persons, who are regular in *Naam jap*, take good care of their body and, normally, enjoy a long and healthy life.

The *Jaap* promotes mental peace, increases the capacity for mental concentration and ability for putting in sustained mental work for long periods. Thus, regular practice of *Naam jap* makes a person mentally more efficient and productive; he acquires freedom to think only of that which is of benefit to him and /or to others. When mind switches off, at random, from one thought to the other in a continuous row, lot of mental energy is wasted, *Naam* enables an aspirant to conserve mental energy by slowing down the process of thinking.

When time is hanging heavy over you and you are feeling bored, fill your mind with *Naam* to take off the boredom. Watching TV aimlessly, just to fill time is a great drag on your mental energy and quite enervating.

The *Naam* enables us to direct our attention at will from negative to positive thinking. In times of distress it enables us to take our thoughts off from worry, sorrow, pain or any nagging problem and calms down the mind. Every individual has within his subconscious, an immense reserve of creative wisdom and love; *Naam mantra* enables us to make use of that capacity and enrich life.

If you spend a lot of time on reading and writing, it is a good practice to rest for a short while, to close your eyes and to repeat *Naam mantra*. When you are unwell and lying in bed at home or in hospital, practice *Naam mantra*. This would take your mind off from pain, discomfort or any brooding tendency.

If a person has strong likes and dislikes, strong opinions and set habits, his responses become mechanical and subjective; in other words, he is a slave to his inner urges and loses his freedom of choice. His way of life, therefore, becomes unsound. He behaves as if he has no control on his mind. *Mantra* helps him in gaining control over the mind, in making wise choices and in living a more meaningful life. Persons with strong likes and dislikes are, generally extremely self-centered and they cannot appreciate other people's point of view. They are too rigid in their approach and personal relationships. This trait of theirs stands in their way of their growth and spiritual advancement. They are intolerant and impatient; they find it difficult to get along with others and to make adjustments where needed. They cannot co-operate with others and therefore do not get co-operation from others. They cannot undertake disagreeable jobs, however important they may be. When a person gains control over his mind, through *mantra*, he can drop a job which he likes and do a job which he dislikes, when doing so

becomes necessary from consideration of some overall advantage to himself as well as to others.

An unstable mind gets very much elated on success and depressed on meeting a failure. It is a law of life that too much elation brings a reactive depression afterwards. A stable person never goes to extremes and remains calm and tranquil under all circumstances. This ability to remain calm and steady is acquired through regular practice of *mantra jap*.

While concluding, it will not be an exaggeration to state that *mantra jap* has been rightly called the *Elixir* of life. *Gurbani* says:- '*Sarb rog ka aukhad naam.*' that is - *mantra jap* is a cure for every ill. In case of those who lead a very busy life its regular practice of even half an hour daily will bring about immense benefits, physical, mental, social, psychological and spiritual.