

Focussed Naam Jaap

KS Ram

The practice of chanting the name of God is recommended by all religions. *Jaap*, or the repetition of God's name, helps to activate a resource centre in our system that is otherwise dormant. Most people pass through life entirely ignorant of this spiritual faculty, or they underestimate it.

What is God's name? He has countless names, because God's names are all adjectives, not nouns: They refer to some aspect of His. Conflict begins when the adjective is made into a noun: We then err in trying to differentiate God.

Mirabai turned ecstatic when she discovered the potency of *Rama nama*. It was like coming upon a treasure – “*Payoji maine Rama rattan-dhan paayo!*” This treasure, she says, none can rob; it does not reduce if you draw from it; in fact, it grows at a compound rate!

Naam jaap is done in three modes: In high tone, in low tone, and in the silent, mental mode. Low tone *jaap* is more powerful than high tone *jaap*, and mental *jaap* is more powerful than low tone *jaap*.

One must begin *jaap* with high tone and gradually move on to low, and then to the silent mode. It is important to coordinate thought with chant: if the mind wanders while lips utter the Name, the exercise is futile. The mind is bound to wander; it must however be repeatedly and gently drawn back to the *jaap*. Regular practice of mental *jaap* leads to *ajapa jaap* or effortless chanting in the subconscious mind.

This leads to an exalted state where the individual ego begins to ebb, because the self is logged on to the Cosmic Self. This state is marked by *pranava dhvani*, the ceaseless, primordial reverberations within. Receiving the *naam mantra* or *Shabda* from Sri Guru Granth is considered to be more effective than acquiring it of oneself. *Naam jaap* is effective when it is practised for earthly ends, as well as when it is practised for its own sake. The latter is superior to the former. Practised for its own sake, *jaap* serves to burn away the *sanchit karmas* – the garbage that makes life toxic. To use *jaap* for earthly ends is to underutilise a resource and, worse, to increase your spiritual baggage.

To grade the different names of God as superior or inferior is sinful. While chanting the Name, many people fix in mind an *ishta rupa* (favoured form) of God. It is better to contemplate on the *vishwa-rupa*, the all-inclusive Cosmic form.

A better way, perhaps, is to contemplate on the formless, an expanding light, or a brilliant void.

[Adapted from: *Times of India*]

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