

# Practice of Japa-Yoga.

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*Japa* is an important *Anga* (part) of *Yoga*. In the *Gītā* you will find: 'यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि' (Among *Yajñas* I am *Japa-Yajña*). In *Kali Yuga* the practice of *Japa* alone can give eternal Peace, Bliss and Immortality. *Japa* ultimately results in *Samādhi* or communion with the Lord. *Japa* must become habitual and must be attended with Sattvic or Divine *Bhāva*, Purity, *Prema* (Love) and *Śraddhā* (Reverence). There is no *Yoga* greater than *Japa-Yoga*. It can give you all *Iṣṭa-Siddhis* (whatever you want), *Bhukti* (Enjoyment) and *Mukti* (Liberation). Dhruva, Prahlāda, Vālmiki, Tukaram, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, all attained salvation by uttering the name of God.

*Mantra* is Divinity. It is Divine Power or *Daivi Śakti* manifesting in a sound-body. The *Śāstra* says that those who think that an image is mere stone, that mantras are merely letters, and that a *Guru* is a mere man and not a manifestation and representative of the Lord or Supreme Teacher, Illustrator and Director, go to hell. The aspirant should endeavour to realize his unity with the *mantra* or the Divinity and, to the extent he does so, the *mantra*-power or the *mantra-śakti* supplements his worship-power (*Sādhana-Śakti*).

*Japa* is repetition of a *mantra* or the name of the Lord. *Dhyāna* is meditation on the form of the Lord, with His attributes. This is the difference between *Japa* and *Dhyāna*. There is *Japa* with meditation (*dhyāna-sahita*); there is *Japa* without meditation (*dhyāna-rahita*). As you advance, the *Japa* drops by itself; meditation only remains. You can practise concentration separately. You can do whatever you like best. OM is both *Saḡuṇa* and

*Nirguṇa*—manifested and unmanifested *Brahma*. You can repeat OM RĀMA for worship of the manifest *Brahma*.

Any *mantra* is very powerful. It is a mass of radiant energy. There is *mantra-śakti* and *mantra-chaitanya* in every *mantra*. It changes the mental substance from passion to purity, from *Rajas* to *Sattva*. It calms and strengthens the mind. It makes the mind introspective. It checks the outgoing tendencies of the mind. It eradicates all kinds of evil thoughts and inclinations. It induces determination and austerity. Eventually it leads to the direct *Darśana* of God—the *Iṣṭa Devatā*—or Self-Realization (*Ātma-Darśana*). When you repeat the *mantra*, have sattvic *Bhāva* or *Śuddha Bhāvanā* (right mental attitude, sattvic feeling). The *Bhāva* comes slowly when the purificatory process goes on. Even mere mechanical repetition exercises a great purifying effect on the mind. The vibration in the mind set up by the repetition purifies the 'Chitta', the 'mind-stuff'.

Get up during what is known as the *Brahma-Muhūrta* (the period of three hours preceding sunrise), which is very favourable for spiritual contemplation, and start doing *Japa*. During the early morning hours the mind is calm and pure and the brain quite fresh after slumber. The mind is like a blank sheet of paper and comparatively free from worldly *saṃskāras* (impressions of *Vyavahāra*) at that time. It can be moulded very easily. The atmosphere also is charged with an abundance of *Sattva* at this particular time. Wash your hands, feet and face with cold or warm water, if you find it difficult to take a bath. That will suffice. Do *āchamana*, sip a spoonful of water thrice with the name of Hari on your lips.

Sit on *Padma*, *Siddha*, *Swastika* or *Sukha āsana* for half an hour to start with. Then increase the period gradually to three hours. In one year you can have *Āsana-siddhi* (perfection in posture). Any easy comfortable posture is *āsana*. Keep the head, neck and trunk in one straight line. Spread a four-folded blanket and over this spread a piece of soft, white cloth. This will do nicely. If you can get a good tiger-skin complete with claws, etc., it will be still better. A tiger-skin has got its own advantages. It generates electricity in the body quickly and does not allow leakage of electric current from the body. It is full of magnetism. Face east or north while you are on the *āsana*. A spiritual neophyte should observe this rule. In facing north you will be in communion with the Ṛṣis of the Himalayas and will be mysteriously benefited by their spiritual currents.

Repeat the *mantra* aloud for some time, in a whisper for some time and mentally for some time. The mind wants variety. It gets disgusted with any monotonous practice. Mental repetition is very powerful. It is termed manasic *Japa*. Verbal repetition is called *Vaikhari Japa*. Repetition in a whisper or humming sound is termed *Upāṁsu Japa*, which is more efficacious than verbal repetition. Loud *Japa* shuts out all worldly sounds. There is no break. These are the two advantages in loud *Japa*: In manasic *Japa* it is difficult for ordinary people to find when the break comes in the mind. Whenever sleep tries to over power you when you do *Japa* at night, take the *mālā* (rosary) in your hands and roll the beads. This will put a check to sleep. Repeat the *mantra* loudly, give up manasic *Japa*. The *mālā* reminds us of the stoppage of *Japa*. When sleep comes, stand up and do the *Japa* in that posture.

Śāṇḍilya says in the *Śāṇḍilya Upaniṣad*: "The *Vaikhari Japa* (loud

muttering) gives the reward stated in the Vedas; while *Upāṁsu Japa* (*Japa* in a whispering or humming tone which cannot be heard by any one) gives a reward a thousand times more than the *Vaikhari*: the manasic (mental) *Japa* gives a reward a crore of times more than the *Vaikhari*".

The mind is purified by constant *Japa* and worship. It is filled with good and pure thoughts. Repetition of *mantra* and worship strengthens the good *samskāras*. "As a man thinks, so he becomes." This is the psychological law. The mind of a man who trains himself in thinking good, holy thoughts, develops a tendency to think good thoughts. His character is moulded and transformed by continued good thoughts. When the mind thinks of the image of the Lord during *Japa* and worship, the mental substance actually assumes the form of the image. The impression of the object is left in the mind. This is called a *samskāra*. When the act is repeated very often, the *samskāras* gain strength by repetition, and a tendency or habit is formed in the mind. He who entertains thoughts of Divinity becomes transformed actually into the Divinity by constant thinking and meditation. His *Bhāva* or disposition is purified and divinized. The meditator and the meditated, the worshipper and the worshipped, the thinker and the thought, get identified in course of time. This is *Samādhi*. This is the fruit of worship or *Upāsana* or doing *Japa*.

Silent repetition of God's Name is a tremendous tonic and a potent specific for all diseases. It should never be stopped even for a day under any circumstances. It is like food. It is a spiritual food for the hungry soul. You can hardly live on bread alone; but you can live on the Name of God alone. You can drink and live on the nectar that flows during *Japa* a meditation.

If you are tired of repeating the *mantra* at a stretch for a long time, have three or more sittings, say from 4 to 7 in the morning, from 4 to 5 in the evening and from 6 to 8 at night. Repeat the *mantra* very quickly for some time, when you find that the mind is wandering much. The golden rule is to repeat the *mantra* neither too slow nor too quick. Observe the happy medium. There should be *Akṣara-Suddhi* (correct pronunciation) in your repetition. All the akṣaras of the *mantra* should be pronounced properly. If there are five akṣaras or letters in the *mantra*, it should be repeated five lacs of times. This is *Akṣara-Lakṣa* repetition.

If you sit by the side of a river, lake or well, at the foot or on the top of a mountain, or inside a temple, a lovely garden or a solitary room, the mind will be focussed quite easily without much effort. If you repeat the *mantra* when the stomach is overloaded, you will begin to feel drowsy very soon. Take light sattvic food. Repeat any prayer and then sit for *Japa*. The mind will be elevated. You will find it pleasant to rotate the beads easily. You must use your common sense throughout your spiritual practice. For some time you can visit holy places like Rikhikesh, Hardwar, Benares and Nasik, and there you can do the *Japa* on the banks of the holy Ganges or Godavery. You will find a marked improvement. As the mind is free from thoughts of business, worries and family anxieties, you can have an efficient outturn of *Japa* owing to good concentration. Record the *Japa* in your diary. When you roll the beads, do not use the index finger. Use the right thumb and the middle finger. Cover your fingers with a piece of towel or a specially made cap. Others should not see your rolling the beads.

Introspect. Live within. Watch the mind and its vṛttis (thought-waves) carefully. Sit in a solitary room for some time.

Manasic *Japa* of 'Rāma-Mantra' can be associated with the breath like 'SOHAM' in order to make it *Ajapā Japa*. A *Japa* that is done without moving the lips is *Ajapā*. When you inhale the air, repeat mentally *Rā*; when you exhale, repeat mentally *ma*. Keep up the practice even during walking. For some this method is easy. During meditation in the room you can have this practice also. This is *Ajapā* way of repeating 'Rāma-Mantra'.

Fixing one's eyes between the eye-brows is called *Bhrūmadhya-dṛṣṭi*. Sit on *Padmāsana*, *Siddhāsana* or *Swastikāsana* in your meditation room and practise this gaze gently from half a minute to half an hour. There must not be the least violence in this practice. Gradually increase the period. This yogic *Kṛyā* removes *Vikṣepa* or the tossing of mind and develops concentration. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa prescribes this practice in the *Gītā* (V. 27): 'स्पर्शान् कृत्वा बहिर्बाह्यांश्चक्षुश्चैवान्तरे भ्रुवोः' (having external contacts excluded, and with gaze fixed between the eye-brows). This is known as the "Frontal Gaze" because the eyes are directed towards the frontal bone or the bone of the forehead. You can select for yourself either the "Nasal Gaze" or the "Frontal Gaze" according to your taste, temperament and capacity. For the practice of the Nasal Gaze sit on *Padmāsana* or *Virāsana* and fix the gaze at the tip of the nose, from half a minute to half an hour. Do this practice gently. Do not strain the eyes. Gradually increase the period. Even when you pass on the road, practise this gaze. You will have wonderful concentration. The *Japa* can go on nicely while walking.

Some students like to concentrate with open eyes, others with closed eyes, and still others with half-opened eyes. If you meditate with closed eyes, dust or foreign particles will not fall into your eyes. Those practicers who are troubled by lights and jerks prefer concentration with open eyes. But if they meditate with closed eyes, they are easily overpowered by sleep. And if the eyes are opened, the mind wanders to objects. Use your common sense and adopt that method which suits you best. Overcome other obstacles by suitable, intelligent methods. Remember the story of "Bruce and the Spider". Be patient and persevering. Struggle hard and win the spiritual battle, become a spiritual hero, and wear the spiritual laurels round your neck.

There is a special, mysterious spiritual force or wonderful magnetic power at *Sandhi* or junction of time, viz. at sunrise and sunset. The mind will be elevated quickly. It will be filled with *Sattva*. Concentration will come by itself without any effort at this time. *Japa* should be done at the *Sandhis*. It is always better to start *Japa* and meditation early in the morning as soon as you get up from bed. At this time the mind is quite calm and refreshed. You should catch the meditative wave now, since meditation is more important. Then you can take to *āsanas* and *Prāṇāyāma* and finish up the full course by another short sitting in *Japa* and meditation. As there is always some drowsiness when you get up and start the practice, it is desirable to do some *āsana* and a little *prāṇāyāma* for five minutes just to drive off this drowsiness and to make you fit for *Japa* and meditation.

*Mālā* (rosary) is a whip to goad the mind towards God. Just as you are reminded of courts, cases, documents and clients when you see or think of a lawyer, just as you are reminded of

a dispensary, patients, drugs, chemicals, diseases and hospitals when you see or think of a doctor, so also the ideas of Sanctity, Purity, Divinity, Divine Glory, Divine Splendour, Divine Wisdom, Divine Power, Divine Love, Omnipotence, and all other Divine attributes come up before your mind when you see or think of a *mālā*. Therefore wear this always in your neck, and do *Japa* with the same. Don't feel shy in wearing it, O educated persons! It will always remind you of God and God-Realization. It is more valuable than a golden necklace bedecked with nine kinds of precious stones, because it fills your mind with divine thoughts, and is the instrument to take you to the goal and liberate you from the Sansaric wheel of birth and death.

Concentrate gently either on the lotus of the heart (*anāhata-chakra*) or on the space between the two eyebrows (*ājñā-chakra*). *Ājñā-Chakra* is the seat of the mind according to *Hathayoga*. Mind can be controlled easily if one concentrates on this *Ājñā-Chakra* with one's eyes closed.

Goswami Tulasidas says: "If any one utters the word RĀMA even in a dream, I should like to make a pair of shoes out of my skin for his daily use." Who can describe the glory of God's sacred name? Who can really comprehend the greatness and splendour of the holy name of God? Even Pārvatī, Lord Śiva's Consort, failed to describe in adequate terms the grandeur and true significance of God's Name. When one sings His Name or hears It sung, he is unconsciously raised to sublime spiritual heights. He loses his body-consciousness. He is immersed in joy. He drinks deep the divine nectar of Immortality. He gets Divine intoxication. Repetition of God's Name enables the devotee to feel the Divine Presence, the Divine Glory, and the Divine Consciousness within himself and everywhere else. How sweet is

Hari's Name ! How powerful is God's Name ! How much joy, peace and strength It brings to one who repeats His Name ! Blessed, indeed, are those who repeat God's Name; for they shall be freed from the wheel of birth and death and will attain *Parama Ānanda* and Immortality !

May God give us inner strength to control the senses and mind and practise *Japa-Yoga* uninterruptedly ! May we have unshakable faith in the

miraculous power and marvellous benefits of *Japa-Yoga* ! May we all recognize and realize the glory of *Nāma* ! May we all spread the glory of *Nāma* throughout the length and breadth of this land ! Victory to Hari and His Name ! Glory to HARI and His Name ! May the blessings of Śrī ŚIVA-HARI-RĀMA-KRṢṆA be upon you all !!

*Hari Om Tat Sat !*

*Om Śāntiḥ Śāntiḥ Śāntiḥ !!*

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