Common curiosities
answered in a simplest way..

NAAM

(The Divine Name)

Dr.Suhas Pethe

Lucid and Comprehensive Treatise
for the Seekers of

NAAM

(The Divine Name)

... common curiosities about naam, the simplest path for spiritual liberation, resolved in question answer form

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NAAM

First English edition:2013
Digital edition : December 2021

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Dedicated,
with deep gratitude and surrender,
to
the ***NAAM***
… the omnipotent simple universal path
towards the Divine

and

to all those who practice it;
and to those who are
yet to begin …

Suhas Pethe

PROLOGUE

The word '*naam*' - the Divine Name - is being used since time immemorial. A number of saints, elevated souls and spiritual preachers have insisted compassionately on the *naam* as a path to attain the state of bliss or supreme contentment. A lot seems to have been written and said about the *naam* as compared to other spiritual paths; and still more will be written on the *naam* in newer contexts and changing problems of the times to come. In fact, the significance of this omnipotent spiritual path will go on increasing with time and its preaching will not end.

The present world is characterized by rapid changes in the intellectual trends, religious practices, isms and social movements, technological advances and routine daily problems. In the context of these changes, the path of *naam* is required to be viewed with a new perspective. This book is an humble effort in this direction. It attempts to manifest almost all the facets of *naam* in a comprehensive way.

For ease of reading and understanding, the content is presented in a lucid question-answer form. The most asked and representative queries on the *naam* have been addressed and are explained at length. Many sub-questions and allied points have also been considered in the flow of answers.

However, detailed list of such sub-questions and allied

points is not given as it would be too long for the space of the book. Readers are requested to consider this difficulty. Keeping in view, the usefulness of the book, for all categories of readers - from unfamiliar to the subject to the well-conversants, book addresses introductory to relatively deep questions on *naam*.

The scope of the subject is vast - starting from 'what is *naam* ?' to getting eventual individual experience of self-realization through the *naam*. The reader is, therefore, urged to forgive, with a broad heart, for any incompleteness or lacuna in the book.

Limitations also arise as the book expects reader's individual conceiving, experimentation and experience of *naam*, to be the basis for the sanction of explanations provided. The reader is therefore, requested to accept from this book only that, which conforms to his own experience and reasoning; and the rest may be discarded. The Almighty and so also the compassionate saints are offered a deep prayer that may this attempt be fruitful in evoking urge for practice of *naam*.

As a further exposure to the topic of the naam, the readers may refer the books, presently in Marathi - *Jap Sankalpa : Swaroop va Paddhati* and particularly *Vrittyantar Prakash*.

All the varieties of the *naam* and their practitioners are equally respected here at Santachhaya. Therefore, a generalized and universal prayer- *aarati* -of *naam* is sung

here at Santachhaya as a part of *upasana*. The *aarati* is available in audio form in the CD named *Kripaapade* - Part Three and audio DVD no. 7.

I express my sincere gratitude towards all the *sadhakas* here at Santachhaya for their selfless efforts to make all the publications, including this one, available to a number of readers in India and abroad, helping tirelessly in delivering the books, with the attitude of service, to the interested readers, as there is no formal distribution agency. I am also thankful to Mr. Sandesh Shah, Shri. Nandan, Shri. Phule, Mrs. Maithili, Mrs. Ketaki for their efforts in bringing out this book. The *naam-sadhakas* also deserve thanks for their invaluable response, necessitating editions after editions.

May the Grace of *naam* itself lead us to unfold the secrets of the *naam* in the pages to follow now. I may humbly add that the contents of this book are basically based on own experiences. I equally respect any different view, answer, opinion on the questions and topics raised here.

As regards the translation of this book into English, I must mention Prof. Upendra Karkhanis, who came forward for this arduous and delicate task. He did it single handedly in a very short span of time, from thorough reading to submitting to me the soft copy of the English version. He was offered all the necessary support by his wife Dr. Mrs. Smita Karkhanis in carrying out the work successfully. With the only purpose to make the contents of this book available to the universal readers familiar with English,

Prof. Karkhanis has taken the efforts with such a devotion and sincerity that I have no words to place my gratitude on record.

I also sincerely thank a devoted *naam-sadhak* Mr. Sameer Joshi, an avid reader who has travelled worldwide, for going through the manuscript and making valuable suggestions, on my humble request. I am sure, even a single person who benefits from this version, will join me in expressing the gratitude.

Before I conclude this prologue, I request the learned readership to kindly forgive me for any discrepancies that might have been left out of our eyes. We sincerely commit ourselves to pass on the intended meaning by making any improvements, if felt necessary, in the further edition. Let the *Naam* bless Mr. and Mrs. Karkhanis and Mr. Sameer Joshi for their selfless work and the readers for their co-operation as well.

Shriram!

October, 2013 - Suhas Pethe

Naam
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Note : Important reprensentative questions, raised in general, about naam are mentioned below. Their answers are given in the same order as separate chapters in the following pages. The possible sub-questions are also covered in the respective answers. The word 'Maharaj' that appears while elaborating answers, refers to 'Shri Brahmachaitanya Gondavlekar Maharaj' (1845-1913) - a well-known saint from western Maharashtra, the Grace of whom is behind the entire work here.

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1. What *naam* means ?

Commonly, the word '*naam*' refers to the name of God. Applicability and usage of this fact is found in various religions and sects throughout the world. The words *naam* and name are almost synonymous in that sense. Commonly, to address a person we call him by his 'name', in similar terms when the god, the almighty is addressed, the word used is '*naam*', which differentiate itself, in context and effect, from the word 'name'. It's easy to make out if 'name' 'Shankar' is called to address some person, but when used in the context of '*naam*' it would be addressed to Lord '*Shri Shankar*'. In common colloquial context Shankar represents name of a person, but is also '*naam*' when it's addressed to Lord *Shri Shankar.*

The above explanation gives the context and usage of the terms '*naam*' and 'name' in broad sense. Though '*naam*' is used to address the almighty god, the term has more aspects and does not restrict itself to the purpose of addressing only. '*Naam*' has been used as one of the path-ways to god in the spiritual world.

But the scope of the *naam* is much greater than that. As a means of the spiritual elevation, *naam* has a manifold aspects such as vastness, context, meaning, mechanism and effect.

Some of the salient dimensions of the term *naam* are as follows:

1.1 Indication of a particular God or Deity -

For example, *Ram Krishna Hari, Shri Ram*, etc. The phrase of *naam* -the *naam mantra*- can include pronunciation, acclamation or addressing along with indication of the name of the God, also

can include even some specific action also. The phrase can include even some action also. For example, *Om Namah Shivaay* (Sanskrit) meaning saluting the deity also.

1.2 Indication of a particular state of mind or existence

For example, *Shivoham* (Sanskrit) meaning I am *Shiva*. i.e. I am the nameless.

1.3 Indication of a particular realization or truth -

For example, *Om Tat Sat* (Sanskrit) meaning, 'that is true' : implying that the rest of the world and life are pseudo or untrue.

1.4 Indication of absolute existence of an entity -

For example, *Om* (Sanskrit). The word AUM is the reflection of the absolute reality, it is said to be seed syllable. (*'aadi-beej'*) the first and original vibration and manifestation of the formless god, in form.

1.5 Indication of some mystique content -

For example, *Gan Gan Ganat Bote* or *Gani Gan Ganat Bote*. Such phrases are utterances of realized souls. Their meaning can be realized only through *upasana*.

While practicing the *naam*, it is advantageous to know the nature of one's *naam mantra* as mentioned above. Depending on whether it contains praise or concept or existence, the words of the *naam mantra* can be conceived in that dimension accordingly, thereby making the practice more effective. There is a vast difference, therefore, between the *naam mantra* and any other similar words.The *naam*,on one side,invokes the concept or praise or state beyond mere real meaning and, on the other side,

begins the journey of mind towards the divinity within. For example, the *naam* of *Ram* does not invoke the identity of the house-boy Ram, but it awakens in mind, the images of the incarnate son of King Dasharath - the God *Ram* with his victorious bow. At a yet another level, the *naam* indicating universal truth like *Om Tat Sat* (Sanskrit), on chanting, brings the awareness in the mind that 'that is the truth' and I should not overvalue things in my routine life as they are pseudo or partially true; I should not get entangled and become upset for them.

On intense and prolonged practice, when the *naam* gets internalized, one can get the realization that, the *naam* of *Ram* invokes not only the formal physical images of the idols like *Daasharathi Ram or Parashuram or Balram*, but it takes one to the divine and formless *Atma Ram*- inside oneself. Now the Ram is the symbol of all the virtues of the formal Ram on one side and also of the abstract sublime Divinity – a combination of both *sagun* and *nirgun*-the form and the formless. And on either side, the *naam* elevates the *sadhak* from conditioned, incomplete life and the world. From this elevated state of understanding and purity, the same present day worries and sorrows get diluted and start fading out.

That rewards one with the vision of dispassion and constructiveness for the routine life actions. The same proves true for all the varieties of the *naam*.

* * *

2. Why practice *naam* ?

The reasons for practicing *naam* are innumerable. A few of them are as follows :

2.1 Practical reasons to practice *naam* :

2.1.1 Harmless solution to spend free time

Many people have the problem of spending free time. So they engage themselves in activities like unnecessary wandering or lingering here or there, indulging in eating, watching TV, internet and social networking sites, mobile and lot more. The same free time can be utilized most productively in *naam*, without disturbing any one. Practiced in the true sense, *naam sadhana* is a practice that has no harm or inconvenience or encroachment on others.

2.1.2 Remedy for unnecessary social engagements

House wives, retired persons, children often have free time. When one is not aware of how to use, this precious gift, the free time invites engagements like social circles, clubs, various groups, joining classes for various crafts and skills. Apart from time, these activities also consume one's abilities, money, efforts, energy etc. Moreover, when one is not aware of his own psychological conditionings, these activities can be the cause for relation complexes, false gratifications and ego indulgence. One may therefore, sacrifice the so called benefits of the activities rather than inviting subtle losses and troubles. Spending the same free time in the *naam* will keep one away positively from such trifles and their subsequent drawbacks.

2.1.3 Richest reward even for the poorest

The rewards of *naam* - like peace of mind, generosity, dispassion, delightedness - are outstandingly rich on one side and on the other side, they are absolutely inexpensive as a boon for the poorest. It costs neither a rupee nor physical exertion. Its inexpensiveness can also be a motivation to practice it !

2.2 Psychological reasons for practicing *naam* :

2.2.1 Means for inner harmony

Most of the people have psychological conflicts gained in their minds. Capacities, expectations, circumstances, dreams, ideals and many such mutually conflicting entities result in dissonance and stress. Mind has its own mechanism of resolving these conflicts, but that mechanism is inactive in most of the people. *Naam* helps in this respect too. It generates an experience of consonance and harmony through the pronunciation of the *naam mantra* of well organized, effective, time-tested words leading to idealistic content of meaning. It also provides a rhythmic and tonal pleasure, helps to achieve peace of mind. This activates our own dormant centers of inner harmony to help resolve the inner conflicts.

2.2.2 Realizing limitations of the mortal

The root of dissatisfaction and disappointment of mind is that we treat the world and its material values to be the ultimate truth. The present world works with the so-called established values like richness of money and wealth, social prestige, professional status, caste superiority, false ideas of social commitment, relation manipulations and diplomacy, undue importance to material knowledge and skills, bodily comforts and luxury, and so on. Ironically, these have become the measures of so-called 'standard of living' and have been wrongly assigned as true symbols of

prestige in social and personal life. During its process of purification of mind, *naam* invokes the awareness about the limitations of these values and uncovers the mist of illusion around them. Once we realize that the toy has no reality of its own, one can give it up obviously. In the same way, in the light of *naam*, the bondages of mind with the mortal begin to defuse.

2.2.3 Absolute rest for stressed mind

One of the outcomes of the flood of information out of the revolution in the present competitive world is a constant level of mental stress, which is perhaps, so naturally taken for granted that,we don't even sense its existence. The mind in fact needs an absolute natural rest, which is as primary as routine diet and sleep for the body. However, if we look at our daily routine, the day begins with the thoughts of household problems of water and power, persons in the house, then the professional stresses for the whole day. To add, the day ends with borrowed worries and sensations of characters of TV serials ! The mind thus has a constant layer of stress which consumes lot of its energy and enthusiasm, suppressing its vital capacities. The daily practice of *naam* provides a meaningful segment of absolute rest to the stressed mind. The *naam* has the strength of refreshing the mind.

2.3 Conceptual reasons for practicing *naam* :

Naam is not a mere phrase of words but it has a very much deeper and wider content. Life becomes great by great deeds and actions. Great actions are derived from elevated state of mind and thoughts. The emotional drive of a positive mind is also a force behind great actions. The configuration of mind is an outcome of the *sanskaras* it has gone through. A constant exposure of great and elevated thoughts and emotions is necessary to keep the mind elevated.

If the main person in the house, for example, has a narrow vision of looking at life and things, the children automatically learn selfishness and indifference for others. They can be isolated even to their friends and close relatives. That shrinks their sphere of concern and they may become emotionally dry. And they can be found to justify this narrow mindedness too !

On the other side, elevation and greatness are the only gateways of real and imperishable contentedness. *Naam* is one of the most obvious and simple means to provide such an elevated, broad and enriching content to mind. *Naam* being the manifestation of the omniscient Godhood, it can work most effectively in this respect. Thus the above conceptual understanding also points to practice of *naam*.

2.4 General reason to practice *naam* :

2.4.1 Human responsibility in the nature and universe

The universe has manifold and versatile existence of apparently inanimate natural entities like mountains, oceans along with a huge variety of animate species from the invisible creatures to the most developed species like human being. Every ingredient of universe has its own role, capacity and limitations. It is, however, undoubtedly acceptable that human being is supreme to all, due to the extraordinary brain and system called mind.

Therefore, just as an extraordinary child in the family is expected to serve better than all others in the family, a human being has to be the most responsible member of the family of the universe. In fact, the award of supremacy of the human being has in itself, an extraordinary responsibility and expectation too!

The human responsibility in the universe is manifold. Some of its

aspects are early self-reliance, attitude of helpfulness, conservation and maintenance of the natural systems in the universe etc. The most important unique human responsibility is, however, to conceive the ultimate meaningfulness of the entire creation of the universe and its oneness with life. This implies identification and interrelationships among the various systems of universe, exploring the creator behind all of this creation, to have a sense of gratitude towards the creator, to remember Him and His expectation and finally to lead a life as expected by Him. If supremacy is one side of coin, all of these responsibilities are the counterpart or the other side of the coin.

'God' is the commonly understandable and accepted idea for ordinary human beings to address the creator of the universe and life. Hence, the supreme responsibility of human being can be put in short as 'remembering the God', as that remembrance is the root of fulfillment of those supreme responsibilities. And the simplest way of remembering God is '*naam*'. So one should practice *naam* in order to fulfill one's supreme responsibility as a human being in this universe.

2.4.2 Simplest but most effective expression of gratitude towards the Creator

The Creator has not only entrusted the supreme responsibility on humans but he has also provided incredibly powerful tools. Human body is one such miraculously complex and powerful means. The modern medical science, in spite of its glorious achievements, is yet to discover a number of secretes of this wonderful machine. The complexity and the harmony of the various systems of human body, its self-maintenance and self curing ability are beyond human comprehension. Such a feeling of astonishment transcends into a feeling of extreme respect, then surrender and then into deep

gratitude for the Creator. Gratitude is one of the highest virtues and it gets enriched if it is expressed by an action. A heartfelt remembrance of the Creator is all - the beginning to end – of expressing the gratitude. *Naam* is the best means to maintain the remembrance. Hence, *naam* should be practiced as an expression of gratitude towards the God or Creator.

2.4.3 Motivation for positive actions

As an extension of the above point, the *naam* also holds the seeds of generic virtues like respect for others, tolerance, concern for various aspects and ingredients of nature. These virtues get transformed into actions that can be termed as service. *Naam* facilitates remembrance which, in turn, invokes sense of responsibility and duty. On the other hand, *naam* also awakens the sense of detachment about the service done, thereby making one free from possible ill effects like ego, expectations etc. of the service.

2.4.4 Prohibition of negative thoughts

Worrying for anything starts a continuous flow of negative thoughts in the mind. At times, this flow of thoughts is so turbulent and strong and it is very difficult to control. This causes anxiety, insomnia, body disorders that can lead to heavy medication or addictions. *Naam* provides an effective rescue mechanism in such situations. The *vaikhari* - that is verbally pronounced *naam japa* - and also the written *naam* help, in particular, to discontinue the stream of unnecessary and negative thoughts.

2.4.5 Safety against hypocrites in spirituality

Even the field of spirituality is not free from fake *gurus* or organizations in today's time. Though the seeker may be sincere

in his urge, a mistaken *guru* can cause a lot of disturbance which is difficult to recover from. In such cases, *naam* serves as the safe means of individual spiritual practice. Such a self-motivated and self-guided seeker certainly gets appropriate and pure help as time comes. *Naam* being almost unconditional, these threats are avoided.

* * *

3. What is the significance of the *naam* in the present era of science and technology ?

In a broad retrospective of time, we find the past centuries to be remarkable in exploring the external world, discovering various natural laws by the scientific process of experiment- observation-inference. Many specialized branches of science have evolved. The field of technology has also emerged and growing rapidly to produce innumerable means of comfort and physical wellbeing of human life.

However, as a counterpart, there is also a threatening advent of powerful weapons in a wide variety. As a consequence of this prominence of science and technology, the idea of dealing with every aspect of life in 'scientific approach' became widely accepted. The education system also adopted the same idea, leading to a deeper impact of this idea on educated world. All the above developments in the past four centuries are so rapid and influential on human life that we started calling the span of the

four centuries as 'era of science and technology' or in Marathi - *vidnyan yug*.

Though the above developments of science and technology are commendable, the use of the word era or *yug* (in Marathi) is rather improper for a relatively very small time span of about four centuries! The era of science, we generally refer to, where scientific feets have been achieved like discovery of milkways, galaxies of sun, covers a small span of four to five hundred years. The *kali-yug* is supposed to be of four lakh thirty two thousand years long ! All the four *yugaas* together amount to a huge span of forty three lakh twenty thousand years ! And for the Creator, the *yugaas* make only one thousandth fraction of the twelve hours out of a hundred years life of his ! On this background, it is obviously immature to call the time span of four centuries of scientific development as an era -*vidnyan yug*.

Another aspect of the issue of development of science and technology is that this development is related to external and material world. The social life and material world have changed incredibly and commendably due to these developments. But the scientific and technological developments have almost no positive effect on the front of inner development, purity and elevation of mind.

Naam is primarily related to inner elevation and manifestation of divinity within oneself. The life and experiences of innumerable saints from ancient times, provide direct examples of this strength of *naam*. So the stream of science and technology and that of *naam* is neither contradictory nor complementary. So, for inner development, the strength of *naam* is equally available for everyone, including the scientists and technologists.

In fact, the history of last half century is a witness to how life gets contaminated by misery produced by blind indulgence in comforts and values inculcated by misuse of technology in human and social life. The need of purity and tranquility of mind has, therefore, become most acute in the present time. This has made *naam* more relevant than ever.

* * *

4. *Naam* : one or many ?

As the *naam* is indicative representation of name of a Deity or a state of consciousness and so on, there is a variety in the *naam mantras*. Though all of them ultimately converge into the same formless, abstract divinity or God, the concrete forms of that abstract have to be many, according to the context in practice.

As a concrete form of god, *Vishnu, Pandurang, Ram or Krishna* represent different ideals and that is significant as far as the *sagun* (in form) is concerned. However, they point to the unique divine entity - God.

The same is the case with cognitive type of *naam mantras* like '*Om tat sat*' or '*Shivoham*' or ' *Deham naaham koham soham*' - meaning 'I am not this body, I am that perennial existence - god.' Though these *naam mantras* appear to be different, they are the expressions of the same spiritual experience of the Truth.

The same is the case with other differently appearing *naam mantras*. We can distinguish, understand the reasons behind these

different expressions in the same manner. It may be noted that they are different only in their appearance and purpose. A thorough understanding of this apparent plurality of *naam mantras* leads one to the understanding of the fact that in its essence the *naam mantras* are one.

It is, therefore, necessary that the practitioner of *naam* should not undervalue or overvalue *naam mantras* of own or others, realising these to be the futile activities of narrow mind. He should also not deviate from his *naam mantra* even if anyone underestimates it, seeing the ultimate unity in their purpose, mechanism and effect.

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5. Can one change the *naam mantra* ?

The choice of *naam mantra* is basically a matter of one's spiritual trust. So need to change the *naam mantra* implies that either the faith therein has shaken or some other *naam mantra* appears to be more effective. In such situations, changing the *naam mantra* is similar to the behavior we demonstrate within worldly objects in our day to day life following our whims and fancies. In that case, change is not expected and adherence to the same original *naam* is beneficial.

There can be another situation, however, when one mode of spiritual practice has come to its completion and the new mode is to begin. Very similar to a situation during a journey when we leave one destination behind and start towards a new forward

destination. In such cases, if the *Guru* or the Divine System desires, the *sadhak* gets appropriate instructions to change the *naam mantra* for rapid spiritual progress, against the one, *sadhak* himself might have chosen and has been practicing it with utter faith and devotion. Only in such situation it can be treated appropriate to change the *naam*.

However, naturally, such cases are rare.

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6. God is all one, why so many names ?

It would be appropriate to say that Godhood is formless and all one, but its expression and perception is in the form of many gods. This multiplicity of forms arises from variation of temperamental set-ups of the devotees. We know, everyone has his own family deity or *kuldaivat* and *kulaswami* - the deities adopted and continued by the family ancestors for generations. Then, there is an *upasya daivat* - the deity that appears closer to the devotee for his personal spiritual practice or *upasana*.

Everyone has a unique temperamental set-up. Accordingly, we call people generous or matured or jealous etc. People also vary in terms of their relationships with others, like husband-wife, child-mother, friend-friend, master-servant, *guru*-disciple etc. They can be at various stages of life such as childhood, adulthood, old age. People transact among themselves with all these attributes, thus leading the life.

The world around is also multifaceted and dynamic. The process of formation, maintenance and dissolution is just a broad example of its dynamism. But the daily transactions of the natural systems of worlds and of human beings are also in constant action. The universe has its own natural needs and functions. Various natural systems exist to satisfy these needs and functions. Obviously, the Creator is projected to head and control every system in the form of its God; just like *varun* for rains, *savita* for the sun, and so on. One deity represents an ideal ruler, one an ideal wife and another an ideal protector. Thus, assigning a separate deity for each system makes it easier for the ordinary human being to perceive the formless Creator.

The idea of multiplicity of Gods is useful and convenient for progress of the universe and human beings. It offers a sense of harmlessly pure security on one side and its concreteness provides a definite spiritual practice of individuals. It is also useful to purify the social behavior. Thus the concept of multiplicity of God is not only a bare fact but a glorious reality of human life.

In the course of life, everyone gets realization of one's incompleteness and also the incompleteness of others. And one can also realize that this incompleteness is the cause of dissatisfaction. Therefore, one goes on to search or imagine an ideal in relationships like ideal brothers, ideal *guru*, ideal disciple, and so on. Every God is a symbol of one such ideal. This also gives rise to multiplicity of gods, and so also to multiplicity of *naam mantras*.

Therefore, multiplicity of gods and *naam mantras* should be viewed properly as a useful inevitability of an advanced spiritual system, a cultural richness and not as a conceptual imperfection or confusion.

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7. Does the practice of *naam* require any pre- qualification or authority ?

Many spiritual paths have some eligibility conditions, like ability to take particular posture for meditation, physical conditions for *yog*, specific rules in case of some spiritual paths.

The *naam*, however, has no prerequisites - no conditions of caste, knowledge, nationality and religion. One can even be illiterate to the extent that he may not be able to read the *naam mantra*. Even if one is not able to pronounce or if one is dumb, one can practice *naam*, as *naam* is basically a remembrance.

The only thing required to start practice of *naam* is 'the desire to practice it'. That is a noble desire unlike all other worldly desires. Indeed, when one's noble time comes, one may come across some book or someone's experience or guidance of *naam* and that creates wish for practicing it. In spite of the fact that *naam* is an easy and ancient path, its practitioners are comparatively very few in number. This may suggest the existence of some pure or good deeds in this or the past lives that can lead one to take *naam*. In this sense only, existence of such past can be termed as a prerequisite for the desire to take *naam*. However, it is limited to this extent only.

It naturally follows that as we are reading about *naam*, like to learn about *naam*, may have doubts about it - it itself reflects that we are that qualified to practice *naam*.

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8. How a *naam mantra* gets proved, established or aquires strength?

Naam is omnipotent and proved in itself. Its omnipotence means one should get the established experiences, particularly of inner changes like peace of mind, purity of heart etc. while practicing it. However, to get it established, proved for oneself, the *sadhak* has to get the established experiences for himself. In that sense it has to be proved for himself. For this he has to reach the eligibility to have these experiences through his own practice.

There is one more sense in which any particular *naam mantra* gets proved, that is, it gets its potential power when it is practiced by authorities like sages through their own intense *upasana*. Such *naam mantras* get strength from the intense *upasana* of the sages and that *naam mantra* gets proved in that sense. In such cases new *naam matras* also come into existence. e.g. '*Digambara digambara shripad vallbha digambara*' or recent one like '*om hariram vitthalay namaha*'.

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9. Should the *naam mantra* be received from an authority? How?

Receiving or taking *naam mantra* from someone means getting necessary information about its practice and learning to pronounce

it from that person. It is obvious that such a person should be an authority. He must have himself practiced *naam* as *upasana* for a cosiderably long period of time and, moreover, he should be authorized by his *Guru* to give it to others. Receiving *naam* from such an authority is helpful for the progress and effectiveness of the spiritual journey of the *sadhak*.

An authority has the capacity to select appropriate *naam mantra* for a particular *sadhak*, to inspire the *sadhak* for *naam*, intensify his urge and resolve his spiritual impediments. The authoritative person has the capacity to guide and help the *sadhak* in his spiritual journey till the destination of eternal bliss is reached.

The authoritative person, while giving the *naam mantra* outwardly, transmits subtly the capacity necessary for its practice too. The union of the compassionate well-wishing of the giver and the genuine faith of the receiver, works to be an effective force for the *upasana* of the *sadhak*.

Unlike ordinary human beings, a subtle presence of the authorities like saints exist for the spiritual wellbeing of *sadhakas* who have strong faith in them even after the saints have left their material body. A *sadhak* can take a *naam mantra* even from such a departed holy soul, if he has a deep faith in the sage, may be at the memorial or *samadhi* or photograph of the sage.

In similar ways, with genuine faith, a *sadhak* can get or take the *naam* even through a message or a letter or a dream.

Moreover, if the urge for *naam* is intense, that urge itself is a powerful divine drive to start practicing *naam* by oneself - without receiving it formally in any of the above ways. One can with due faith, select and accept any of the established *naam*

mantras and practice it. Naturally, there is likely to be a difference in receiving it from some authority and taking it on ones own - as far as knowing the meaning, necessary behavioral support, knowing the quantum of *naam* required etc. are concerned. In due course, help can be taken from experts to understand the depth of meaning and content, procedure and quantum of practice.

In any case, one should not waste time in waiting or searching an authority; preferably one should start on his own with faith and urge. For, time wasted in between, is lost forever. It may also be noted that,there are many examples in which, the *sadhakas* who started the *naam* on their own, with faith, got a convincing divine support later, by some way or the other.

This is indeed the special strength of the *naam*. So there can be absolutely no reason to postpone the *naam* on this count.

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10. Why all saints insist on the path of *naam* ?

Saints are born as ordinary human beings; but with intense urge, obedience for the *Guru*, *upasana* and divine Grace, they attain a state of self-realization of the divine joy. Then their life and their message become unceasing enlightenment for others. All saints have certain common attributes like intense urge for elevation of others and helping them ceaslessly for that.

One more remarkable characteristic of saints is that they are very thoroughly conversant, as if that is their own experience, with the worldly set-ups of the ordinary people. They can sense very subtly the routine problems, weaknesses and individual differences of ordinary beings. Therefore, while suggesting a particular spiritual path to a particular seeker, they have perfect judgement of strengths, capacities and weaknesses of the seeker. So to some, they may recommend *yog* and to some, they may assign the path of knowledge. But for common ordinary people, they unanimously insist the path of *naam*. In fact, even for the *sadhakas* of *yog*, *karma* or knowledge, they recommend *naam* as essential supplementary path. The reason behind insisting on the supplement of *naam* to *yogis* or *dnyanis* and the others is that, the saints are aware of the pitfalls in these paths too. For example, *siddhis* in *yog* or ego in the path of *dnyan*. These pitfalls can be so dangerous that they can even ruin the entire *sadhana* to nil. The true remembrance of the Creator or God can only save in such situations. This is achieved by the *naam*.

The *sadhakas* of the path of *yog* or knowledge or *karma* are rare as these paths require extraordinary capacities. These paths require strong determination and unyielding dispassion which is very difficult to maintain. Ordinary people cannot have such great tolerance and endurance. The saints, due to their universal compassion, realize this difficulty of ordinary human beings and therefore insist on the path of *naam*. The path of *naam* does not require physical strength, money or wealth or any complex procedures. More importantly, *naam* does not provide any mysterious experiences or any super- natural powers, thereby keeping the *sadhak* safely saved from the drawbacks of their misuse or adverse effects. Saints have concern for the whole community of ordinary human beings and are eager to elevate even the weakest of them. That is why, they do not recommend

openly other paths like *yog* that are meant for only some extraordinary *sadhakas*. The simplicity of the path of *naam* also avoids the danger of wrong or mistaken practices as likely in case of other paths.

Every man has a natural capacity and tendency for mundane - *prapanchik* activities. Normally he has a capacity of *Vaani* which is very useful in conducting the activities. He has also the capacity of planning and achievements. As far as the *naam* is concerned all these capacities can be easily utilised to achieve big leaps in *naam*.

Naam does not require any other capacities like intellect, skills etc. However, even if he acquires any feats in *naam* that destructive ego mechanism can not operate as remembrance of God is the core of *naam* and *naam* can be taken only if one remembers to take it, which is not itself in his hands. So, even if, one practices *naam* continuously for a long period or with a rare volume, he can not claim its credit. Naturally, the destructive hurdles of achievement and ego etc. are avoided, as far as spiritual progress is concerned.

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11. What is the harm if one does not practice *naam* ?

The world and life is made up of innumerable types of deeds and no single individual can encompass all of them together in a

life span. It is impossible even to enlist good deeds in the world because the world is incomprehensible in its totality and contains countless types of deeds.

One can just imagine, whether we can enlist the activities, deeds that are taking place in the village or city we live, exactly at this moment we are reading this book. It is, therefore, enough for one to bother about only those deeds that are related to one's life.

On this background, we can consider the volume of innumerable good deeds, activities that can be done by us or are taking place in the world. There also, even if, these innumerable deeds are good in themselves one has to limit one's scope of good deeds that are enough for his life and progress. So is the case, with the various means of spiritual elevation. They are innumerable. Just as there is immeasurable water in a river to quench thirst, we take only that much, ample for quenching our own thirst.

Naam is one of the means of spiritual elevation. One can also achieve spiritual elevation by other means like desire-free deeds, absolute knowledge and so on. Even one path is also enough, if it works.

In that case, *naam* is not necessary. But one must practice successfully at least one path. In absence of any more spiritual capabilities, one should practice at least *naam*. Not practicing any path and not taking *naam* will certainly lead to a spiritual loss in life.

But it is also clear that one should evaluate one's capabilities realistically and be free from any illusions about one's capabilities. Such illusions are indeed very common, just as one thinks that 'I

am intelligent and I am an intellectual. So I am of the knowledge path' or someone may think 'I am physically capable, enjoy working and therefore I am of the *karma* type', and so on. All these ideas are likely to be superficial and poor thought, because even in the presence of such capabilities treading the paths is not so easy. There are many hurdles like conducive environment, sufficient resources etc. Further, if such paths are taken up succesfully, going beyond the hurdles, the ego arising out of the success in such journey, is not easy. So it is safer to understand that not practicing *naam* does not harm as long as one is able to succesfully cross all these hurdles. But in the absence of such capacity, which is rare, it is safer to prefer *naam*. In any case one has to be utmost careful while selecting such paths.

In conclusion, it can be said that not practicing *naam* will not result in any apparent calamities or any material losses but one shall certainly miss the great opportunity of making our routine life harmonious and happy in a very simple way - *naam* !

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12. Can one create one's own new *naam mantra* ?

Practicing the existing proved *naam mantra* is expected in the path of *naam-sadhana*. Creating a new phrase for chanting may appear easy but empowering it to the level of *naam mantra* is a matter of very long, consistent and painstaking spiritual effort, besides the concluding divine authentication.

Moreover, creating a new *naam mantra* of one's own is unnecessary. The Grace of the divine is the ultimate authentication but that is exceptional and never accidental; it can be only as a conclusion of consistent, deep and rigorous *upasana*. Only in such case, a new *naam mantra* can be created, nay, can come into existence.

As such a condition applies only to elevated and realized sole, it is advised not to waste the valuable time at hand, in going for a own new *naam mantra*.

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13. How is *naam* related with our routine life?

Naam is related directly as well as indirectly to our routine life, right from birth till the last breath in a variety of ways.

13.1 Relation of *naam* with breath

Breathing is a natural bodily process, and we can continue life without paying attention to it - as do all the animals. But if we give attention to breathing and can associate *naam* with breathing, we can make our breathing meaningful. This can make us think of the fundamental enquiry as, by whose Grace does our breathing continue lifelong ceaselessly ? Also, while associating *naam* to breath, we can derive certain *yogic*, psychological and physical benefits too. As a consequent benefit, breathing process can get regulated better. Only thing to note is that it is a skill to practice *naam* on breath and one should practice it only if that suits.

13.2 A stable mindset for routine work

All of our daily deeds require background support of a well synchronized mental state. Even the deeds of physical nature need a sound and stable state of mind. With a confused, depressed, chaotic state of mind, our deeds are of inferior quality and cannot produce satisfaction. *Naam* helps to develop a steady, sound and harmonious state of mind so that our routine work deeds can be fruitful and satisfying.

13.3 Written or uttered *naam* : a new positive deed

Ideally, *naam jap* should be chanted in mind – that is *moun jap*. However, as a complementary practice, the *naam mantra* may be chanted aloud (that is the *vaikhari jap*) or may also be practiced in written form (the *likhit jap*).

Loud chanting while writing provides a threefold experience of *naam* through pronunciation, writing as well as hearing.

The *naam* practiced in this form becomes an additional positive physical deed in the daily routine. Just as bad or abusive words have a negative effect on the mind, the physical pronunciation of the holy *naam* provides purification of mind and consequent positive effects.

13.4 Dilution of residual ill-effects of bad deeds

As a result of all the good and bad deeds of the day, there is a residue of their positive or negative impressions on the mind. These residual effects cause general depression in mood and restlessness. If one has undergone any unfortunate immoral or ill practices in daily routine, they occupy and even obsess the mind

in the calm hours to corrupt peace of mind. Such a state of mind breads worry and disappointment. *Naam* helps to at least dilute these residues, though the deeds themselves may be unavoidable in the given circumstances.

Moreover, *naam* can also provide clarity for better understanding of the situation to help one, come out of the ill-effects of undesired deeds.

13.5 Immediate as well as long term precious benefits

While doing various deeds in daily life, though one expects some immediate gains, one also has a long term plan to accumulate such gains for some bigger long term target.

For example, daily or monthly income is supposed to get accumulated into the fund required for purchasing a house after say about 10 years or a student has at the back of his mind a bigger lifelong career goal while studying a particular subject as a part of the whole.

In short, today's deeds pay for today and also contribute to the greater achievements in the future. In a similar way, though the *naam* has its immediate benefits, it also provides some long term and deeper benefits for life as a whole.

While filling the voids of imperfection and healing the effects of impurities in the daily deeds,the *naam* is teaching one to die these ill products of the temperamental drawbacks – called *vikaras.*

Thus, the *naam* gradually prepares one for the death, which is in a sense - dying to one's own unreasonable, unceasing desires and *vikaras*.

Hence, a true practitioner of *naam* can become free from fear of death; in fact, he would welcome it. This is one of the most precious benefits of *naam*.

13.6 A daily step towards the ultimate inner enlightenment

In whatever words one may spell or in whatever illusions one may indulge, inner enlightenment is the ultimate goal of everybody's life. Daily practice of *naam* is the daily contribution towards attainment of this eventual experience.It is also the fulfillment of daily responsibility of the divine goal.

In a nut shell, *naam* is related harmoniously with all these aspects of daily routine life.

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14. What is the relation of *naam* with other spiritual paths?

Naam is complementary to all the other spiritual paths. Actually, the path of *naam*, if followed in proper direction and magnitude, is complete and enough for spiritual enlightenment. However, considering variety in mental set-ups, spiritual capabilities and the directions given by the *Guru*, other spiritual paths may also be practiced. The *naam* can be complementary in such cases, as explained below.

14.1 *Naam* and the *karma yog* or path of desire-less deeds

In the path of *karma yog* - that is doing deeds without any desire

and choice about their rewards, desirelessness is difficult to understand as well as to practice. This requires an indifference or dispassion and acceptance about the reward. While practicing such indifference and isolation of reward from the deed, one is likely to become careless or insincere about the deed itself. A thorough understanding, awareness and firmness of mind is required to avoid these drawbacks. *Naam* supplements in strengthening and preparing the mind for such a quality.

14.2 The *naam* can help isolate reward from the deed in two ways

The *naam* has capacity to detach the doer from the deed. The same capacity can be useful to isolate the reward from the deed. Secondly, *naam* helps *sadhak* to constantly remember the Creator or the real Doer and teaches the doer to disown and surrender the reward and the results to the Creator.

14.3 *Naam* and the *dnyan yog*

The *dnyan yog* involves the practice of absolute dispassionate understanding of the world, life and oneself. The *sadhak* of *dnyan yog* can conceive the nature of the Divine through the process of absolute understanding.

But the next and concluding step is to become unified with the conceived divinity; and moreover, to continue to live throughout, at that level of understanding and unity. Both of these are indeed very difficult tasks in the path of *dnyan*.

Yet another hurdle in *dnyan yog* is the subtle ego accompanying knowledge. Knowledge can bring immediate enlightenment by removing illusion but the subtle sense of superiority that 'I know' is the unaffordable impediment in the spiritual voyage that holds

one away from the experience of divinity. *Naam* helps to remove all of these three hurdles in the following way :

Ego functions through establishment of one's separate pseudo-identity in place of the omnipresent Divine. The first help from *naam* is that it facilitates dissolution of ego. This helps the *sadhak* of *dnyan yog* to dissolve separate existence while becoming unified with the divinity.

Secondly, while the *sadhak* practicing *dnyan yog* assumes a variety of intellectual view points on his path of cognitive realization, the *naam* unwavering, unchanged and steady in every walk of life. This helps the sadhak to stabilize the experience of the divine after the enlightenment.

Thirdly, *naam* detaches the doer's ego behind an attainment and keeping intact the attainment itself. Thus, *naam* proves to be a boon for a *sadhak* of *dnyan yog* as its rigorous practice gives him a sense that his cognitive realization is the Grace of the Divine.

Hence, *naam* provides invaluable help to get rid of ego, which is otherwise almost undefeatable.

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15. What are the supportive practices for enhancing *naam-sadhana*?

Naam is a medicine on dissatisfaction and a means for wellbeing. Dedicated practice of *naam* results in contentedness and advancement of the *sadhak*. For getting the intended result of a prescribed medicine, one needs to follow certain restrictions on diet, activities etc. which are supportive in achieving the desired end result, if these are violated, they result in nullification of the effect of the medicine. Similar principle is applicable for the *naam-sadhana* as well. Following are few suupportive best practices and measures, which enhance the practice of *naam-sadhana*.

15.1 Consistency

One has to be consistent in practice of *naam*. Practicing for few days and taking breaks thereafter, certainly reduces effectiveness of *naam* and the results do not last long. The *naam* practiced even once cannot get lost or wasted, but stable results can be obtained only with consistency. Hence it is necessary to have at least some pre-decided quantity of *naam jap* every day. *Naam* should be treated, in initial stage of *sadhana*, as means of cleansing the mind. *Naam* cleanses the mind of all the layers of cobwebs that we accumulate over our lives. The cleaning is required to be followed at utmost consistency, so that the cobwebs don't gather again resulting in healthy and peaceful mind.

15.2 Quantity of *naam jap*

Dose of a medicine depends on intensity of disorder. Similarly, a more impure and dissatisfied mind will require a greater practice of *naam*. The proportion of purity of mind varies from person to

person. Some are obsessed by worries and dissatisfaction, while some others are naturally stable and content. As the *naam* is supposed to bring satisfaction, it should be practiced in proper quantity. Basic effect of *naam* is to bring peace and calmness to the mind of the *sadhak*, the more the unrest, the more quantity of *naam* would be required to be practiced. Though there is no mathematical equation which can derive the exact quantity of *naam* to be practiced, as it may vary on various factors affecting people in different situations and their state of mind. To decide if the dosage of *naam* is sufficient or not, one can introspect one's behavioral changes at regular intervals, after one starts practicing *naam* or approach a mentor or *guru* for appropriate guidance. The book *Japa Sankalpa : Swaroop ani Padhhati* (in Marathi) meaning - 'Quantity of *Naam* -The Nature and Methodology' - may also be referred.

15.3 Selection of the *naam mantra*

Choice of *naam mantra* should be made as suitable for one's temperament. If it is to involve name of some deity, the choice should be of the deity for whom one has affection. If one is inclined to formlessness or has knowledge orientation, *naam mantra* indicating truth, like '*om tat sat*' may be preferred. Intuition as well as guidance of an authority can help in this regard, though all the *naam mantras* are equally potent. One's individual temperamental setup demands appropriate choice of suitable *naam mantra*. If *naam mantra* is taken from an authority or from the shrine of a saint, the responsibility is taken by that authority or the saint.

15.4 Study and control of mind

Naam performs the function of making one free at the level of mind and then the deeper mind - subconscious (that is *chitta*).

The tranquility attained by the practice of *naam* gets disturbed due to the residues of daily routine activities. Therefore, an introspection and study of the particular routine activities that cause disturbance in subconscious can be directly helpful.

For example, we are so firm on our opinions and convictions that even a small argument against them is disturbing. In such situations, if we trace back the roots and origin of our convictions, we can realize that they do not deserve so much of importance or rigidity. On one side, they are not as important and unchangeable as we think, but on the other side, even the smallest event of their turbulance is enough to disturb the tranquility already reached. Such a self-study helps to a great extent to stabilize practice of *naam*.

15.5 Spiritual obedience

If the practitioner of *naam* is initiated by an authority or has assumed by mind the disciple-hood of a saint, then the suggestions or guidance provided by them should be treated as command and should be followed. These commands usually ask the *sadhak* to do things which he generally dislikes to do. The disciple may also be asked to give up his convictions. Such commands are not for the insistence of the *Guru's* wish but for the spiritual wellbeing of the *sadhak*. They know better about the spiritual wellbeing of the disciple rather than the disciple himself.

So the *sadhak* should be sincerely obedient to the *Guru* even if he is not able to understand the purpose of the order.

15.6 Elevating association - *Satsanga*

Consistent association of elevated persons is one of the best catalysts of *sadhana*. Elevating association may be in the form of

joint practice of *naam jap* with elevated *sadhak* or may also be in the form of repeated hearing of spiritual discourses. It is, however, suggested to avoid association with commercially motivated persons or organizations.

15.7 Avoidance of negative things

There is a misconception seen among the *sadhakas* that, on obtaining *naam* from their respective *guru* or mentors or places of *samadhi* of saints, their duty towards spirituality is accomplished and the sole resposibility of taking them to the liberelization rests with their respective *sadguru*, masters, mentors. They as well feel that, they are free to lead their day to day lives as they were leading in the past without any spiritual binding, in reality this is not expected.

The responsibility of *sadhak* does not end with the *naam jap* session; it continues throughout the daily routine in the form of moral and spiritually alert behavior. If *naam jap* for an hour is like getting a pot-full of water, engaging thereafter in tendencies like jealousy, rage, greed, ego, corruption is like wasting four pot-fulls of water. A businessman should not expect spiritual elevation on practicing *naam* for half an hour, and then continuing to exploit the customer.

Hence, along with sincere practice of *naam*, one must be careful about spiritually positive routine offline behavior too.

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16. What are the effects of *naam* ?

Undoubtedly practice of *naam* brings about many constructive changes in one's life. These changes are related to internal experiences of the individual, which in turn reflect on the outer aspects of life too. Depending on the faith, intensity, consistency, Grace of the *sadguru* etc. on the *naam-sadhak*, the effect on these parameters vary. The salient effects of *naam* are as follows:

16.1 Broad comprehension of life

In routine life, everyone has general awareness about one's sorrows and pleasures, ambitions and goals at an ordinary level. We experience such awareness in the routine happenings like putting on the fan as soon as we sense ambient heat or changing the road, when there is a traffic congestion.

The scope of awareness of ordinary person is limited to ordinary cycles of pleasure and sorrow of mind. But when one practices *naam*, his scope of conscience expands as well as deepens to the extent that, one develops concern about the divine law and starts feeling grateful for it, that is he goes beyond his own limited sphere of sorrows and pleasures. It is possible that some persons, not practicing *naam*, can also be aware of going beyond their limited sphere of sorrows and pleasures - by other means like - intellectual understanding, reading etc.

But this awareness needs to be translated into actions which becomes more possible and easy for those practicing *naam*, as *naam* provides constant remembrance and repetition of this understanding, the divine dimension, the scope of conscience becomes vast to comprehend entire life and world. This constant

remembrance affects and facilitates necessary actions. This also reflects into routine actions and deeds to make living purer, content and elevated. It initiates new selfless and elevating deeds which eventually lead to the inner enlightenment.

16.2 Stability centre

In the daily routine, the mind is usually in an unstable state. Extraordinary personalities have a well-defined goal of life which acts as the centre of thoughts for them, thereby stabilizing their mind at the centre. *Naam* provides such a centre of stability for its *sadhak*. Consistent practice of *naam* generates a state of psychological and intellectual stability, thereby avoiding desperate and erroneous actions.

16.3 Decision of life's goal

Goals shape life. So goals ought to be proper and constructive. Incomplete, erroneous and destructive goals make life a misery. Constructive goals make life content and worth.

Naam, the intense remembrance of the Divine and the eventual self-realization, can prove to be the noble goal of life. This helps one to shape and reconstitute one's life, its new constructive goals, aligned with the spiritual enlightenment.

16.4 Prominence to the Divine in the day's routine

Our routine is occupied by daily generic activities like food, sleep, bath, business or job etc. and occasional worldly assignments like public functions and family ceremonies. For a person who practices *naam* every day, his mind doesn't get involved fully like a common man but,gets partly occupied in the remembrance of the god.As a consequence, he is able to maintain mental stability

in spite of the ups and downs happening after such activities, which a common man is subjected to suffer. Practiced consistently and intensely, the Divine occupies the core of the day's routine and eventually of the entire life.

16.5 Purity and nobleness in actions

Goals orient the thoughts and thoughts make actions. When *naam* consolidates into mind, noble thoughts get prevalence in mind resulting in constructive actions like unselfish donations, overall generosity, compassion for others, purified and warm relationships.

16.6 Affectionate relationships

As is said, 'to be is to be related'. Everyone is related to various people in various contexts and at various levels like close relatives, friends, colleagues, superiors, subordinates. Even when one is alone, the relationships operate in the form of memories and thoughts about related people. The relationships are based on material and emotional needs, relational compulsions, selfish motives, fears, insecurity, urge for sharing, domination, etc. The relationships are one of the main causes of disturbance in the state of mind. Particularly when the relationships have the basis of selfish motives, one is rarely concerned about satisfying others' needs and share sorrows.

When a person is practicing *naam*, he is already in the state of gratitude towards the Divine and consequently away from one's own ego. Therefore, the positive changes observed in various relationships are as follows - firstly, one doesn't give undue importance to oneself, secondly, realizes the importance of place of others in his life. Consequently, he becomes sensitive to others' favors on him, his own expectations about satisfying his needs

are considerably reduced, thereby the life becomes easier and calm. Daily and constant *naam* purifies and calms the turbulent mind and therefore, it becomes ideal for correct actions in relationships. He always has feeling of gratitude for all the others in the relationship. This purifies the relationship and adores it with the virtues like duty, unselfishness, love, affection, caring etc. which in turn, bring much harmony in the relationships. As he develops the capacity to come back to stability, by the regular practice of consistent and daily *naam*, so also by virtue of it he develops the rare ability to come back to a stable state of mind from the ups and downs of the daily life and can comfortably observe the happenings in own life peacefully like a third party. The more the *naam* gets internalized in a person, the more caring and elevated are his relationships with others. Hence, practice of *naam* results in more matured,satisfying and harmonious relationships.

16.7 Harmony within and without

The greatest outcome of *naam* is harmony in one's life. There is generally a chaotic disorder among the various parameters of one's life like individual mental setup, needs and limitations, others' expectations, circumstances and conditions imposed by the world. It seems almost impossible to meet all these ends into a unified synchronized composition. The jigsaw puzzle remains unresolved in spite of struggling with any combinations. This dissonance generates conflicts and that becomes the very nature of life.

Due to incomplete understanding of life, one may even wrongly philosophize the conflicts and sorrows as the essential and permanent ingredients of life, thereby refusing any possibility of elevation. On the other side, by virtue of *naam*, one gets a vast expanse of awareness of divinity with its eternity, virtues like gratitude and compassion. This enables one to comprehend life

from a height into a consistent and consonant composition, thereby removing conflicts.

Hence there is a reduction in frequency and intensity of occasions of conflict in daily life. Every parameter of life, including the ego, gets its due and justified value in place of erroneous unjustified importance. This slows and narrows down the vigorous swings of restlessness of mind and liberates the vital mental energy.

Then mind thus becomes light, energetic and motivated for elevating deeds. The goals and self expectations get purified and cut down to be realistic and sensible. Their reflection in the relationships with others is also positive. The pains of the unavoidable fate can be accepted without transforming them into suffering. The mind remains stable even in the tough occasions of life. Minor deviations from state of contentment can be recovered easily and quickly.

This develops a sense of observer for the life rather than that of a participant. This spiritual attitude and consequent total harmony emerge as the greatest Gracious reward of *naam*.

16.8 Noble dimension of gratitude

It is a fact that human being has been blessed and graced by mother nature and god at every juncture of evolution starting from birth, having a body and mind which are meant to serve a definitive higher purpose attaining salvation and any other important aspect or mile-stone in human world.

The intellectual and practical realization of all this and translating this into actions is must but rare. Sense of sincere gratitude towards the Divine for this divine favor is also rare.

One may experience this simple, necessary but rare mechanism in - *naam* - development of the sense of gratitude towards the creator - mother nature through it - the resultant constructive actions - a positive and blissfull change in one's life and its surroundings !

Naam is a practical way to invoke and practice both remembrances of the divinity as well as expressing gratitude. Anyone who exercises utmost sincerity in all the aspects of the practice of *naam* - that is receiving it with responsibility, imbibing in oneself its meaning and feeling, strengthening with unyielding faith and practicing it with unshaken determination shall certainly and unconditionally experience in oneself these divine virtues and the eventual bliss.

* * *

17. Can routine rituals be replaced by *naam* ?

The religious and moral bindings are usually intended to make living close to ideal. They restrict us from worldly evils and provide us a self code of conduct. The *naam* practitionar also abides to certain rules of conducts to make his *sadhana* effective. As discussed earlier, *naam* automatically shapes and orients life to self elevation along with facilitating a successful worldly life. But this does not mean that one should give up all other religious or ethical rituals. The generic rules of diet, health, exercise, social ethics are applicable to *sadhak* of *naam* too.

The religious bindings sometimes vary from religion to religion or caste to caste or male to female. *Naam*, however, prescribes universal norms of love, ethical behavior, faith, consistency and proportion. These norms or complimentary prescriptions of *naam* are universal and same for all.

It may, however, be noted that the religious bindings are sometimes based on some customs that have become insignificant or irrelevant in the present time. Certain rituals remain as dead habits. Certain rituals are misunderstood and blindly followed. Every religion is expected to have a system of evaluating it's rituals, in context with time and to modify and replace them by right ones. If such a system is not functioning, conflicts arise to produce religious reforms. Such situation is chaotic and causes confusion in the minds of the followers.

By its very characteristic, *naam* can fill the gaps of imperfections in the deeds - '*naamna saadgunnyam'* (Sanskrit) - meaning - '*naam* rectifies mistaken actions and supplements any shortcomings therein in a way which is applicable universally'.

It is, therefore, recommended that one should continue to practice *naam* in spite of any imperfections or confusions in religious rituals. The usual family rituals and religious bindings prove to be complimentary to the practice of *naam*.The Ultimate is eternal and anything intermediate is bound by space and time. The content of *naam* is absolute in reference of time, place, religion, gender and age; it points to the Ultimate or the Divine. But while living in the world, rules of practical systems of world are necessary and obligatory for the practitioner of *naam*.

One is not free from various other bindings even if one is practicing *naam* for the two basic reasons. Firstly, even while taking *naam*

it is likely that he may not be observing the attendent and supplementary practices as prescribed for a *naam sadhak*. He may also be lacking in the volume and urge, necessary while practicing *naam*. Observing the general customs and religious practices can prove like useful help for these shortcomings in *naam*.

Secondly, the *naam-sadhak* lives in a world which is full of a variety of people following various faiths, different religions, governed by a variety of political systems, people not believing in *naam* or anything for that matter, may be even against it. *Naam-sadhak* should not forget that he is a part of 'this world'. So, if he follows the rules and regulations governing his place of living - as a matter of duty and also for a harmonious relationship with the surrounding people as stated above - becomes necessary and desirable.

Following other religious and ethical practices along with *naam* will not only help *naam* but will also provide a more matured and absolute view towards the rituals. This will help the *sadhak* to discriminate between the obsolete and useful of the rituals and develops enough courage to give up the obsolete. Such constructive actions not only help the *naam-sadhak* to be free from fear of not following the discardable rituals but such discrimination and right actions also help purify the rituals themselves and their systems.

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18. How is naam related to past-*karma-sanchit-* or *prarabdha*?

Prarabdha is the storage of undestroyed residual effects of one's past deeds. One has to accept and live them now or sometime later as they come. On the scale of time, as *prarabdha* includes the deeds in even long past, one is not able to understand the direct co-relation between the past deeds and their effects in the present time.

That is why ordinarily we complain for our sufferings as unjustified and we get puzzled that our present sufferings do not have relation to our present deeds. Interestingly, the complaints are only for the unexplained sufferings but one conveniently disregards the unexplained gifts and pleasures of the *prarabdha*. Actually, just as we encounter unexplained sufferings as *prarabdha*, we also get unexplained fruits in the form of unexpected success, honors, material benefits etc.

The spiritual philosophy says that unless one accepts and actually lives the positive and negative residual effects of the corresponding positive and negative deeds, these deeds do not get nullified or calmed and one cannot be freed from the need of a physical body. Body, and hence a birth, is required to live the *prarabdha bhog*, but consequently one has to do other deeds too, residue of which adds again to the *prarabdha*; thereby continuing the endless chain of *prarabdha*.

To break the chain, the new deeds are to be done skillfully with their fruits accepted but disowned and surrendered to the god. This skill – as practiced in the *Karma Yog* as *yogah karmasu kaushalam* (Sanskrit) – can be enabled by practice of *naam*.

18.1 Awareness about deeds and fate

Naam provides one the awareness of fate while doing the deeds. This awakens the understanding about the play of *prarabdha* on one side and of the creation of the new *prarabdha* through the new deeds on the other side. One has no way to avoid doing deeds; it is only the art of *Karma Yog* that can be mastered. As practitioner of *naam* develops strong faith in the ultimate elevating capacity of *naam*, one gets proper vision, neutrality and strength to tackle the undesired fruits of the *prarabdha*.

18.2 Acceptance of fruits of *prarabdha*

Due to *naam*, acceptance of positive as well as undesired effects of *prarabdha* becomes easy. Thus unnecessary complaints about one's sorrow, blames on others and on circumstances, undue credit of success, self-gratification on achievements are avoided to generate tranquility of mind. The physical pains and mental shocks can thus be digested with ease. The attraction for worldly pleasures starts fading. One gets convinced about inevitability and obviousness of one's *prarabhdha-bhog* as one understands that one is oneself responsible for them. Living out the *prarabdha-bhog* gives one a feeling of relief of clearing a debt.

18.3 Remedy for the chain of deeds and consequences

Naam also provides remedy for the chain of generation of new *prarabdha* due to new deeds. The choice of deeds is in the light of will of the Divine for the practitioner of *naam* rather than his own usual selfish worldly motives. Moreover, *naam* helps one to get detached from the deeds as soon as they are done, thereby avoiding unnecessary lingering into them.

Thus choice of deeds is proper and effects of deeds do not bind

the doer. Further, as *naam* implies surrender to the Divine so that the new deeds can readily be offered to the Divine. Consequently, the effects of the offered deeds also get offered to the Divine. Hence, such effects do not get credited to *prarabdha*. This breaks the chain of new deeds and new *prarabdha*.

18.4 Divine help for the fate

On a deeper thought, one can realize that *prarabdha* is an outcome of the universal law of cause and effect. Of course, the Creator behind the law is apart from the law. The Creator may obey the law but that is not a binding on Him, for the obvious reasons. *Naam* connects one to the Divine Creator directly. Therefore, the Creator or the Divine can provide help to the *sadhak* to handle the chain of *prarabdha* in a few ways :

First, to reduce the intensity, though not the magnitude, of the *prarabdha* or to dilute its effect on the *sadhak*.

Second, to postpone or rejig in scale of time or prepone the *prarabdha-bhog* considering sustaining ability of the *sadhak*. If one has to get sick due to *prarabdha* on a day of prime work, the sickness can get postponed to a leisure day so that the practical losses may be avoided. Here, the sickness is not avoided but postponed without notice to the person.

Third, and the most exceptional mode of help for the *naam-sadhak* is that the Divine, in the form of the *Sadguru,* nullifies the effect of *prarabdha* or takes the *bhog* on himself, thus clearing the *bhog* without the person to live it out himself.

This is, of course, not at the will of the *naam sadhak*; in fact a true *naam sadhak* has courage and responsibility to live out the

bhogs himself but in unavoidable exceptional cases, the Divine can operate the exceptional powers as above.

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19. Why is concentration difficult during practice of *naam* ?

This question includes sub-questions like why we encounter unwanted or negative thoughts, or why does the mind wander uncontrolled, or why progress is not seen even after a few years of practice of *naam*. This happens to be a common question, so let us discuss the aspects in detail.

19.1 Lack of concentration even in routine activities

In many cases, lack of concentration or attentiveness of mind is not only found during practice of *naam*, but in other routine daily activities as well. It's only during the *naamsadhana* that the practitioner becomes aware of this shortcoming. This can be a limitation of *sadhak* which has been overseen by him during his daily chores.

19.2 Mind requires change after an interval of time

When the problem of lack of concentration does not arise much in other daily activities like cooking, working at job, watching television or movies, it is because these activities are usually not too long. On the contrary, as in case of students, studying seems

to involve many distractions as it is expected to extend continuously over an hour or a few. Same is the situation when one attempts *naam jap* for say an hour or two continuously.

It is a characteristic of mind that it cannot concentrate on anything for a long time at a stretch. It requires change of work and it can concentrate well on tasks of short time spells. As most of our routine tasks are of this nature, mind co-operates well but while chanting in mind the same *naam mantra* over long spells of time, the distractions crop in.

19.3 Instability is the very nature of mind

Another characteristic of mind is its instability or fickleness. If we watch the sea for some time, we find that in spite of its overall stable appearance, there are constant wavelets showing continuous movement over its surface. Just similar is the nature of mind. Therefore, expecting total stillness from it, is against its basic nature. Therefore, occasional concentration due to monotony of repetition or due to change of work is like an exception for the mechanism of mind. Hence, accepting a long time spell of concentration is an unrealistic expectation from the mind.

19.4 Aggravation of instability of mind

One rebels and offers strong opposite reaction when one is compelled to do anything against one's will. Same is the case with mind. Its instability aggravates when it is compelled to be kept stable, similar to a notorious child. This answers the common question – why exceptionally many wild thoughts occur during *naam* than otherwise. The thought process not only gets aggravated but the thoughts can be of very awkward or evil or even shameful than ever.

This common experience is also explained by the above reactive or rebellious characteristic of mind. Hence, one should not worry or feel guilty if instability of mind gets aggravated during practice of *naam*.

19.5 *Naam* has no visual appeal

Though mind itself is invisible, it has an attraction for visual. The sense organs are the gateways to the external world and the mind likes to satisfy all the sense organs as much as possible.

While listening to music, mind uses the ears. But it would ordinarily prefer an 'eventful' music of fast rhythm rather than a calm classical rendering or the chanting of *omkar* on a single note. Moreover, it would prefer, if the music is accompanied by visuals like dance and nature around. It may be noted, psychologists say that seventy percent of our perception is, in general, through the eyes.

Considering the above nature of mind, it can be understood that mind sees nothing attractive in *naam* as the *naam* is tangible neither to the eyes nor to the ears. Hence, concentration on the *naam* is obviously difficult.

19.6 *Naam* offers no intellectual challenge to mind

Though mind has attraction for the visual, it can get involved in certain invisible tasks like solving puzzles or intellectual tasks like programming as they offer challenges. In such cases mind can co-operate with remarkable concentration. But this concentration lasts only till the challenge exists and after the challenge is conquered, concentration is lost. The remembrance of the Divine through *naam* does not raise any challenge to the mind. Hence, this fact also goes adverse to the concentration of the mind.

19.7 Mind needs things while *naam* is abstract and unconditioned

One more attraction of mind is the anchors of material symbols called *upadhis*. Mind prefers things to voids. It will not get involved in the vast sky but would get attached to small cloud on it. It can get involved into forms but not in the abstractions. It would, therefore, prefer photographs or sculpture images of Deities, that too in garlanded and decorated form -rather than the abstract concept of divinity.

The intellect may conceive the abstract but mind needs a form or symbol to anchor on. It likes to develop and expand complex systems of concrete symbols to create a whole of material world out of anything. Even if it is enough to have a fruit as offering for the God, the mind would like to present a plate full of delicious items as *naivedya* - a food offerring. One should not misunderstand this indulgence of mind as deep devotion towards the Divine! In fact this involvement into the decoration of spiritual symbols is just the same in quality and nature as the indulgence in the routine worldly attractions of daily life.

The reason for attraction of mind about worldly life will now be clear from the above explanation. The root is in attraction of mind for things. So mind is after gathering newer means and things. House, clothes, money, people, relations, organizations, arts etc. are the innumerable *upadhis* constituting the kingdom of worldly mind. Hence, one gets entangled in the trap of the *upadhis*, even if one realizes their futility later.

Only an aware and courageous person can find the right way out. But on that path, even the relatives and friends can criticize and compel one to get back into the same world. One should

therefore, be alert and aware that spirituality demands abstraction or the *nirgun* and one should be careful about things and symbols and use them appropriately without getting entangled into them.

As *naam* is formless and has no conditionings or *upadhi*s, it is against the nature of mind and hence concentration becomes difficult.

19.8 *Naam* acts in opposition to the nature of mind

There is a contradiction between constitution of mind and operation of *naam*. *Naam* works in opposition to the basic characteristics of mind - its attraction for thing, instability, challenge, etc. Mind creates many illusions and can even bind the *naam* by *upadhi*s, thereby defeating the spirit of *sadhana*. One has to exercise utmost awareness in this regard. True *naam* is the *naam* free from any of the tricks of mind and it reduces the conditionings of life. It allows one to keep only the minimum essential worldly things. At times, it accepts worldly compromises and retreats to maintain peace of mind without feeling inferior. It makes apparent the futility of worldly status. It makes one free from each prop, mind seeks restlessly to lead to a life of constant dissatisfaction or pseudo satisfaction. Therefore, the mind starts losing its common tacts and props and one becomes free from the bondage of mind. This is, in a way, destruction of mind, which is of ultimate good of the *sadhak*.

From the above explanation it will be clear that *naam* acts in opposition of the mind's mechanism to the extent that *naam* can destroy mind. The mind is, therefore, bound to oppose the action of *naam*. The *Guru* of *Shri Maharaj* on meeting him for the first time said that,he will kill *Maharaj*-that is his mind,the remainder self. *Shri Maharaj* replied like echo, 'I am eager to

die then.'

What an absolute dispassion *Shri Maharaj* must have had at that tender age ! So, one has to be very firm to achieve concentration.

19.9 Why is concentration difficult even after years of *naam sadhana* ?

The first reason is that mind's attraction for things and conditionings is very strong, subtle and as old as many past births. Further, one has to exercise utmost alertness to prevent new conditionings during routine life.

Secondly, we are in constant association with conditioned people and the value systems of society of such people - are also imposing strong conditionings. Further, most people start the practice of *naam* at later age of life – may be in forties or fifties or even later. The sincerity, intensity, quantum of *upasana* and the complimentary practices are also likely to be inadequate. So counting only the years is incorrect. In fact, in the present world of diminished spiritual values and prominence of destructive life philosophies, it is very rare to have and maintain purity of mind for true *sadhana*.

The characteristics of mind as discussed in this chapter happen to prove that it is worthless to expect concentration from mind. One should not, however, get disappointed, as there are proved remedies too, to be discussed in the next chapter.

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20. What are the measures for concentration?

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is difficult to expect concentration from mind due to its inherent nature. Though measures can be taken to achieve concentration, one should be realistic but determined about expectations. Consistent effort will be required. Practice of apparently insignificant remedies can also prove beneficial.

20.1 No unique universal formula for concentration

The ways to tackle the mind are many and even everyone can discover suitable ways depending upon the particular configuration of one's mind set. The remedies should obviously be consistent with the present state of mind. Help can also be taken from outside sources. One can be innovative in discovering the ways to tackle mind.

20.2 Help of *saguna*

Even though the divinity is formless by nature, considering constitution of mind, one can take help of the form or *saguna* in many ways.

20.2.1 *Darshan* of image

The simplest form of *sagun* is a visual image as a photo or a sculpture of the God or saint of one's choice. One should sit still before the image and watch it with full attention. Then with eyes closed, one should practice the *naam jap*. After a spell of *jap*, when distracting thoughts start emerging, one should pause the *jap*, open eyes and again take *darshan* of the image. As

concentration is again attained, *jap* should be continued.

The frequency and duration of the help of *darshan* will vary from person to person or day by day for the same person. In any case, one should be aware of the purpose of the image and its *darshan* in concentration during the *jap*. The key is not in sitting and looking at the image while performing the *jap* but, in using the image and its *darshan* as tools for sessions of concentration for the *jap*. The concentration obtained through the *darshan* is to be utilized for the *jap* session, and on fading, the concentration is to be refreshed through the *darshan*. So during *darshan*, one will have to sit in front of the image, but during the *jap* session with eyes closed, one may sit elsewhere till the concentration lasts. With a rigorous practice of this measure, mind will learn to concentrate by association with the image. The duration of concentration thus gets increased slowly and progress can be achieved.

20.2.2 Help from worship place in the house

In most of the houses, there are special separate holy places or worship places where the images are placed and daily worship rituals are performed. Such holy places can be seen in some form or the other in almost all the castes and religions. The *darshan* help, as explained above, can be taken from the worship places but the place of *naam jap* can be different. The *jap* is to be practiced for a long duration of time and there are no restrictions of place or posture. So the place for *jap* should be decided as per convenience and bodily needs.One may perform *jap* by sitting in chair or laying in bed also. One should not indulge of course, in luxurious comfort during the *jap*, as it can bring sleepiness. One should also not indulge in the insistence of particular *yogic* postures like *padmasana* by force, as they can cause physical

inconvenience and awkwardness to lead to distraction in *jap*.

While taking intermittent *darshan* help from the worship place in the house, the mind gets tired of making such frequent visits and to avoid that it may co-operate or on the other side mind may prefer a break in monotony by frequent visits to the worship place; concentration is to be achieved either way. It is also likely that the family members may criticize such frequent visits to the worship place and may pass remarks. One should handle the situation skillfully to achieve the goal without making it an issue in the house.

20.2.3 *Jap* sessions distributed according to one's concentration habits

Many times, concentration is good initially but does not last after some time. In such case, one should find out one's own continuous concentration time spell and perform *jap* in sessions accordingly. The sessions may be spread over the day conveniently. Just as too much of food at a time is difficult to digest and one should distribute it over number of short intakes, one should think of one's concentration capacity and distribute the *jap* sessions accordingly. It is also beneficial to find out one's prime time of the day for concentration like early morning or evening by experiment and experience, and practice accordingly to achieve maximum concentration time.

20.2.4 Help of *jap mala*

Jap mala is one of the simplest helps of concentration. The *mala* satisfies mind's attraction of visuals by associating the *naam mantra* with the bids. The mind is so swift that one even does not note that distracting thoughts have cropped in and mind continues to get carried away by them for quite a span of time.

When suddenly one becomes alert, one realizes that concentration was lost. The prime bid - the *meru mani* of the *mala*- helps to gather back the concentration as, by convention, the prime bid is not supposed to be crossed. Moreover, if the *mala* has the facility of the extra counter *mala*, the counting process can help to bring awareness back, for concentration.

Many times, one is likely to get a nap followed by a consequent awakening jerk in the neck during the practice of *jap*. One should be careful to avoid occasions of mind getting dull during the *jap*. In this condition, the *mala* may also drop down and one may again strive for concentration at least due to guilt. One should have a practical approach about using *mala*. One should not wait for any *Guru* or authority to provide a *mala*; one should buy a *mala* and keep it in front of the image of God and pray for strength for *sadhana*, and be sure that divine help and acknowledgement will certainly come. The physical repetition of sliding the bids and its association with mental repetition of the *naam mantra* go complimentary and attuned in the *mala jap*. Thus use of *mala* can help restrict the unstable nature of mind.

20.2.5 Constructive breaks of monotony

Periodic breaks and changes in daily practice of *naam jap* can help to control the nature of mind in various ways as follows :

20.2.5.1 Complimentary reading

The *sadhak* can read some pre-decided literature related to *naam-sadhana* as a break , as concentration starts fading in a *jap* session. The literature can contain discourses or anecdotes of saints or part of any scripture or verses of any saint poets etc. The intention is not to engage in the intellectual activity of reading but to regain the state of concentration, to continue next session

of *jap*. Fortunately, such complimentary literature is abundantly available and one can plan, decide and keep ready specific paragraphs or pieces before starting the *jap* sessions of the day. It is important to note that duration of such a break should not be more than about five to seven minutes.

20.2.5.2 Complimentary rendering or listening of a devotional song

A huge stock of devotional songs is available and rendering or listening to a song or two, can help to quickly regain concentration to continue with the next *jap* session. The songs should be pre-selected and kept ready to be played. It is a remarkable experience that a song selected at random also applies apt for the instantaneous requirement of the *sadhak*. Of course, one should exercise care about loudness of song so that others are not disturbed and do not make an issue. Preferably, the *sadhak* may use headphone for listening.

20.2.5.3 Written *naam-jap*

Continuous and repeated writing of the *naam jap* in a separate notebook is another effective way to have a complimentary break in *naam jap* session. The written *jap* involves engagement of eyes, fingures, bodily posture. It can be accompanied by pronunciation and consequent listening. All these actions together can lead to a gentle stop to distraction, particularly when the concentration is violated by chaotic thoughts and strong upsurges of desire. Moreover, the written *jap* also happens to be just another way of remembrance of the Divine through *naam*.

There is a possible difficulty in some cases where the *Guru* has instructed to keep the *jap mantra* secrete. Though secrecy of *naam mantra* is a separate issue, one can still exercise written

jap by keeping the notebook of written *jap* in a secrete place or by writing on an erasable slate and wiping it out before going for the next *jap* session. The secrecy of the original *naam mantra* can also be maintained by using only for written *jap* a different universal but proved *naam mantra*. This is quite valid, as here the purpose of written *jap* is just to regain concentration. Those who have physiological restrictions for the process of writing, however, have to take care accordingly while taking help of the written *jap*.

20.2.5.4 Participating in collective *moun jap* sessions

In collective *moun jap* session of elevated *sadhakas*, one can concentrate best. Usually such collective *jap* sessions take place in holy locations like temples, houses of elevated devotees and the pious environment has an elevating effect. The positive effect of such collective sessions lasts for a few days. Participating in such sessions weekly is recommended in the initial stage and monthly at a later stage.

20.2 .5.5 Becoming one with various appeals of nature

The nature around us is indeed a manifested form of the Divinity. The luster of a tiny plant or the play of colors in a flower or a compassionate tree or a river flowing like a *karma–yogi* are the ways of Divine to call man. With this vision, the nature can be a tool for concentration. Looking at it practically, one can just find a nearby lake or a beautiful tree and watch it with a still mind. It is so rewarding and educating to appreciate how these elements of nature are firmly and calmly facing the adversities and calamities like storms and draughts. It also teaches us that our problem of controlling mind is not as grave as the struggle they go through

for mere existence. This feeling reduces the intensity of our problem.

A practical difficulty of unavailability of beautiful nature around, can arise in case of very big cities; but otherwise at least at a short distance, one can get a treasure of nature's beauty. Big cities also provide well developed gardens hosting beautiful natural birds and flowers. It is basically a matter of one's vision rather than the availability. In any case, one can have at least an excursion once a month with this orientation in mind. For a person who has cultivated the vision of becoming sensitive and one with the nature, even a small plant or the *tulasi* in the terrace or balcony can be enough as a representative of nature. Just like *darshan* help from images, one can derive benefit from the natural entities. At least the endless sky, the sun and the moon, the evening colors and the star-full night are the ever available natural representations of the Divinity – alike in villages and in very mega cities.

20.2.5.6 Association of saints or their shrines

The places where saints live are elevated and charged by their existence. To visit such places and to just have a wordless association with them is also highly elevating.

The spiritual potential of saints is so powerful that anyone in the vicinity can experience absolute purity of mind and a deep spiritual silence. Such a direct and live association of saints is however rare. But there are ways to overcome this hurdle. Prayer is a path to reach the saints. Prayer also creates faith and courage. It is, however, not easy to recognize a saint. Primarily, it requires intense urge and humility so that the path can be visible. Fortunately, the holy land of India has no dearth of saints, or at least elevated *sadhakas*.The only thing is, as *Shri Maharaj* says,

the true sages are always hidden like a green fruit in green leaves. So most of the people do not see them or do not recognize them. If one is aware enough, one can find them in India and for that matter anywhere in the world.

There is also a word of caution in this regard. The true saints are indeed uninterested in exposing their spiritual identity, whereas, there are many fake or half-baked pseudo saints who, in the face of elegant oratory - advertise and attract the helplessly desperate needy. Actually, a flower will never advertise its fragrance; the breeze in the divine system will automatically serve to spread it. So, anyone who advertises spirituality to attract people is certainly not the real sage.

One more option is available. It is an experience of many seekers that the memorials or shrines of the saints are equally effective as their actual association. Of course, again, such places are required to be kept potent through constant *sadhana* by devotees or *sadhakas*. Mere exhibition of prosperity and rush of people are not the marks of a true shrine. The soil of India is so fertile spiritually that within every ten miles at least one sage or shrine can be found. If we stay at such a place with a calm mind, we can feel the reflections of the spirituality crystallized at true shrines. We can experience exceptional concentration and peace of mind at such places which is an enough proof for their spiritual worth.

20.2.5.7 Time during the day

Naam can be practiced at any hour of the day. However, according to mental setup and habits, some particular time of the day can be of special significance for any particular *sadhak*. One has to find out one's prime time of the day.

Similarly, some particular days of month can be more favorable.

As a common experience, the hour after a sound and refreshing sleep in the night is most favorable for concentration, even a short session during this hour is of good quality.

Another common favorable time of the day, is just prior to the lunch. One can concentrate better in *jap* during this time. The same is the case with an hour prior to the dinner provided that one is not in the state of very strong appetite so as to disturb the concentration. But medium hunger is favorable for concentration. On fast on the special holy days -*tithis*- like *ekadashi*, *sankashti*, *shivratri* one can derive maximum threefold benefit of speciality of the *tithi*, foundation of *bhakti* and light diet. As a word of caution, the fasts should not be occasions to indulge in attractive verity of food. Such fasts result in digestive disorders, accompanied by lack of concentration and absence of *naam*. Eliminating these drawbacks, the fasts on special *tithis* can be of help for better practice of *naam*.

20.2.6 Help from the celestial world

Shri Sant Ganore Baba suggested, on the background of his actual spiritual realization, association of favorable time of *jap* with one's zodiac sign and other parameters. The original d**e**tails can be found in his book '*Om Haach Guru*' (Marathi)(now available in English also) published by Bhukum *Math*, Pune (India). An extract has been presented below, on the basis of actual experience, with minor inevitable modifications. The zodiac signs as referred in the table below refers to the horoscope prepared as per *Hindu panchanga*. [Courtesy – *Shri Ganore Baba*, Bhukum *Math*, Pune]

Tattwa - Zodiac Sign		Time of the day	Direction
Earth	Taurus, Capricorn, Virgo	10.30 pm to 02.00 am	East
Water	Pisces, Scorpio, Cancer	05.30 pm to 10.30 pm	West
Fire	Arise, Leo, Sagittarius	01.00 pm to 05.00 pm	South
Air	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	07.48 am to 12.36 pm	North

The timings mentioned in the Table may not suit most people due to occupational compulsions. By self experience, however, there are two options :

One, to practice at least one *mala jap* during specified time by adjusting the daily schedule and completing the remaining *jap* at other convenient time. Second option is to adopt the timing of the succeeding (preferable) or preceeding *tattva* in the table.

The directions are more convenient to practice. The *sadhak* has to just change the sitting position and face the specified direction only. If it is not possible to follow the timings specified, one can at least follow the directions, and get the benefit.

20.2.7 Don'ts for concentration

Avoiding the following distracting things would help concentration :

20.2.7.1 Avoiding negative audio-visual inputs

Mind has a constant known and unknown inputs from the environment through eyes and ears. Our daily routine involves association or conversation with unnecessary people, negative inputs through innumerable daily news, entertainment media, internet, games, mobiles, magazines etc. Mind gets engaged in these inputs and keeps on processing the information along with its already stored experiences.

In today's world of information technology and information explosion, one has to exercise utmost discrimination and discard all, that is unnecessary and harmful. The children are most miserable victims of these influences but the elder should accept the responsibility for the situation.

Simply prohibiting children from exposure to these influences is not possible and proper. In fact, many times elders themselves are addicts of such inputs. Therefore, replacement of positive engagement and a family level counselling is necessary to arrive at a proper understanding of drawbacks of these ill influences.

Reading only the headlines in the news papers rather than going into the details of every news, putting off the internet or television immediately after use, are some helpful tips in this regard.

20.2.7.2 Avoiding worrying

Worrying is yet another negative engagement of mind. One may keep on brooding over the past incidents or worrying about the future. The object of worry is immaterial; one can worry even about the leaking public water-tap upto one's own elevation ! The conclusion of worrying lies in one's distrust in one's capacity and also in the strength of the *Guru* or the God and the habit of mind to keep on knitting its own web of negative imagination.

Strong positive thoughts can counteract worrying. This may appear simple to say but it is not impossible to follow too. Many courageous persons have proved that doing one's duty but relying on the strength and compassion of God are the certain ways to quit worrying.

One more element that engrosses mind is excessive and unnecessary activities of the worldly life; for example, to go after unnecessary possessions like many houses, many cars, holding posts in many organizations, keep on earning degrees after degrees, unnecessary and uncalled for involvement in the problems of others, collections of things, obsession of money and investments, unnecessary knowledge, excessive logical reasoning, unnecessary reactions on global and local issues, greed for social contact - are just a few common and invited engrossments in routine life.

The elevated souls like Vinoba used to say 'let us not overload the deeper mind - the *chitta*.' It is therefore, essential to introspect and start planed elimination of all of these non-essentials. As J. Krishnamurti used to say, 'one must carry light, if one wants to travel long'. There is one more point to be noted that we ourselves have, without awareness, overload the mind and it is in our hands to correct the things. If we create an action plan, we can offload or atleast stop adding more and more worries. This will certainly help concentration of mind.

20.2.8 Minimizing impurity of mind

Impurity of mind due to desires and *vikara*s is one more common cause of distraction of mind. The ill feelings like jealousy, competition, disputes, revenge - add to this impurity, destroying concentration. Praising others for their success, avoiding competition with others, undervaluing one's worries and sorrows,

respecting other *sadhakas* and admiring their fortune, sacrificing desires, practicing gratitude, avoiding disputes and court matters- even at the cost of benefits - and wishing well for even the opponents or enemies - are some of the most effective tips for keeping mind pure.

Needless to add that, such a pure mind can become readily favorable for *naam*.

* * *

21. In what terms are *bhaav* (emotion) and *naam* related?

21.1 The dimension of *bhaav*

As far as the results are concerned *bhaav* is an inevitable content of *naam*. To understand it by definition, *bhaav* is the remainder when we substract the mechanical aspects from the *naam mantra*. Now we realize that the complete devotion and faith remain.

Let us illustrate it with an example, the difference in feeling when one buys and eats commercially packed food available at stores on feeling hungry versus the food coocked and served by a mother with love, affection and kindness to a child. In theory, in both the cases, the food served as a unit is same, but the difference lies in the satisfaction, contentment and happiness which one experiences in the latter case.

21.2 *Bhaav* makes a big difference

Technically *naam* is a string of words to be pronounced by use of the respective body organs. It may have its own meaning but *bhaav* is one's emotive application or urge behind it. In calling a friend casually on one side and calling him with the urge of survival at the last breath on the other side, name of the friend is the same, but the emotive content and energy of urge behind the words make a big difference. The same is the difference between mere mechanically practiced *naam* and *naam* with *bhaav*.

21.3 Response of the Divine is proportional to urge of call

Let us extend further the same example of calling for survival. On one side is the quality of caller's tone and on the other side is the quality of the register and response at the receiver's end - the receiver will not be able to ignore the call for survival like a light casual call but will keep aside everything to rush for help. In case of calling the Divinity, the response on the other side may not be verifiable one-to-one, but one can trust reasonably that the intensity of response will be proportional to the intensity of calling.

Maturity and experience of life teach every one, sooner or later, that the Divine and Its formal manifestation – the God or *Guru* is much more trustworthy than any material or human support - in fact, that is the only support to be sought. It should, therefore, be understood that the *naam* practiced with *bhaav* can become very effective. The voyage in the ocean of worldly life is full of sorrow, worries, expectations, desire and fear. However, if this voyage is accompanied with *naam* practiced along with *bhaav* makes the voyage a successful one. Hence, it is necessary to practice *naam* with *bhaav.*

21.4 Communication with Divine

In the *naam sadhana*, the communication between the *sadhak* and the Divine is uniquely different as compared to the usual and habitual interpersonal communication. In the *naam*, the receiver is the Divine, characterized by formlessness and subtlety. *Naam* with *bhaav* may even not be pronounced, it can be simply brought in mind. The Divine or the God, on the other end, is so sensitive that even the smallest call or desire can be heard. The intense urge can make many differences. In fact, *naam* contains a cluster of words. They are pronounced like a call to a divine. In case of certain *naam mantras* the aspect of pronunciation is important as error in pronunciation can result in wrong effects. But the purity of *bhaav* takes care of many such aspects. It can mitigate or nullify the errors and its illeffects so also it can create the urge required if it is lacking.

An interesting part while communicating with the divine by the help of *naam* can be considered here. The *bhaav* has a rare capacity to pierce through the outer pronunciations or manifestations to the inner core and purposes behind it. The saint like *Tukaram* has the urge, the *bhaav* in his *naam* which evokes a similar urgent and emotional response from the deity called *Vitthala*. *Tukaram Maharaj* calls him as '*Vitthala, Pandharinatha, Panduranga*' etc. with the same feeling of love-*bhaav*. *Jijabai* was the wife of *Tukaram Maharaj*. She had intense faith and love for *Tukaram Maharaj*, but not for his deity *Vitthala* as she conceived *Vitthala* like her enemy who had taken away *Tukaram* from her. So when she called *Vitthala* she had a feelilng of rage, anger and that made her call *Vitthala* as '*Vithya*, the blackish - *kalya*' but as the divine is enough mature to understand her devotion and love for *Tukaram*, a dearest saint of *Vitthala*, the derogatory, wrong pronunciations and calls like

above made by *Jijabai* are received and respected by *Vitthala* as the same as those calls made by *Tukaram*. Her *bhaav* for *Tukaram* in the *naam* could change the rage and anger for *Vitthala* into love and affection. It could invite the same blessings and affection from the divine as *Tukaram* received.

21.5 Urge supersedes quantity

To make *naam sadhana* effective and take it to the next level, it is must to inculcate or bring in the feelings of faith (*bhaav*) in one's *upasana*. The value of *naam* for a true *sadhak* is much more, greater and precious than the value of so called precious metals like gold or silver mean to an ordinary, worldly person.The *bhaav* converts the *naam* into an intense call. The urge in the *naam* even supersedes the quantitative aspects of *naam jap*. Due to absence of *bhaav*, the real benefit and the spiritual reward for *naam* are often missed. Hence, one should examine and attempt to make the *naam jap* earnest.

21.6 True urge transforms into love for calling, making response unimportant

This point of earnestness, *bhaav* in *japa* and its extraordinary effect, answers yet another question or experience narrated by many *naam sadhakas* taking *naam* in huge quantities. It is an experience shared by people who have been practicing *naam* for long time and have completed milestones of few crores that, they don't feel elevated nor get any spiritual push. The cause of this is seen as lack of faith or devotion and developing feeling (*bhaav*) towards the *naam*-deity to achieve transformation of mind. If this *bhaav* or the earnestness is missed the only huge quantity is unable to produce the desired effect as experienced in these complaints. Obviously, the reverse becomes true i.e. if earnestness or *bhaav* is present a even small quantity can produce

the desired result.

The incidences of not experiencing *darshan* of God after a *jap* of three and half crores or not seeing the live form of *Shri Ram* after a *jap* of thirteen crores indicate absence of *bhaav*. The urge or the *bhaav* has two aspects in it – one, the unyielding faith and confidence in the capacity of the Divine to elevate, and the second, absolute helplessness and surrender of the *sadhak*. On true practice, the urge becomes so pure and mature that the *sadhak* gets ecstatic joy in just calling, not expecting even the response like spiritual realization or *darshan*. Thus the very last barrier in the spiritual realization – the desire for the realization also dissolves and *sadhak* becomes one with the Divine.

21.7 Ways to practice *bhaav*

Work done with complete dedication, willingness and love creates an extraordinary quality product. The same principle applies to *naam*, if practiced alongwith *bhaav*. The obvious question is now that how can *bhaav* be brought in the practice of *naam*? To answer this question, certain characteristics of *bhaav* should be understood.

21.7.1 Basic characteristics of *bhaav*

Bhaav, like love, cannot be inculcated artificially or mechanically or by force. Presence and absence of love can be felt, but it cannot be borrowed or generated. It is useful to think of the things that we like and to trace back carefully how we started liking them. *Bhaav* is a natural and essential faculty of every human being. Even a very dry tempered person gets emotionally dragged on seeing the innocent smile of an infant. It is a common experience that a very strict and hard father usually transforms to be a soft and gentle grandfather.

The above examples show that persons appearing emotionless in certain situations or roles can become emotionally warm in certain other situations. It is almost impossible to get a person devoid of any emotion throughout life; the category, intensity and mode of expression may be different. Everyone is somewhere in between the two emotional extremes – emotionally charged and absolutely dry.

The above understanding about *bhaav* will help in exploring the reasons and remedies about *bhaav* in the *naam*.

21.7.2 Obvious – *sahaj bhaav*

Sahaj bhaav or the obvious spontaneous *bhaav* is a very simple form of *bhaav*. It is like having a born gift of pure melodious consonance in one's voice. Such rare and gifted persons start their *naam upasana* readily with *bhaav* at an early age as soon as they get exposed to it. Such an inherent *sahaj bhaa*v is the reward of noble deeds of the past births. If one is rewarded with such a *sahaj bhaav*, one should become aware and utilize it best for the *naam*. If we come across such a child, we should encourage and facilitate the child for *naam*. This is also a service to the *naam*.We may perhaps get the *bhaav* for our *naam sadhana* as a reciprocal.

21.7.3 *Bhaav* and emotional overflow are different

There is a likely confusion between *bhaav* and emotional indulgence or emotional impulsiveness. Sometimes, during the *naam jap*, a *sadhak* may get filled with intense emotion of gratitude towards the *Guru* and the feeling may even spill in the form of choked throat or tears in eyes.

This is a constructive manifestation of *bhaav*. However, if one continues to shed tears and becomes unable to practice *naam* due to the emotions, that is unreasonable and not desired. Such a deep emotion of gratitude should transform into a positive determination and action of a rigorous and intense session of *naam jap*.

Otherwise, that will be a sort of an unproductive and loose emotional overflow and a waste of time, just like long passive discussions on *naam*.

One disadvantage of such emotional overflow is that it creates in the *sadhak* a misunderstanding that such an overflow is a sign of progress in the *sadhana*. Another disadvantage is that other *sadhak* - get a wrong feeling of inferiority about their own *sadhana* that their *sadhana* has no *bhaav*. Hence, one should, in general, exercise care about the expression of one's *bhaav* and make it a constructive support for the *naam*.

21.7.4 Improving trust in *naam* and awareness about others' help

Bhaav can also be cultivated by convincing oneself about its importance and strength. The literature stating its worth, realizations and experiences of saints and other *sadhakas*, actual self–experimentation and self– observation can help in this regard.

In routine life, we can be irresponsible and overconfident until we are unaware of others' supports and favors on us; the same can happen with *naam*.Therefore,one should take an introspective view on one's past life, turning points and incidences, *Guru* and his direct or indirect help. This can be done periodically. This exercise can reveal some close persons or even some strangers

who have helped even unexpectedly at some crucial points of life. It may also occur to mind that such invaluable helps have, at times, not been properly acknowledged, even regrettably forgotten. This realization brings politeness and sense of gratitude to improve *bhaav* in *naam*, which is a proper symbol of gratitude.

21.7.5 Little higher daily *jap* target

For those who have decided to practice *naam* regularly, a mechanical but useful tip for inducing *bhaav* is to decide on a slightly higher quantity of daily *jap* as target. The target should be little difficult to achieve, but not very difficult or unfeasible. Such a steep target of quantity requires an extra *jap* as compared to routine target. In the priorities of daily routine, when it becomes difficult to cover the extra *jap*, one gets a feeling of a bit positive helplessness. This feeling also helps create *bhaav* in *naam.*

21.7.6 Practicing *jap* at specific time everyday

Another way to induce the feeling of faith-*bhaav* in oneself is to attempt to practice *naam* at a particular time within one's daily schedule. Though this resolution e.g. to chant *naam* for ten minutes when one gets up and starts the day or having slots during morning or evening hours reserved for *naam sadhana* etc. appear to be simple and easily achievable. There are impacts and digression arising due to parameters like less seriousness towards *naam*, forgetfulness, spillover of other worldly activities which get precedence, external impacts of unforseen circumstances and many more similar incidences which occur in a day to day life. In managing all these, the seriousness and priority towards *naam sadhana* gets lowered.Considering the situation, if at all one gets successful in overcoming these challenges and is able to practice the resolution for a while, then chances that the *sadhak* can get influenced and may start rewarding for own doership

resulting in developing a shed of ego in mind. In such situation, by the grace the next day or week the *sadhak* misses his schedule. This helps to correct and realise his mistake of taking doership towards himself. He realises that even if he could observe the predecided schedule, it was not by his strength but was possible because of the grace of the *guru* or the divine and that it is impossible to continue even a small schedule without such grace. Consequently, this creates a sense of helplessness, gratitude and *bhaav* as well, which in turn improve the quality of *naam* thereafter.

21.7.7 Contact with great and rare *sadhakas*

Sometimes, one comes in contact with great and rare *sadhakas* incidently. Such *sadhakas* practice their *naam sadhana* or for that matter any type of *sadhana* with a very ease and devotion. They don't consider themselves anyway different or of higher quality in *sadhana* or don't have any sense of ego about it. This creates an intense urge in us to practice such *sadhana*. It also creates *bhaav* in us.

In view of this, it is better to be in search of such really great *sadhakas*, who are away from any sort of publicity or public view. In doing this, the paths of *sadhana* should not be an hindrance.As capacity to create the motivation and *bhaav* is always there in a great *sadhaka* of any path. The contact with them makes us awefully aware of how we lack in the quantity and more importantly in quality-*bhaav* in our *sadhana*.As a consequence, there is a positive and definite change in our *sadhana*. It may be added that a mere contact with such great *sadhakas* can create such a response. Formal communication or guidance may be useful but not necessary. It may be recalled here, that many *sadhakas* could get improvement in feeling purity of mind and *bhaav* in themselves - as a response of merely

coming in contact and by sitting quietly in the divine presence of *Shri Raman Maharshi*.

21.7.8 Repentance about drawbacks and imperfections

One more factor constituting *bhaav* is the introspection of one's drawbacks, *vikaras*, and subsequent losses in life. Reasonable repentance of one's drawbacks like hypocrisy, imperfections in the practice of *naam*, can add to the quality of *sadhana* as it convinces that serious and sincere practice of *naam* is the only way out. This convection improves *bhaav*.

21.7.9 Awareness and remembrance of the Grace of God

One of the important reasons for not developing the feeling-*bhaav* is one's mindset of ingratitude towards countless favours showered upon us by mother-nature and god. To be grateful and express gratitude towards nature and god is a moral and essential duty of everyone and can be exercised within one's capacity. Incidences like death at an early age, accidental deaths, unexpected and sudden severe accidents that we observe around us, should actually teach us that we are shielded by the grace of the supreme power. This should develop a sense of gratitude and thereby the *bhaav* in our *naam*.

It may be noted here, that when somebody escapes such accidents, fatal happenings etc. that creates a sense of gratitude, but it is very temporary and is forgotten as the time passes by. In fact, taking a clue from such incidences and gratitude felt thereafter, one should remember and inculcate that sense permanently. If we do so the *bhaav* can come in and can be maintained

throughout our life.

Various people – close or distant - organizations, nature, and systems help us and make our living better every moment. A sense of gratitude for them is also equivalent to the gratitude towards the Divine as the divine power is itself behind all these. This improves the *bhaav* in the practice of *naam*. A reference is made here to the *'Hrina Smaran Mala'*, the verses in Marathi expressing gratitude towards all these factors in routine worldly life.

21.7.10 'Leaving it to the Divine' with prayer

If one is convinced about importance of *bhaav* and one has deep urge for *bhaav*, and is unable to develop it, the suggested way is prayer to the *sadguru* or *naam* itself. One can simply pray the *Guru* or even the *naam* itself that 'I will practice *naam* sincerely with whatever drawbacks; kindly grant me *bhaav*.' Such a prayer at the beginning and end of sincere effort is certainly heard and rewarded.

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22. How does purity and behavior of the initiator affect practice of the *sadhak* ?

22.1 Purity of initiator affects positivity

One who offers the *naam mantra* is the initiator and the other the who receives it, is the *sadhak*. The initiator and the receiver

are related by faith of the receiver. Therefore, anything that strengthens the faith of receiver, adds to effectiveness of the *sadhana*. Hence, the spiritual status of the initiator, his *upasana*, purity, the *Gurukripa* on him and conformity of his living with his *upasana* are the factors making him a worth initiator. The receiver, however, should take care that his own *sadhana*, faith and virtuousness of routine life are followed. It is recommended, in general, that a receiver should have respect and the faith about the initiator and the receiver should confirm it. If the *naam* is received from a shrine, the receiver should first be convinced about sacredness of that place, the sage, his *upasana*, its intensity, *Gurukripa* on him and consistency of his routine life with the *naam*. The same is the case about the great books and their authors.

22.2 On later disagreement with *Guru's* behavior …

It is likely that the receiver starts disagreeing with the instructions and behavior of his initiator or *Guru* after the *naam* has been given. This can dilute or destroy the receiver's faith.

In such a situation, the receiver should know that his perception about the behavior of the *Guru* can be erroneous, because many times, the behavior of the saints or elevated persons can be beyond the reasoning ability of the ordinary people.

The saints are sometimes required to behave in a questionable way for the reasons which others do not know and cannot comprehend. Particularly, the inner aspects of saint's living can often be apparently absurd to others - as absurd and unreasonable as the ways of the God himself. From the ordinary viewpoint of selfish motives of worldly life, it is difficult to understand and accept the Divine outlook of saints, that can penetrate the past, present

and also the future with same quality of compassion.

Of course, this has another side as well. Certain so called '*Gurus*' can be actually fake and the *sadhak* is likely to be already mistaken in recognizing them. In this regard, the test of a genuine *Guru* is total lack of selfishness - particularly in respect of money or wealth or honors and recognition. However effectively, one may pretend, the traces of selfishness prevail which cannot be hidden. So if the *sadhak* disagrees with any particular behavior of the *Guru*, he should examine it to check, if there is any trace of selfishness in it. If there is no trace of selfishness, the *sadhak* should treat other aspects of disagreement as beyond his own understanding limit and should continue practice of *naam* with unshaken faith in the *Guru*.

22.3 Ignore the differences and concentrate on *naam*

The next important point is that the effectiveness of *sadhana* depends on the *sadhaka's* own determination, effort and trust in the *naam* itself; behavior of *Guru* or initiator being just a supportive help.

Hence, the initiator should be simply treated as a medium, whereas the *naam* itself should be the object of trust and faith. Therefore, even if there is a crack in the faith in the initiator, the *sadhak* should withdraw the involvement in the initiator and hold firm the Divine *naam* with strong faith so that the *sadhana* progresses in the proper direction. Due to this, if there is fakeness in the initiator, the initiator gets eliminated but the ever pure *naam* remains; and if there is a misunderstanding on the side of the *sadhak* about genuine initiator, the misunderstanding gets resolved by the Divine system in due course of time and the original status and bonds of faith are restored.

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23. Should the *naam mantra* we practice be kept secret?

23.1 Secrecy is justified for certain *naam mantras*

Certain sects or *Gurus* have justified reasons for keeping certain *naam mantras* secret. Certain *naam mantras* are not meant for all, as they are obtained from individual spiritual realizations. Sometimes, they are to be kept secret just to prevent making publicity or an issue out of it. In conclusion, the secrecy is intended for effectiveness.

Many times the *sadhak* is not thoroughly conversant with the multiple and subtle aspects of the *naam* or one has not given enough thought at depth. In such case, disclosing it openly is not desired as the *sadhak* is unable to face any queries or debates raised by others. Such occasions can cause diffidence and confusion in the mind of *sadhak*. The persons raising doubts leave but the duality of mind of *sadhak* prevails and widens to cause distrust in the *naam*. A weak *sadhak* may go to the extent of leaving the path of *upasana*. This is likely to be one of the important reasons for secrecy of *naam*.

23.2 Drawbacks of undue secrecy of *naam*

23.2.1 Unnecessary stressful family issue

Maintaining secrecy can become stressful, particularly if there are conflicts in the family members. Attempts and efforts for secrecy can be misunderstood and can cause unnecessary disputes and disturbances in relationships. So if there are no special

instructions from the *Guru*, one need not make secrecy an issue. Of course, one need not have sense of exhibition too.

23.2.2 Written and verbal forms of *jap* cannot be secret

The other two forms of *naam* - the written or *likhit jap* and the *vaikhari* or verbal jap have their own advantages and limitations. They support and supplement the *moun jap* at least in the initial phase of *sadhana*. The written or verbal *jap* cannot be kept secret. Hence, the insistence of secrecy will mean foregoing the practice and benefits of these two forms of *jap*,which is not desired.

In summary, if one is able to maintain secercy it is desired. However, it should not become a stressfull issue or act of hardship, which impacts the ultimate goal of consistent *naam sadhana*. It needs to be understood that *naam* is not like a worldly object which could be exhibited or used as a show-off for worldly reasons. There, in that sense, secrecy be followed in such aspects, on the other hand, it would be wise to reveal *naam* if the situation demands and would be of ultimate benefit.

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24. Is it not worthless and dull to merely practice *naam* ?

24.1 Views of non-practitioners of *naam*

This question typically arises from people who do not show faith in *naam* and have not practiced it sincerely, people who are ignorant about the great transforming effect of *naam*. The question can even arise from people who are sincere but curious to know *naam* and other variety of people from different backgrounds and situations.

It is even observed that the intentions behind enquiring also vary accordingly. Based on different experiences, some feel that the *naam* practitioner is an unitelligent or dull, doing meaningless and worthless boring exercise. Some of them comment with the confidence as if they have got key to complex problems of this world, which is illusion. While some people become unaware of complexities of life as they possess plenty of wealth, power, physical favorability etc. Some people, haven't been touched by any adverse situation or misery, see no need for *upasana* or *naam* etc. While some people erroneously feel that their close ones have started distancing from them after they started *naam*, which is actually not the case for obvious reasons.

24.2 Multiple dimensions of the question

With sincere regards to the non- practitioners, the above question can be explored in many dimensions :

24.2.1 *Naam sadhana* appears to be unproductive

The question actually indicates the notion of worthlessness of the

naam itself. It also indicates the questioner's expectations that something should 'happen' or some clear change should be visibly apparent due to practice of *naam* and that does not happen by *naam*.

24.2.2 Every action has an effect

Every action has some form of effect, truth of which is even agreed by today's modern science. The effects could be undesired or desired, good or bad and all would depend upon the original action, but in summary, there would be some form of effect or reaction associated towards every action. Even for hypothesis, if we consider *naam* as action to pronounce or chant few phrases in a particular manner, by above definition these would also have some sort of effect or reaction somewhere.

Let us discuss the following illustration when one speaks out an abusive word to someone. In this situation all the entities involved have some sort of effect ranging from aggressiveness shown by the person who has initiated this conversation, reaction of opposite entity ranging in the form of changing facial expression to hitting back in the form of one tight slap, depending upon the prevailing situation and the impact or effect, the abusive word which might have made. So if an abusive word can make such an effect or impact, definitely *naam* which is complete and divine in itself would certainly have good effect on anyone who practices it.

Even if the person pronouncing the *naam* is unaware of its meaning – as suggested by the word 'merely' in the question – the word heard will have its effect; just like a child 'merely' uses the words it has heard with meanings unknown. These words may contain abusive words, too. Such 'mere' utternace of any sort of words certainly has some effect on the listener. So is the case with the

positive words of *naam*.

In the simplest sense, *naam* is calling the God or Divinity inside. So the call is bound to be echoed as reply from inside. The nature of reply will be according to the nature of content, meaning of the *naam mantra*, as mentioned already. So there is bound to be an effect.

24.2.3 Effects of positive deeds are less apparent

One may think why the effect of *naam* is not as apparent as the effects of other things. Here, it is necessary to examine minutely the word 'effect'.

Effect implies a reactive happening or change as a result of the action. For example, reaction of an abusive word can be the feeling of anger which may or may not be transformed into any physical action. If the speaker is a child, there may be a reaction but if the listener is considerate, he may leave it or may scold the child or may even slap the child.

So the reaction will be there, but may or may not get transformed into any apparent action. If the speaker himself is an elder person, an authority or a mighty person, the reaction or effect will be formed in the mind of the receiver, but it will not be transformed into an immediate counteraction.

Considering another example, even if we praise someone just for the sake of saying, there will be a pleasant reaction in the mind of the receiver. But we can understand that the reaction may not get easily transformed into action. In fact, positive and negative reactions both occur in mind equally but the apparent counteraction is more probable for negative reactions than for positive ones.

One may have to praise ten times for a person to get an apparent acknowledgement, whereas an abusive or insulting word may be retorted quickly. Sometimes, negative reaction can be directly harmful too, like raising a stick or a weapon against a person.

In such case, the reaction will be accompanied immediately with physical counteraction like running away or raising a protective physical action. On the contrary, a warm pat on the back may not be counteracted by any apparent physical counteraction. Sometimes, considering the common worldly selfish incidences, one may doubt the real intension behind such a praise or warm pat. A person may wait to get cleared his doubt that there is no hidden selfish intension and then only he may react with an apparent action.

Naam being an absolutely positive action, its apparent reaction takes time to be transformed into a visible or tangible effect though the subtle internal change has taken place on its action only.

24.2.4 Unreasonable expectations from *naam*

The effects of *naam* do not seem to be immediately apparent because our expectations from *naam* are unrealistic or unreasonable. If one expects that on practice of *naam*, one's material problems, like result of a court matter or profit in business or success in exam or advent of a virtue, fulfillment in a relationship, or cure of disease or victory over an enemy - should get solved as per wish, change in temperament of a person etc. that is itself an unreasonable expectation; *naam* is not meant for such 'results'.

So the expectations themselves are erroneous. Either one is expecting fulfillment of one's selfish motives from a practitioner of *naam* or if one is himself practicing it, one is expecting *naam*

to make others favorable for one's selfish motives. Moreover, the expectations are in terms of visible, apparent and immediate effects.

It can be accepted that the apparent effects are based on the subtle internal invisible effects. Visible effects means completion of desire to own a house property, result of some case dispute to be in one's favour, getting success in the examination etc. and examples of few invisible effects like reduction in one's greedy nature, achieve control on temper, to become co-operative and helpful to others etc. It has been observed that people who pose the basic question about achieving results by simply chanting *naam*, expect or are more inclined to see 'visible results'.

If on seeing a broader picture the effects achieved out of visible and invisible results are equally important, the visible results can by physically realised or grossly understood or at times sensed by us.

Let us discuss it with an example : A constructed house is the example of visible effect, but the backgroud mechanism which has worked in making this happen like - strong desire, idea, the blue-print of the house, spirit of co-operation from workers etc. are not visible factors and without them the visible effect cannot exist. So it is apparent that invisible inner effects are, therefore,the guiding and fundamental effects. The same, of course, applies alike to positive as well as negative effects.

Let us take success in examination, as an another example of the apparent effect. But it is not possible without the inner invisible effects of urge for studying, readiness for hard work, concentration, grasp of subject matter, sincerity etc. Therefore, the inner invisible effects are the controlling factors. Hence, raising

a stick or punishing a student appear to be the ways, but they may not result in good marks in exam, instead, the invisible controlling factors can bring the desired change.

Naam operates at the level of the internal changes or effects. In case of studying for examination, *naam* can help by reducing destructive thoughts and worries, or by increasing urge for noble targets, or by keeping away from ill tendencies etc. Mere practice of *naam* can make all these things happen.

It will, therefore, be clear that the effects of *naam* are internal, subtle in nature and hence not immediately apparent. They are, however, fundamental, long lasting and mandatory for the apparent gross and temporary effects.

24.2.5 Individual elevation is the ultimate remedy

A concluding facet of the question is now considered by a counter question - if practice of *naam* is worthless, what are the alternative actions to replace it ? - should be answered by all who have these doubts.

The commonly stated alternate activities could be so- called noble activities like equalizing the social discriminations or socialism, or democracy, or active politics, or contesting elections, or forming organizations, or fighting in the courts, or being selfish for one's own ambitions and so on. Which of the human problems have been solved by 'merely' these activities? But we still never challenge the worth of these activities, but we do make reservations for practice of *naam* ! In fact, it is easier to convince worth of mere *naam* than worth of these activities.

The history of centuries has revealed that decisive, permanent

and ultimate remedies for any generalized social problems are logically impossible. Still, unsuccessful attempts have been made to resolve and the solutions have always been incomplete, temporary and erroneous. The root cause behind this impossibility is the fact that the collective problems, collective mind and collective solutions are ever changing, unstable and hence incomplete. A permanent, ultimate and decisive solution for even the global and social problems is uniquely the individual spiritual elevation of every one.

On the background of the above, *naam* treats mind of every individual, uniquely. The effect of *naam* is undoubtedly constructive and time tested. The answer to this question will be most convincing if one practices *naam*, at least as an experiment to get experience rather than getting trapped in the logical reasoning. For, logical convection will always have the threat of being disproved over time, but self experience stands proved as it is and that is the highest proof.

24.2.6 Insecurity, worries and addictions even in prosperity

There is one more aspect to the question. The question of not practicing *naam* or any other *upasana* is generally raised by those who are doing well on physical, material and financial fronts in life. They dare to doubt the worth of *naam* or any *upasana* out of their unawareness derived from these favorable aspects. But on the other side, in spite of such favorable situation, even in advanced countries, such people do have worries, fear of uncertainties of tomorrow or a strange general sense of insecurity for unknown reasons. Is there any constructive solution derived for these worries and stresses ?

The fluctuations in the shares market, suddenly cropping incurable

diseases, business hazards like extreme recessions, toppling of political powers, natural calamities like tsunamis and perishing the entire families in a moment - are some of the common happenings making all the wealth and power senseless. One should also note that why the so called world of abundance, money, power is made helpless and mentally imbalanced in such calamities ? When such insecurities and worries become unbearable, a more obvious but destructive way of taking to various drug addictions has become common, thus making the situation more worse and irreparable. On the backdrop of all this one has to evaluate the lasting importance of *naam*.

The only flame in this dark is to enlighten the inner world of every individual and to make one calm, strong and stable by mind, which is the main reward of practice of *naam*. With this broad and deep thought, one will not raise the immature doubt about worthlessness of *naam*.

In fact, one will get through this understanding a strong faith that mere *naam* is certainly worth and elevating.

* * *

25. How is *naam* unconditioned or *nirupadhik* ?

25.1 Both – *naam* and *sadhak* – are condition free

Conditioning or *upadhi* of an entity means some other thing unnecessarily attached and if left so, bringing various limitations on the original entity. If one is not aware of conditioning and if attachment of its association continues, the conditioning limits, restricts or corrupts the perception of the main entity. Conditionings can be many. Consider an example of an idol of God. The sculptor of the idol carves all the humanly features. Further decorates it with garlands, ornaments, garments etc. All these other details decorate the idol but the same can sometimes obstruct the main features of the idol. Moreover,involvement in rituals and other details like costly ornaments and elegant temple can become more important as compared to the idol itself.

The same applies to the various paths and means of *sadhana*. Various things and procedures are involved in the process of worship or *pooja*. Bathing the images, offering flowers and garments, the large variety of *pooja* apparatus, its materials like brass or silver or copper or even gold, and so on. And generally one is seen to be more interested in these accessories rather than the worship itself. In fact the purpose is to awaken the conscience of the inner Divine with the help of the *sagun* worship. It is actually all about the inner happening, the outer detailing being just instrumental to turn the mind inwards. Once the conditionings start dominating, another drawback of fear of not following them also crops in. This is yet another trouble with the conditionings or *upadhis*.

The path of *naam* stands altogether distinct in this respect - that it is almost free of conditionings. The unconditioned-ness of *naam* has two aspects. First, *naam* is itself unconditioned. That is, unlike the images and consequent attachments discussed above, *naam* has the simplest possible form of a few words of the *naam mantra*, that too of the choice of the *sadhak*.Moreover, the pronunciation of these words is also not essential; in fact *moun jap* is preferred to other forms of *jap*. As one progresses further, even the connection with the mind also gets eliminated. The *naam* has no identity with respect to any of the five sense organs and also the five work organs; unlike most other spiritual paths.

The second aspect of unconditioned-ness of the path of *naam* is that, just like the *naam* itself, the *sadhak* is also not imposed with any conditions. There are no restrictions of age, gender, education, place, health, socio-economic status, caste, religion, posture etc. As such, *sadhak* can practice *naam* in any state of mind, body, surrounding etc. This twofold unconditioned-ness of *naam* makes it a path of high rank among other paths.

25.2 Avoidance of one's own conditionings

The unconditioned-ness of *naam* is to be maintained by *sadhak* by exercising utmost awareness, as the mind always likes to create and maintain material associative attachments. The saints insist on this point. Many times the *sadhakas* say that they consider *jap* only after bath or after *pooja* or in front of the image, and so on.

These conditionings are unnecessary and undesired as they will restrict or sometimes prohibit the *sadhak* from the practice of *naam*. These can be the tricks of the mind to avoid the *naam*. A simple looking condition of bath has so many restrictions in it -

e.g. one should wake up in time, hot water should be available, one should have enough physical fitness for taking bath, bathroom should be available at the peak morning hour, and so on. So if for any reason, the time is short, the first thing to be skipped will be usually the *naam* – and not the *pooja* or breakfast!

Actually, if there was no condition of bath etc; the *jap* could have been completed even before bath, *pooja* could have been done by someone else later. *Jap* could be done calmly during the bus journey towards the office. In spite of unconditioned-ness of the path, we are likely to invite our own conditions and put ourselves to loss.

The same is the case about the conditions like *jap mala*, *satsang*, specific place etc.

So, one should be aware about one's own invited conditionings and eliminate them, as soon as possible, to get benefit of unconditioned-ness of the path of *naam*.

* * *

26. 'Where do I need *naam* when things are going perfect in my life ?'

The sense that 'everything is fine in my life' is generally gross, meaning attainment of common worldly things like a good occupation, enough earnings, good natured wife or husband and children, happy family life, facilities and luxuries like own house and car, social status and recognition, occasional enjoyment of trips and tours, entertainment through media, and so on.

26.1 Levels of living : material self-centered level

Living 'happily' only with these material fulfillments is, however, only one level of life. One has freedom to feel these fulfillments to be enough. But there are levels of living – gross living, animal living, human living etc.

Even within animals or birds, there are levels ranging from purely instinctive self-centered life to a higher level showing warmth of feeling and commitment for the master and even dying for him. So for human beings, the range of levels of living must obviously be wider.

To struggle and exert for enough of one's own livelihood is preliminary level and the sense of self-reliance in it, is commendable. But unreasonable striving for money, materials and expense of time for the livelihood of grand-children or so would be a misuse of freedom of action. Instead, seen neutrally, one should get involved in the next and higher level of living – that is one's spiritual elevation.

The history shows that those who contributed to social wellbeing

or to the knowledge domain of the world stepped into the next higher level of living on fulfillment of material needs instead of indulging in more possessions at the lower level life. The contributions in the fields like material and social sciences, arts, philosophy, authoring, remarkable devotion towards noble goals, peace and salvation are some of the examples. Indeed, only those who transcended their bodily and material needs have contributed to the comfort, wellbeing and elevation of ordinary people. Most of the others have remained only at the material level by indulging in buying and utilizing these means, and calling these possessions as mark of pseudo 'higher standard of living'.

26.2 Levels of living : the next higher level

It would, therefore, be a gentleman's duty to step up into the further level of living at least to pay the debt of these contributors as a matter of gratitude. The details may vary but the level should be raised. The areas of work will have to be consistent with one's set-up and abilities. Someone may literate the illiterates, some may help needy through money or things or services, someone may give expression to the sorrows of the exploited through writings, someone may work for slums or underprivileged communities; someone may like to work through organizations, and so on. All these people will certainly live life at a level higher than the material self-centered level of life.

26.3 Self-elevation necessary even for social service

The next higher level of living is one's own purification and elevation. In fact, even for a social worker, self- elevation is a pre-requisite to do justice to his mission of social welfare. The world or the society needs improvement basically because of the immaturity and imperfections of the people in it. This is the pioneering fact for any type of social work. It is also acceptable

that one cannot bring true improvement in the society; on the contrary, one may deteriorate it due to one's own imperfections or impurities. Hence, to help society in true sense, one needs to purify and elevate oneself. Of course it has its own personal rewards too. Therefore, as emphasized already, the *naam sadhana* becomes necessary. Hence, living with *upasana* for self-elevation happens to be the next higher level of living.

26.4 Self-purification is the primary social responsibility

Convinced about the above facts, one can start treating self-elevation as one's prime social responsibility – that one's material needs are at least fulfilled and that one must take care of those who are deprived; the best service would start from self-purification. And as a prerequisite, one can start practicing *naam* to inculcate virtues.

26.5 Gratitude towards the supporters of one's fulfillments

One more dimension of gratitude is that the fulfillment of material and worldly needs is to be credited to many factors like various people, organizations and systems in addition to one's own efforts.

Even if one's earning and its utilization is one's own right, the direct and indirect contribution of others' co-operation, efforts and well-wishes must not be disregarded.

To describe this context let us take an example of prosperous person employed in an institution. His prosperity is related to the above factors like the institution where one is employed, co-ordination, co-operation and acceptance of oneself by other peers, skilled staff, successful establishment, economic boom and demand present at this stage for the line of business, good customers etc. leading to successful and profitable scenario, which

in turns would decide the so called nature of prosperity one would be staying in. So it won't be fare for oneself to be ungrateful to all these parameters who have contributed towards one's economic prosperity and wellbeing. Even though the credit of success or attainment is customarily awarded to the doer, the success stands on these various supports.

Hence, gratitude has to be towards all these factors too. *Naam* is an occasion of expressing gratitude towards the Divine, as discussed earlier, which can be considered to represent the gratitude towards all these debts too.

Therefore, as a gratitude for others' support for material fulfillment, one should practice *naam*.

26.6 *Naam* is necessary to retain the present prosperity and wellbeing

One should remember yet another thing that the present state of material fulfillment is a result of the noble past deeds and of the constructive setup of one's mind. Even if one deserves such a fulfilled life at present, this state cannot last long, if one does not continue to do constructive deeds for the fulfilled tomorrow.

Naam provides the inspiration and strength for doing such positive deeds. *Naam* also helps to keep awake the discrimination between the does and the don'ts so that the present material prosperity does not take one to the hell of addictions and unawareness.

Hence, *naam* is necessary to retain and maintain the present prosperity and fulfillment.

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27. What is meant by 'practicing *naam on* breath'? What are its added benefits ?

Breathing is a natural and obvious process that continues at every moment of life. Each breath consists of three parts - inhalation, holding the breath and exhalation.Although, holding the breath is not done in routine breathing.

Naam jap can be associated with these parts of every breath - particularly with inhalation and exhalation. Depending upon the length of phrases of *naam mantra*, the *naam* can be made to properly synchronized by own experiment. In the initial state, this may appear to be artificial or inconvenient, but on practice, the *naam* can become one with the breath.

This way of practicing *naam* seems to be simple in theory, but it is rather difficult to implement. One can feel comfortable if he becomes cautious about his breathing, but taking *naam* alongwith the breath can be a strenuous task during the intial stages. Probability of getting this process implemented has equal chances for success or failure, but for people who don't get adapted may get some side effects like headache. Even common issues which pose challange, is chanting *naam* with the divided phrases during inhalation and exhalation and with equal consistency throughout. Factor related to human breathing is pulse rate which may vary between 60-80 beats/min at speed of breath may also affect. In nutshell, if a person is able to deal with the above lilsted factors he may continue this activity, else it is suggested to make a judicious decision by oneself to participate in this type of *naam sadhana* or continue with routine old way.

Those who already practice *yog* and *pranayam* with proper

training can very well take advantage of the *yogic* breathing discipline for the *naam*, if they so desire, but that should also be under proper supervision.

By the way, it may be mentioned that associating *naam* with breathing has actually been referred to by some saints, scriptures - to highlight that quantity of *naam* should have some reference, as a gratitude, to the breaths that are offered by God and on which our entire living depends. This naturally does not mean associating *naam* with breath verbatim. If we read, in between the lines and take the spirit behind the reference, we need not artificially or mechanically relate the things to get a 'benefit' like any wordly 'benefit'. Instead, we shall be able to derive more benefit, if we take *naam* with ease, keeping the gratitude for the breath alive in mind.

But, by the Divine Grace, we are already rewarded by natural, obvious and effortless system of breathing. It is suggested that instead of taking or associating *naam* with the speed and rate of breathing forcefully, it is advisable that instead we should allow ourselves to practice *naam* with the same ease and natural, effortless system. Then such *naam* can be treated as a direct breath to breath humble return of the Divine favor.

* * *

28. Can one pass in exams by practice of *naam*?

Writing correct answers of the questions in the question paper is necessary to pass in examinations. The memory and the other cognitive abilities have to serve well at the time of writing the answers. The prior study, concentration, practice of writing, postural comfort, proper guidance are the factors contributing to success in exams. Many of these factors can be strengthened, directly or indirectly, by *naam*.

The primary advantage of *naam* is, it helps increase the concentration of the students, which is one of the important faculties of mind required in their situation. Also as a result they understand the gravity of the situation in better sense and are able to distinguish and concentrate on their targets and avoid wastage of time in less productive type of activities chit-chatting, entertainment, indulging in sports activities, numerous serials broadcasted on television channels, addiction to the internet etc. All these unproductive activities often distract students and it requires courage and determination to keep them at bay. *Naam* helps in achieving this for any student who practices *naam*.

To supplement this, an honest and sincere prayer to the *naam* deity can yeild the required sterngth. If regular practice of *naam* is done in a particular posture, that physical stability can be useful while studying too; one can sit at a place for long time without discomfort.

The calmness and subtleness of deeper mind, as obtained from *naam*,provide extraordinary grasping and comprehension that is

key to studying. *Naam* strengthens the faith on one's propitiation Deity and convinces one about its ultimate doership. This generates confidence that the Deity will back in tough situation which may come. The occasions of such situations - anxiety, going blank, fear of failure - are thus avoided.

In so many aspects, therefore, *naam* helps to study better and convert it into success at the time of examination. But, of course, it should be noted that *naam* does not work as an alternative for study; it can help as an effective and constructive supplement in achieving good grades.

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29. Can *naam* reduce domestic conflicts and unrest ?

The cause of conflict within the family members is seen due to some of the common reasons like - immature behavior, lack of dialogue and transparency, adamant and egoistic attitude, greedy tendency, lack of consideration and respect for others. This creates unrest minds and is equally applicable to all strata of the society be they rich or poor, educated or illiterate. The after-effects of such conflicts are reflected as incidences in daily newspaper all over the world.

29.1 *Naam* inculcates concern for others

Naam teaches proper valuation of ego and its dissolution into the surrender to Divinity. Hence, practitioner of *naam* can think

beyond oneself - beyond one's ego - about others. Understanding the other person's opinions and views, his demands and limitations lead to the solutions of domestic conflicts by eliminating the cause itself. This concern for others can be inculcated by practice of *naam*.

29.2 *Naam* dissolves ego into surrender

A *sadhak* also has his own opinions, but he is aware that it is the will of the Divine that is final. So opinions of *sadhak* do not take the form of adamant convictions. As the Divine is the real doer, a *sadhak* cannot have ego for success of a deed or guilt on failure. Ego is generally the root of all conflicts.The *sadhak* is always ready to distribute the credit as well as the possessions among all family members, as he is always aware of the direct or indirect share of the family members in every earning and possession.

29.3 *Naam* avoids improper usage of words

Wrong and unaware utterance of words is one common cause of aggravation of conflict situation. For a *sadhak*, the verbal energy is primarily reserved for *naam* and it is used with absolute care for worldly purpose. So in order to maintain its purity, the *sadhak* avoids such misuse of words. This helps in resolving the conflicts.

29.4 *Naam* reduces possessiveness

The forth common cause of conflict is possessiveness. *Naam* teaches withdrawal from the chaos of possessions through surrender of everything to the Divinity as 'it is all Yours!' This awareness weakens the desire for possessions.'The almighty gives whatever is mine and deprives me of or takes away whatever is not mine' is the tendency developed in *naam-sadhak* which helps him to prevent conflicts arising out of possessiveness and greed.

29.5 *Naam* teaches tolerance to see others' conflicts

Probability of starting a conflict by a devoted and sincere *naam* practicing *sadhak* would be said as a rare occurance or occasional in nature. But when a conflict occurs, it would be between two people and it's quite possible that the other person might not be in *naam-sadhana* or haven't yet been transformed. In such instances, the conflicts won't reduce and may continue, but this poses a real test of the *naam-sadhaka* to maintain the peace of mind and observe the situation in isolation and remain shielded with its impact. The grace of god helps him to achieve and maintain his efforts.

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30. What is relation and difference between *naam* and *moun*?

Naam and *moun* are two independent separate spiritual paths, having their own utility for *sadhana*.

However, there are confusions in their understanding. As defined by *Shri Maharaj*, in essence, *naam* is an indication of Divinity. On the face of its definition, *moun* implies absolute non-utterance of words. But the scope of *moun* is much wider - ranging from absence of verbal pronunciation to absence of the subtlest desire or urge for expression.

The confusion arises when one feels *moun jap* to be equal to *moun*. And some *sadhakas* count *moun jap* as equal to observing

moun for that time. Actually, *moun jap* can be considered as *moun* only at verbal level. But at a deeper level, the *moun jap* should not be counted as *moun* in *moun sadhana*.

Moun jap implies verbal silence with mental presence of *naam* is the form of remembrance.

In *moun sadhana*, mental remembrance is also prohibited. Accordingly, *moun* as a *sadhana* should be done separately. It should be noted that, though in *moun*, prohibiting all actions including verbal speech to mental actions-reactions are implied, it appears to be tentamount to inert inaction. In fact, absence of ego-centered ripples in *moun* is not an inert inaction but an action in totality.

* * *

31. Why temperamental improvement is not seen in *naam-sadhakas* ?

It appears to be like asking why there is no cure in spite of medicine. Just as fever goes on inspite of taking a tablet, one thinks, why the temperamental drawbacks do not vanish with practice of *naam*. This expectation is particularly about 'others' temperament', rather than one's own! Comments like 'so and so is practicing *naam* for so many years, but there appears to be no change !!... all waste !' are common.

In most cases, such questioners themselves are not practicing

naam, and have not undergone any temperamental improvement. But then, they feel themselves free to shrug shoulders saying 'we atleast don't practice that *naam* and all anyway!' The answer to the above question is to be sought on this background.

Temperament or mental setup is not as clear and simply defined as a disease. Temperament is indicated by reactions generated by mind. One's present temperamental setup is a result of one's innumerable subtle mental activity, and that too, since one's past births. It has a dynamic dimension too - every day or every moment mental inputs are further added. Hence, a visible temperamental change, normally recognized by a person's behavior, is a very slow and complex process that requires very long, consistent and rigorous efforts with proper path and guidance. Just mechanical count of *naam jap* is effectively close to nil.

Temperament may be the hardest thing to change. It is also a great adventure calling lifelong strong determination, self-enquiry, tireless experimentation along with Grace of the Divine or *Guru*. Though an unconditioned and relatively simple path, *naam* is required to be practiced for the maximum possible time of day, in its true spirit, with crying urge and tearful prayer, with the help of authorities and close ones.

The *naam* is required to be supplemented by one's own systematic efforts of attacking the identified drawbacks of temperament. The ill-trends of temperament are to be identified accurately, the operation for their removal is to be planned with determination, followed by hard implementation, review over a long span of time - has to be the most prioritized mission of life. After such a rigorous effort, by the Divine Grace, will some anger or some greed or some jealousy or some irresponsible words subside. If

so small is the success rate for eager *sadhak*; what should an ordinary complainer expect?

Many times, non-practitioners of *naam* are expecting passive fruits for themselves from the *sadhana* of a *naam sadhak*. They want the temperament of a *naam sadhak* to change so that those changes can be of their convenience and benefit ! Their expectations can of course be selfish and their yardsticks of temperamental improvement can be erroneous. So obviously, they can think that there are no temperamental changes in the *sadhak*. For example, a husband is fond of hotel food and movies whereas the wife dislikes, and that is the cause of disputes between them. Now, if she starts practicing *naam* and after some time, coincidently, if she becomes ready to go for movies, he may attribute this 'positive' change to *naam* ! And if the wife continues her resistance to movies, he may call this to be a failure of *naam* !

In the first place, it is difficult to make a temperamental change. One has to choose one or two noble virtues like humility, affection, forgiveness and work on them, examine without being impatient to conclude.

Many times, our own misconceptions can be the hurdles in the temperamental improvement. As *Shri Maharaj* says, one such common misconception is 'worrying is obvious and natural with man.' Unless one keeps aside this conception, one cannot even begin the journey against worry. Yet another mis-conviction is 'temperament cannot be changed'. This conviction plucks off the very root of temperamental improvement.

So one should be confident and firm in mind that, with whatever painstaking tireless efforts, temperamental changes can be brought

in; the spiritual elevation and the ecstatic silence of the divine can be experienced.

The ultimate means in spirituality is purity and nobleness of one's temperament. It should also be imbibed in mind as a fact and not mere consolation, that sincere and proper *sadhana* shall be rewarded by the Divine Grace for sure.

Another awakening and guiding indication from *Shri Maharaj* is 'people take medicine but don't allow it to go into the stomach!' This clearly implies the necessity of meaningfulness and sincerity in the process of *naam jap*. So the *sadhak*, and not the *naam*, should be blamed if the temperament does not improve.

An humble request here is to go through the book '*Vruttyantar Prakash*' (in Marathi) published at *Santchhaya* in order to get a detailed account of the issue of temperamental improvement. Concrete formulae have also been suggested for practical implementation for spiritual elevation, and material benefits as a byproduct. An overview of the book is presented in Appendix in the present book.

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32. The *naam* practice goes well - tuned sometimes or goes poor at other times. Is it true? If yes, why?

Let us examine first the meaning of '*naam* going well-tuned'. Sometimes, during the *naam jap*, there are very little disturbances of thought, concentration is good, feeling of continuing *jap* timelessly arises, urge prevails, memories - if arise - are of *Guru* or Gracious occasions, there is mental *darshan* of the Deity or rare sensation of holy fragrance, overall state of joy is experienced during and after the *jap*. All or any of these can be considered as sign of a well-tuned *naam jap*. These experiences are facts, not illusions.

On the other side, such experiences are generally rare or less frequent. Some external parameters like pleasantness of morning or evening, lightness of stomach, fragrance of sticks or *dhoop*, absence of engrossing events, flow of a pleasant cool breeze can also contribute to the attunement. Many times these factors are beyond our control. A fragrance stick may be lighted but the flow of breeze has to come on its own !

All of these parameters are the small Gracious gifts of the Divine to support the *jap*. It is indeed the presence of the Divinity that brings attunement to the *naam*; without which any of the external parameters cannot work.

Experience of such attunement is an instantaneous Divine reward for the *sadhana* and one should be grateful for it. Repetition of such experience will of course be desired by the *sadhak*, but it should be left to the Divine and the *sadhak* should treat this as a

test of exercise of patience without showing any form of anxiety.

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33. Can *naam mantra* be chanted for benefit of others?

Let us consider a situation when someone related to us or near or dear ones are undergoing some tough-times or have been cronically ill or have got entangled in some worldly matters or some similar situations. Due to our affinity and long standing relations we would wish, they recover over the situation or would wholeheartedly intend to offer help. But in all such situations, inspite of all noble intentions we are not able to extend any help or likewise. In such a situation if we offer help for betterment of their situation by chanting *naam*, would it be helpful, is the context and intention behind this question here.

Basically, *naam* is a noble path for the elevation of the practitioner himself and not for anyone else. But in exceptional situations as above, *naam* can help to some extent just like prayer. This is a sort of material or non- spiritual use of *naam*; but as it is not for oneself, due to unselfishness, such a non-spiritual use is somewhat excusable. It is suggested to offer such help by praying to the *naam* deity and for fixed time frame only and refrain from stressing god for such desirous needs of one. Also it cannot be a substitute for human effort, just as a student must perform his studying or the sick person must take medicines and treatment.

The *naam* can help like a sincere well-wishing to overcome inherent incompleteness of the human effort. It will, in fact, help to strengthen the efforts and endurance rather than producing the actual results.

While taking help of *naam* in this context, it should be remembered that sufferings are a part of one's inevitable result of his own actions which cannot be bye-passed; in fact they are to be faced bravely. Hence, a close *sadhak* can extend support of well-wishing through a predefined quantity of *naam*.

The *sadhak* should only support and should not stretch it and insist for the result, once the support is extended. The result should be left to the fruits of deeds and the Divine will. It should also be noted that the *sadhak* should have strong faith and determination about his *upasana* while extending such help. In that condition such help offered could prove to be effective and useful.

He should note that his *sadhana* is a small flame lit by himself for one's own elevation with effort and determination. All of his deeds are to be lead in that light of *naam*. If someone accompanies in the journey, a bit of light can be shared for a while; but that is not its purpose nor is it enough for him; that should be treated as share of help.

So as described above, help can be extended to near and dear ones by way of offering *naam* within the prescribed conditions above.

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34. Can *naam* be useful for destructive deeds?

No ! *Naam* is the remembrance of the extremely noble - the Divinity. Therefore, its orientation is towards invoking the Divinity and the noble virtues within. Hence, *naam* is totally unlike any other *mantras* or techniques that may be in use to support evil.

The indicated Divine in the *naam* - the Almighty - is certainly beyond the *sattva - raja - tama* and it is also responsible for the cycle of creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe. In this sense, the Divine also has a function of destruction. But one must note that such divine destruction is the privilege of the Divine only and not of the *sadhak* !

The Almighty Divine may do it through the propitiation Deity; but that is beyond the purview of the *sadhak*; he should never think of such evil desires to be fulfilled through *naam*.

Even the noble virtues of life sometimes require protection just as a protective fence for a tiny plant. *Naam* certainly has that strength to protect the noble from the evil. The Deity worshiped through *naam* takes care of this protective aspect.

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35. How is *naam* related to miraculous feats?

The extraordinary ability of bringing out miraculous feats is called *siddhi*. Normally, in order that any particular event should occur, one has to take proper effort. As a consequence of that effort, the event takes place. But a prediction of such a happening prior to any efforts or even occurrence of the event without appropriate effort is an example of *siddhi*. The functioning of *siddhis,* while producing incredible happenings, is somewhat similar to the effort-result relationship - only difference is that, in *siddhi*, there is no apparent effort for the result.

While, in fact, an effort is certainly involved but it cannot be co-related to the characteristics of the result; it is beyond normal cause-effect chain. *Siddhi* is certainly an extraordinary and rare ability. However, as it can be used constructively as well as destructively - so it can be dangerous. The sages have always discarded the use of such *siddhis*.

As the functioning of *siddhis* is similar to logical effort-result relationship, its existence and reality stands accepted without doubt. Of course, a separate *upasana* as well as Grace will be required to attain *siddhi* as well as to retain it. A *siddhi* called *vacha-siddhi* means that the words uttered will come true in spite of any impossibilities of situations or it also means to predict correctly what will happen in near or farther future. This *siddhi* would require rigorous control and *upasana* to give a divine quality to one's spoken words-the *vacha- tap*.Though there is a certain cause-effect aspect in the *siddhis,* the relation between cause and effect is difficult to establish with ordinary

understanding. Therefore, the *siddhis* appear to be mysterious and can even be regarded as illusionary or superstitious.

Siddhis can cause four hurdles in the *sadhana*, First, the *sadhak* who has attained a particular *siddhi* must exercise it only for a constructive cause, which is rather difficult due to worldly temptations. Misuse of a *siddhi* will result in loss of the *siddhi*; but that can further lead to derailment from the *sadhana*.

Second, people will offer great honor and prestige to such a *sadhak* leading to gratification of ego and the *sadhak* may get indulged into it and may use it for material gains. This is against spirituality and hence absolutely dangerous for *sadhana.*

Third, the gratification of ego will develop sense of authority and superiority which is the biggest enemy of *sadhana*.

Fourth, a matured person should rely only on the sincere efforts and the consequent results without getting indulged in unnatural shortcuts. When such ways of sincere efforts are available to a person, why one should expect unnatural ways ? One's attraction for knowing in advance a future happening, many times lies in the potential fear and uncertainty of future,which should be negated by *sadhak*.

Naam sadhana aims at the ultimate goal of self-elevation.But on the way of this noble journey,*siddhi* is an obvious attractive station.

One has to take care and exercise absolute awareness of not getting involved in them. If at all one senses the occurrence of *siddhi* along the path, one should accelerate and intensify the *sadhana* to cross that slippery trap on the path. Indeed, one should pray for not getting trapped in the *siddhis*. * * *

36. What is the difference between *sakaam* and *nishkaam naam* ? Why one tends to practice it and with what approach it should be done ?

36.1. *Sakaam* and *nishkaam naam*

Desirous or *Sakaam naam* means *naam* practiced for fulfillment of some particular worldly desire. Desire-free or *Nishkam naam*, on the other side, is *naam* for *naam*'s sake, i.e.*naam* practiced without keeping any worldly desire in mind.

36.2 Seeking help of *naam* for worldly needs is a *sattvik* attempt

Life of ordinary people is a continuous chain of efforts to fulfill the unendingly emerging desires. He strolls throughout his life to fulfill these desires by all ways and means available with him. In achieving these, he works within the boundaries of his own intelligence, physical and mental strength, his own lilmitations etc. and many other factors contributing in his life.

As a result he gains limited success in fulfilling their desires. In such situations, one seeks help from relatives, friends, agencies, and so on. Similarly, convinced about the strength of *naam*, one thinks of taking help of *naam* also. This is the beginning of desirous *naam*; just like calling for help when situation is beyond control.

This sort of expectation is certainly not objectionable and can be called as *sattvik* help for worldly attainment.

36.3 Desirous vs desire-free *naam*

Though a *sattvik* help, desirous *naam* needs to be distinguished from desire-free, that is *nishkaam naam* :

36.3.1 Desirous *naam* can bring passivity and inaction

Though *sattvik*,help for worldly desire, desirous *naam* is certainly inferior to the desire-free *naam*. One reason for this inferiority is that such a help can become a habit and an invalid shortcut, alternative to appropriate legitimate effort. One is likely to become lazy and passive about the virtue of human effort. This can also develop undesired attitude of relying on fate without doing any effort.

36.3.2 Unreasonable expectation of fruits

Everyone is actually aware of limitations of human effort and inadequacy of intellectual, financial, physical capabilities. The results of the efforts are, therefore, certainly going to have limitations. But one expects desparately superior fruits in spite of inferior effort. Such unreasonable and desperate expectations must be avoided as they are inappropriate. To rely on *naam* in favor of such desperate impatience is also improper.

36.3.3 Desirous *naam* can multiply desires

If the power or assistance of *naam* starts replacing human efforts to achieve any tasks for fulfilling the desires, this poses as a greatest danger as for a worldly persons desires are infinite and neverending. We observe that desires start right from birth till the end of one's life in some form or other and it's a vicious never-ending chain. *Naam* intends to make the *sadhak* desire-free and make him one with god,but if *sakamnaam* would help satisfy the desires, then that in turn, would become a medium for getting all desires satisfied. As there is no stop or pause seen for the desires

that arise out in the mind, the ones which get fulfilled give rise to new ones. The resulting new desires tempt the *sadhak* to use *sakamnaam* for its fulfillment, resulting in a dangerous addictive shortcut, which is not in favour of *sadhak* in long runs.

If the strength of *naam* replaces human effort, the greatest danger is that of emergence of new stronger desires. As it is, the desires are multiplying unendingly. In its true spirit, *naam* is meant to weaken and reduce the desires, and hence desirous *naam* is contrary to that. So such a desirous use of *naam* is directly harmful to *sadhana*.

36.4 View about desirous *naam*

It is indicated that one should not make use of *sakamnaam* at all. One has to take into account what are its limitaions and effects that would surface in the case of desirous *naam*. These points have been discussed briefly in this section. One can think of the following points regarding desirous *naam* :

36.4.1 Desirous *naam* is better than no *naam*

If not for self-elevation, at least for worldly desires, one may practice *naam* rather than avoiding it totally.

36.4.2 Desirous *naam* should be only supplementary to effort

While practicing desirous *naam*, one should be aware of its drawbacks and threats. Without effort, even desirous *naam* cannot work. Hence, desirous *naam* should be treated as complimentary and supplementary to the effort, to compensate the human limitations and imperfections.

36.4.3 Prayer eliminates the drawback of desire in desirous *naam*

The drawback of desire in the desirous *naam* can be eliminated by praying the Divine that 'I may be granted success only if I deserve, otherwise grant me strength to accept the result as the will of the Divine and strength to treat the result as for my eventual benefit.'

36.4.4 Way to desire-free *naam*

The same prayer can take the *sadhak* gradually to desire-free *naam*. The *sadhak* will exercise full effort for worldly desires and leave the fruit to the Divine; and continue desire-free *naam*.

One should strive to achieve a target for his current journey from desirous to desire-free *naam*. Over a period of time, it would be possible to make the best effort for achieving certain desires and not to link them to *naam* and accept its outcome as will and wish of god. This state of mind would further lead to practicing *naam* for sake of *naam*, with no tie-ups for any materialistic desire. This is how *nishkaam-naam* can make a way in one's life.

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37. Can the *naam* practiced become unfruitful or lost for any reasons? If so which are these ? What are the remedies for stopping this drain ?

37.1 Attitudinal and behavioral drawbacks are like leakage holes

The *naam* practiced how much little in quantity, it would be useful and won't get wasted. But it can get reduced or get contaminated due to certain situations as discussed futher. As in the reference to the question cited above, we have seen the reduction can be there if it is used towards fulfilling some desires, but there are more important aspects where the consumption is higher and needs to be understood.

Practicing *naam* on one hand and indulging in negative activities like feeling jealous about someone, having dislike, having negative thoughts towards one's success, acting against the principles of *naamsadhana* e.g. indulging in bad deeds, conducting activities which add worries to the mind, creating unnecessary estates-property transactions, keeping unnecessary public contacts etc. These activities lower the balance of *naam* and is like filling the pot with *naam* which has leakage holes resulting in no personal benefit to the *naamsadhak* as he lacks to store any *naam* for his benefit. In that sense *naam* gets wasted or lost.

37.2 Neutral introspection is the primary remedy

Constant sincere self-inspection or introspection is one of the primary remedies for retention of *naam*. However, many times introspection is not converted into corrective action. This is like getting a pathological report but keeping the diseases untreated. Hence, such introspection should be followed by corrective action, which is like taking actual treatment.

37.3 Corrective action must follow

Other supportive actions like containing one's desires, limiting one's diet, keeping away from feelings like hate, hypocracy etc. are also necessary as per one's requirements. The essential counterpart to introspection is executing such corrective action

with endurance. That is the real medicine to protect one from consumption of *naam* practiced.

37.4 Final remedy

If we fail in our capacity to perform the above ways, then it is suggested to offer sincere prayer with all faith and devotion for preservation of *naam*. This is the final remedy.

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38. Should one propogate or advocate *naamsadhana* ? If yes then by what means ?

Convinced about importance of *naam* by oneself, by genuine feeling to advocate this to others who are near and dear or within one's social circles. This appears unselfish, noble and the intention behind it is sincere. But for the well-being of the *sadhak* himself and of others, the following watch-points should be considered :

38.1 *Naam* is omnipotent; no need to preach

Naam stands proved by itself. So there is no need that it be preached or advertised. Getting convinced about its worth is itself an enough Divine reward and one should simply continue to practice it deeper and deeper for oneself without bothering for its preaching. When there is an upsurge of feeling for preaching, one may have an intense *moun jap* session instead !

38.2 Advocacy with poor practice is disgraceful for *sadhak*

One should understand the fact that, to advocate *naam*, the *sadhak* himself should have experience or background and should have ahieved proficiency over this topic. Preaching *naam* without rigorous consistent *upasana* has two major drawbacks- When the other person sees that the preacher himself is a poor practitioner of *naam* or has a poor experience of it, the preaching becomes weak and gets questioned. To answer, the preacher is required to take false stand or face himself an awkward situation. This eventually defeats the nobleness of *naam*.

38.3 Without practice, preaching becomes gross, aggressive and irresponsible.

The second drawback in advocating *naam* is that, if one has not practiced *naam* sufficiently, he is not able to understand the difficulties and hurdles in getting it, thereby preaching becoming ineffective. To avoid this danger, if one practices *naam* rigorously, consistently and gets to the roots of it - he himself realises the appropriacy of preaching it or otherwise at that stage. That avoids unnecessary eagerness, aggressiveness and impatience in telling or guiding others. Now, the sincere urge for well being of the others through practice of *naam* only remains and is of course commendable.

38.4 The personality of a true *sadhak* will itself preach *naam* best

The more and deeper is the practice of *naam*, the more is the realization that *naam* is self-proved and does not need any formal preaching. The vital rejuvenating changes the *naam*, brings in the life of *sadhak* speak better and deeper than hollow eloquence.

Peace and contentment in even the worldly life of a true *sadhak* itself set an example to others, inspiring them for *naam*. The self-experience is in itself the self-reward for the *sadhak* and therefore, he has no more urge and need to preach it to others. One should wait for such a stage to occur before preaching *naam* to anyone. *Naam* being the representative of Divinity, one get 'chosen' by the *naam* itself for it's propogation or advocacy ; if necessary, for preaching with clear and convincing indications.

38.5 *Sadgurus* and saints are the only authorizesed preachers

Preaching should be distinguished from satisfying someone's curiosity. The vast scope and complexity of the present world and population makes us feel that the powerful path of *naam* needs to be preached. However, one should remember that the *naam* will reach by itself , through the Divine System, to the persons who need it most. So a *sadhak* can very well discuss or answer occasional curiosities of others but should not get engaged in formal preaching.

The path of *naam* may appear to be simple to practice; but due to its unconditioned-ness and subtlety, it is very difficult and dangerous to teach or preach. One should not endeavor that task, even after rigorous practice, unless commanded by the *Guru*. The *sadgurus* and saints are the only authorities appointed for this purpose. So *sadhak* must keep away from this 'noble looking distraction'.

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39. Can a *naam mantra* shorter in length help to achieve quantitative target of jap faster ?

This is an honest question, which would have arisen out of a mind deeply engrossed in worldly setup. As we observe in day to day lives, one is attuned to take shortcuts or work around to achieve a specific goal towards which one is working. By similar analogy one thinks that if *sadhak* chants *jap* for three and a half crore times or thirteen crore times he is bound to be graced with *darshan* of lord *Ram* or get liberated from the cycle of birth and deaths. To achieve this large target if a *sadhak* choses a *naam jap* of 13 letter *mantra* in *devnagari* script like '*Shreeram Jayram Jay Jay Ram*' would take more time. Instead as per attunement of the mind to shortcuts as discussed above if he choses a short syllable like *Aum* he may complete the target much earlier.

Though in terms of the ways of mind this is arithmatically convincing, it is a false assumption on the grounds of spirituality. To make it clear, it may be noted that thirteen crore *jap* of a thirteen-letter *mantra* is equivalent to one hundred sixty nine crore *jap* of a single-letter mantra! The point which is to be emphasize that when taking two variable - count of *jap* and length of the *naam mantra*, the distance to be cover would be the same or constant.

For example, to travel a distance of one thousand kms. it would take 250 hrs. while travelling by foot with pace of 4 km/hr, while a car travelling at 100 km/hr would cover the same distance in 10 hrs and if one uses an aeroplane travelling at 500km/hr would

easily make it in 2 hrs. Though theoretically this calculation is correct and if we want to use the same logic in chanting large sum of *naam*, we should make ourselves more aware of the usage of the vehicle rather than the distance.

If we practice our *naam* with all great difficulty, mechanically or with less faith it is like walking a distance on feet, but if the *naam* practitioner does have full confidence in the *guru*,has faith and urgency - it's like travelling in the aeroplane resulting in covering the distance to realisation pretty quickly. So the rules of covering material distance and distance to the state of realisation differ. In that sense the length of the *naam-mantra* is not the matter at all.

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40. How can *naam* help in the situations of sorrow ?

Naam helps in sorrowful situations, as well as in the situations of happiness. In the situations of happiness, one is usually unaware due to sense of self-gratification, self-confidence and success, thereby not feeling necessity of *naam*. In such situations of happiness, *naam* helps us to make aware of the real doer - the God, reminds us the several persons behind our success, keeping gratitude towards them, guards us against the increasing ego in our mind and keep our mind in neutral or unexcited position. It also assists in understanding the side of sorrow attached to happiness and getting back to our routine, without lingering much in this phase of happiness. *Naam* helps us in the situation of sorrow in a number of ways :

40.1 Stabilizing action for mind

Naam has a stabilizing action. Joy and sorrow are like swings of pendulum - joy on the right and sorrow to the left. *Naam* stands neutral between the two, thereby reducing intensity of suffering.

40.2 Share of sorrow as God's wish

Naam, being remembrance of Divine, invokes the understanding that sorrow is also given by the God as a part of fate,being the fruit of our own actions; whatever may be the apparent worldly cause. This gives acceptance and courage to face the sorrow. There remains no desire to run away from sorrow !

40.3 Broadness of view

Naam provides a Divine dimension to the thoughts and feelings which helps one to view the sorrow from a height. This creates an attitude of neutral observation - *sakshibhaav* - about the sorrow. Another benefit is that the intensity of individual sorrow gets reduced when one has attained a broadness of view by looking at the crisis and calamities in the world and consequent sufferings of people around. One understands that one's own sorrow is a very very tiny sorrow on the backdrop of the sorrows in the world and that reduces the intensity of sorrow.

40.4 Temporary nature of sorrow

The remembrance of God through *naam* also provides the sense that 'God is there to take care'. It also gives an awareness that the Divinity, *Guru* and *naam* are eternal whereas sorrow is temporary; the sorrow in the past perished with time and today's sorrow won't also last long.

Many times, today's joys are the counterparts of yesterday's

sorrows. To emphasize this transitory nature of sorrow, one has to hold firm the finger of the eternal and travel bravely. *Naam* provides this firm support, thereby reducing undue importance and indulgence in sorrow. This understanding considerably lowers the valuation of sorrow.

40.5 Eternal joy supersedes temporary sorrow

Being an indication of the Divine, effect of *naam* has the quality of Eternal Bliss. A true *sadhak* receives a constant refreshment and enrichment from this perennial spring within. Hence, just as a drop of water slips off an *Asoka* leaf, the sorrow cannot stay on the background of the eternal joy. Indeed *naam* is potent enough to take one to the realization of Eternal Bliss.

It is in these so many ways that the *naam* can help to tackle sorrow.

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41. Should a person practice multiple *naam mantras* ?

Yes, one may. For various reasons and situations where one needs to follow the responsibilities arising out of family traditions or religious bindings leading to chanting of the family god - *kuladaivat* or traditions which have been passed through generations of chanting *naam* of some other deity and many other situations. So these situations can force one to follow multiple *naam mantras*. In order to avoid difference of opinion within the family or obey an elderly person, one may take up reciting multiple *naam mantras*, if it helps him to keep the situation

harmonious. But in any case, one should bear in mind that the variety is only in the name, and the Divinity is unique and the same.

The golden mean is to practice the other *mantras* as minimum rituals and to concentrate on the *upasana* with the usual *naam mantra*.

If compulsions are not so strong, it is obviously better to practice only one *naam mantra* to represent all the deities with faith and respect for all. Digging ten feet at single point would certainly yield some water than digging a foot at ten points.

In any case, one should never have a guilt that certain deities will get 'angry' if their *naam* is not practiced, for that is never the fact.

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42. How can mere chanting of *Ram Ram* solve the complex problems persisting in the modern world ?

The ongoing problems in the world are complex and serious in nature, would they be solved by merely chanting *Ram Ram* - is a common question raised by so called modern people. Let us examine it.

42.1 Problems of world are rooted in problems of human beings.

In the first place, it should be well understood that we human beings are the real culprits for making the world's situtation complex and serious, going against the simple and easy laws of mother nature. Due to human greed, egoism, selfishness - problems in the world have increased manifold times.

Complexity and intensity of problems of modern world are attributed to those of the human beings and not to the nature or the circumstances. Every severe problem of today's world can be proved to be rooted in human evil and imperfection.

42.2 All non-spiritual solutions available for world problems are incomplete

The history reveals that no single complete solution was ever found by any science, technology, philosophy, ism or political system for any of the world's problems. Some temporary solutions that appeared absolute at a point of time, were required to be overruled sooner or later for being incorrect. Temporary remedies cannot be called solutions. In such situations, is it not unreasonable to expect a permanent solution from the *naam* only ?

42.3 Treating human psyche is the only solution

Once it is accepted that all worldly problems are rooted in human psyche, it also follows that the external system changes will not suffice; the solution must be at the level of human psyche. Hence, instead, spirituality and *naam* which treat the psyche itself inwardly are the best solutions.

42.4 Even a drop of nobleness is powerful

The constructive attitudinal setup is a product of spiritual elevation attained by *naam*. Remembrance of Divine will lead to inculcation

of virtues like love, honesty, sincerity and contentedness. Hence, *naam* is supposed to be practiced in its true spirit, meaningfully and with feeling. Every small drop of the sea contains in it every property of the sea. So also, nobleness of Divinity will be as it is in every drop of *naam*. As a result, the family life will get purified, then the social life and finally the world.

42.5 *Naam* is the only solution to world's problems

Society and world are made up of human beings. Hence, the inner systems of the human minds are required to be repaired. *Naam* can certainly do that, though slow. The speed may appear very less but it is due to accumulation of the damages kept unattended and untreated since past births. Hence, more the practice of *naam* in the world, the lesser will be the world's problems. So we can trust that, this would be the only solution; none else.

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43. What is meant by leaving it to *naam* ?

'Leaving it to *naam*' implies leaving the core responsibility of one's actions to the strength of *naam*.

Leaving the responsibility of doership and subsequent outcome of any task on to *naam*, is a path available for any true *sadhak*, who can exhibit true faith and devotion towards *naam sadhana*. Consider any human being who can be physically strong, healthy, wealthy, famous, powerful, educated etc. and with many more

capabilities and capacities, but should be bound to have some sort of deficiency or limitation in some of his faculties or capacities or talent. This is the rule of nature or god induced universally. It is just the matter of time that it surfaces out early for the fortunate ones while it is realised at later stage in the life of the less fortunate.

The term 'less fortunate' is used because if a person realizes his limitations and deficiencies at his early stage of life about his doership, he would start thinking or introspect early about the root causes and would in turn, start his search for god or means like *naam upasana* or similar paths. If this realization happens at the later stage in life, he would have less time remaining for his perusal for finding the path which can lead him to god and later practicing it. So it is beneficial to know the limitations on one's capacity and capability early in life than later.

In such situation, after executing any of our task and responsibilities, one should offer prayers to one's *naam* or deity for making the related actions correct and favourable. The outcome or result of the task should be left to *naam* that is the god, which could be in favour or not, in current situation. Accepting the result 'as it is', without being happy or sad and as a command of god - is meant by relying completely on *naam* as the sole support. That is leaving it to *naam*.

For the *naam sadhak*, the *naam* is itself the Deity. One has to exercise fully the human effort and then leave the issue to the *naam* with utmost faith that the result, whatever, will be of one's ultimate good. This frees the *sadhak* from the trouble and worries caused by worldly problems. As a lateral effect, the other members of family also become free from anxiety. This is how the attitude of leaving it to *naam* works to be beneficial, noble and harmless.

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44. It is claimed that *naam* can be applied and useful in all situations, how can *naam* help in extreme situations like wars ?

Naam can help everywhere as it is a process going within the individual and purify the inner world. Even in the situations of dispute or war, it is the mind that operates at the root. It keeps the mind stable if one goes on war or one is made to take up a war as the mind is inseparable aspect of our presence, so is the *naam*.It can, therefore, help in many ways even in war :

44.1 Mental equilibrium

A warrior requires a stable mental equilibrium. Even gun cannot be operated without a stable hand. *Naam* provides stability of mind to plan and implement strategies in war. To do this it is utmost essential to have mind in stable mode. This can be powered by the effect of *naam*. As characteristics of *naam* are to provide stability to its practitioner. *Naam* itself is omnipotent and omnipresent and can stabilize the worrier himself at the place of war itself, to carry a successful war there.

44.2 No fear of death or losses due to worries

The discrimination between eternal and temporary is clear to a regular practitioner of *naam*. He is also clear about the transient nature of world, fame and body. He is convinced about the Divinity within and its eternality. Hence, the fear of death of body is lost and the warrior can fight at his best with absolute bravery; putting life at stake.

A warrior can get deviated due to loss of self-confidence, fear of superiority of enemy, uncertainties of war etc. These apprehensions de-motivate and weaken the warrior.

Sadhak of *naam* has unyielding faith in the ultimate power of the Divine; so he does not worry. He is convinced that he should not fall short even slightly in his effort but, at the same time, he should leave the result to the *naam*. Therefore, a *sadhak* warrior remains unshaken even in the midst of situation like war.

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45. What is the relation between the *naam* and *yog* ?

Yog, particularly the *Ashtang Yog*, is considered to be highly profound form of *yoga*, yeilding many benefits and results and has attracted not only people who have mastery in this field but also aspiring candidates. But following *yog-marga* for general masses can be a tough situation as certain prerequisites on physical capacity, time of exercise, training requirements are required to reap the desired benefits. Hence, it is not universally simple like *naam*. Besides it is worth noting here what *Shri Maharaj* assures in this context. He emphasizes that, True *Naam* can give all the benefits and results, which could have been achieved by practicing *yog*.

Meaning of *yog* is to get connected to Divine. By *naam*, one gets connected to the Divine right from the beginning through

remembrance and association. The behavioral restrictions suggested for effective *sadhana* are equivalent to *yama* and *niyama* - the first two aspects of yog.

The maintenance of posture comfortable for practice of *naam jap* is equivalent to the third aspect *aasana* of *yog*.

Regular practice of *naam* develops proper conservation and regulation of the vital energy - the *prana* which is equivalent to the fourth aspect of *yog* namely *pranayam*, though it may not increase longevity.

The study of introspection and control of desires for *naam sadhak* are close to the *pratyahar* of *yog*.

The sixth aspect of *yog* - *dharana* is analogous with the aspect of concentration in *naam sadhana*. The consistency and attunement in *naam sadhana* produce the state of *dhyana* - the seventh aspect of *yog*.

In the concluding state of *naam sadhana*, even the *naam* itself subsides leading to union with Divine, which is equivalent to the last and eighth aspect of *yog*, namely *samadhi*.

So though persons of highest capabilities required for *yog* can very well take up *yog-marga* with alertness about the pros and cons of the path; whereas, common people, it is better to adopt the path of *naam* without any hesitation and without an inferior feeling as *naam* is also a parallel analogous *yog* path.

Moreover, as already discussed, formal *naam sadhana* can prove a beneficial supplement even for a *yog sadhak*.

* * *

46. If *naam* is so simple and effective, why is it not practiced by all ?

There is a subtle notion of doubt about simplicity and effectiveness of *naam* in this question; but this doubt is baseless and false. It should be understood here, that in spirituality, worth of a thing does not depend on how many people practice it; it is not the domain of a democratic thinking which takes the things to be true and proved by means of majority of people. *Naam* is a matter of individual experience. Even one person is enough to prove the worth of *naam*.

Apart from this sense of doubt, it may also be noted that the self-proved *naam* has been practiced by a great number of *sadhakas* over the known history of about ten thousand years. The same is the picture in the present time and it will continue in the future. Unanimous preaching of saints from centuries throws light on the same fact. The recorded lives and the biographies and preachings of a thousands of saints are an ample proof of this.

On the other hand, it is the fact that, there are no things which are practiced by one and all. Let them be evil nor noble. Even the common bodily attractions like food fancy, fashionable clothing are also not universally accepted and followed by all - there are people who practice regular fasts or those who exercise maximum simplicity in clothes in spite of the above. More obvious negatives are the *vikaras* like anger - where one can indulge in universally. But it is not so. There are people who are silent and calm, are free from anger.

In conclusion, it is not so important to see whether all practice

naam. But, of course, there is a sense in the question, that why such a simple and effective path is not practiced by common masses. There are possibly a few reasons:

46.1 Practice of other paths

Some people may be practicing other common paths like traditional family rituals or other paths like meditation, *ashtang yog*, *karma yog*, and so on. So, they may not be practicing *naam*, which is one of the paths for achieving god.

46.2 Mindset may be suitable for other path

Every individual has a typical pattern of mindset. It is observed that the individual choose a *sadhana* where he gets adapted easily, so excels well on that path, which is the correct thing to be done. So in this sense, possibilities could be that he can choose some other path and not *naam sadhana*.

46.3 Unawareness of scope and strength of *naam*

It is also likely that one is not aware of the wide scope, effectiveness and simplicity of the path of *naam*.

46.4 Notion that such too simple means can't be effective

The apparent simplicity of *naam* itself creates a feeling that how such a simple thing can be so effective? Even if an expert doctor prescribes a very ordinary medicine on a serious disease, the patient is likely to doubt it. This is because many times there is a notion that the path must be difficult and challenging.

46.5 Age complex about spirituality

One of the common misconceptions about spirituality is that, it is

a topic of oldage activities. So youngsters feel 'this is not the age to practice *naam*'. So they may be staying away from it.

46.6 Intellectual disagreement due to incomplete knowledge about *naam* and its working

Some people feel that monotonous repetition of some words cannot yield anything and such a practice cannot be a spiritual path. They do not have knowledge about the path and even not enough knowhow about the mental state expected behind chanting of the *naam mantra*. They are ignorant about the fact that this monotonous repetition of *naam* conditions their mind, by replacing the doership from oneself by god, resulting in noble deeds, harmonious and contented life.

* * *

47. Where does the *naam* end ? and what is meant by one becomes free of *naam* ?

A stage is reached when bonds within us that hold our individuality, ego - *me* start to become weak and result in complete fading over a period of time. But at this stage a bond starts to get establish with god which progresses to become one with him as a final destination.This is the time when an individual doesn't even require *naam* anymore and the role of *naam* comes to an end. Here, one becomes free of *naam* !

The path is illustrated as follows. *Naam* calls for invocation of

the Divinity already existing within everyone in potential - unexpressed form. Ordinarily, one is not even aware of the Divinity within. In the initial step of *sadhana*, *naam* creates remembrance of the Divinity, which gradually transcends into inner realizations and symptoms of its existence within. This sensation goes on deepening and broadening with *sadhana*.

At this stage, there is a twofold activity - one, the sense of oneness with body and ego starts fading, and on the other side, oneness with the Divinity begins consequently. At this stage of progress, when the ego gets dissolved fully and there is oneness with the Divine, the role of *naam* is over. Just as one keeps on calling someone and the person hears the call, turns back and even meets intimately, calling is no more required, the *naam* drops on oneness with the Divinity. Naturally, the role of *naam* dissolves.

Hence, the *naam* ends by dropping down of the duality between oneself and the Divinity. The *maya* or desire is the cause of this duality. At the stage when the duality has vanished, practicing *naam* would be like calling oneself ! Of course, this is altogether a matter of sustained *sadhana*, divine Grace and actual experience of self realization.

* * *

48. What is the relation between *naam* and death moment? What should be done to remember *naam* at that moment ?What happens if one doesn't remember it ?

48.1 Purification and dissolution of desires

One leads his entire life constantly chasing and following his desries. Desires are potential motivators for most of his actions for bodily, material pleasures. Desires can be catagorised grossly into two types - the overt and covert - revealed and concealed. Both are self-centred. They are catagorised as desires - *vasanas*. The concealed ones are more potential and naturally difficult to destroy.

The nature of desires may be noble, worldly or evil - that is *sattvik, rajas* or *tamas*. In any case, their emergence, follow up, satisfaction or dissatisfaction and reemergence is a constant vicious circle. They bind the *sadhak* and deprive him of realization - his ultimate goal.

The desires make the invisible desireful body – the *vasana deha* - within the physical body. Such desirous body is wrapped into ego. The *sadhana* first purifies the desires from worldly and evil desires to the noble. Then the desires fade and get finished gradually with intensification of *sadhana*.

Hence, as *Shri Maharaj* says, saints are desire-free. During purification and dissolution of desires, from one side, *naam* being proclamation of the You - that is Divinity, the self or ego gets dropped. Hence, the desirous body becomes unsupported. On the other side, due to practice of *naam*, the strong attraction of the world and the worldly desires also fade as one is convinced

about their futility. So emergence of new desires is also very low. Hence, there is purification and one becomes free of desires.

48.2 Twofold help from *naam*

Naam provides the simplest help for purification of desires. This is attained on two fronts - on one side, one has to determine in mind that 'I am practicing *naam* to become desire-free and *naam* has that strength.' On the other side, one has to deliberately control the upsurges of desires in the routine life.

For example, for a patient of diabetes, *naam* is the medicine given by the 'spiritual doctor' - the saint or *Guru* - to reduce the desire for sweet food. But that is not enough. On the other side, the complimentary actions of gradually reducing sugar content in the diet, consuming sugarless tea etc. are also necessary. Such complementary practice reaches a stage where, convinced of his own benefit, one experiences happiness in a sugarfree diet. Similarly, one enjoys pleasure in becoming desire-free. If action is taken consistently on both of these fronts, one can be sure of getting the desires destroyed.

48.3 What is exactly meant by death moment - *antakaal*

At the time of death, the physical body gets separated from the desirous body. The physical body gets destroyed by the rules of nature but the desirous body, being subtle, cannot get destroyed so far as there is at least a desire left in it. *Naam* can destroy the desirous body, as stated above, by destruction of desires.

The death moment, referred to here as - *antakaal, the transition time* in which the physical body is vanishing with its ingredients merging back into the basic elements of nature, the breath merging into the vital element of nature, the desirous body is

handed over to the dark mist of the unknown.

This is the period of transmigration of the invisible, subtle *vasana deha*. This period of transition is of much import and has been studied and experienced by the sages, saints thousands of years back in India. Its importance lies in the fact that even if the material body is no more the *vasana deha* i.e. the subtle body consisting of unfulfilled desires and unburnt residues of the various deeds done during the life by the person. Logically, unless these deep impressions of unfulfilled desires are fulfilled and the residues of the effects of various deeds are burnt out, one can not finally liberate i.e. the *vasana deha* can not be fully destroyed.

It follows that one would need another material body to accomplish this task. The unfulfilled desires may be pure or otherwise. The effects of deeds of the previous life may mature immediately or may take long time. In any case, to accomplish this over the required period of time, one requires another material body which is given by mother nature. This period of transmigration from earlier material body to the next one is subtle and may vary in time short or long. To add to this, there arises another possibility of newer desires and results of new deeds that may be done after getting this another body, if one is not aware of this mechanism of the deepest and intricate sort.

Accordingly, one may see the only way to hault this chain, to become purest of the pure in desires or be desireless, to at least mitigate one side of the problem. For the another side of the problem one can burn the residues of effects of deeds in this life only. *Naam* takes care of both of these solutions if one desires liberation in this birth only. Much of it depends on the earnestness of such desire for liberation, constant practice of *naam* and prayer for it as well. Naturally, the ultimate sum of these problems come

up at the moment of death and the misty period of transmigration, where only *naam* and god can work. Having no human limitations on the functioning, the *naam* and god can work instantaneously in a moment of *antakaal*.

In this transition period also, *naam* can purify the desirous body or totally nullify the desirous body depending upon the urge and intensity behind the *sadhana* of the *sadhak*. In the first case, only a subtle purified body remains and in the second exceptional case *naam* can totally nullify the purified body also, needing no rebirth. This helps in getting the appropriate physical body in the next birth as reuired in the first case. Therefore, since ancient time till today, saints have insisted on importance of *naam* at the death moment - *antakaal - transition time*.

The accuracy of the cause-effect law of nature is such that one gets exactly the type of life situation that one deserves. Hence, to get the best possible starting point and situation for the next birth, it is highly beneficial to have *naam* at the death moment.

Gross things lay over the foundation of subtle things. With proper thought, the subtle causes can be understood. Similarly, many unreasoned life situations can be understood if the above facts related to past births are considered. The sages can tell all the minute details in this regard.

48.4 Hurdles and remedies for presence- remembrance of *naam* at death moment

It is, in a way, easy to put *naam* in practice in routine life.But at the moment of death, there can be severe illness and bodily disability. There may also be loss of faculties like memory, movements, thinking ability, hearing etc. So a question arises as

to how can one remember the *naam* in such situation? But two characteristics of *naam* come for help. One, that *naam* is like a skill - difficult to learn, but mechanically easy to exercise. While learning to drive, one has to keep in mind so many things at a time which is very difficult and one is sure to fail. But once it is learnt, all these actions take place mechanically and automatically without any formal attention. In fact, one can continue to drive and at the same time keep on chatting with others without mistake. *Naam* can also become a habit, but one has to master it by lifelong practice.

The second helpful characteristic of *naam* is that the sages' assurance that a lifelong *sadhak* of *naam* will be rewarded by such a condition at death time that he can himself practice the *naam* or otherwise he will be put in such an environment that others will gather around him and practice *naam* for him.The greatest and the most gracious promise is that the *sadguru* or the Deity of such a committed *sadhak* will himself practice *naam* for the *sadhak* at the death moment as the shower of divine Grace.

I humbly pray all the esteemed readers to consider *naam* from the variety of angles discussed so far. I may reiterate that, *naam* is the only simple way to a blissfull life and peaceful end. In sum, may I, with deep sincerity, request the readers to study this 'path of *naam*' - '*Naamvidya*' thoroughly and practice it as it suits their own experience, for their benefit and also to the benefit of all.

* * *

Surrendered at the holy feet of
Shri Sadguru
Brahmachaitanya Maharaj Gondavlekar #

|| *Om Tat Sat* || || *Shri Ram* ||

GLOSSARY

aasan - yogic posture

ahamkar - the ego-self

antakaal - death moment

anugriha - initiation

ashtang yog- yoga consisting of eight stages of discipline

bhaav - feeling, urge

bhagvant - God, Deity

bhakta - a devotee

bhakti - a devotion and love

bhog - suffering, living out the results of actions

chitta - deeper mind, deeper aspect of the mind in which impressions are stored

daivat - a Deity

darshan - vision

deha - body, physical body, material body

dharana - the firm state of inner concentration

dhyan - stable and constant attunement

dnyan yog - *dnyan i.e. jnana yog*, path of knowledge

jap - repetition of *naam-mantra*, ritualistic incantation

kaliyug - the last of the four ages of the world namely, *krita, treta, dwapara, kali. kali* is rekconed as having began in 3102 BC.

kalyan - spiritual, ultimate wellbeing

karma - action, work, deeds

karma-marga - the path of action, religious duties

karma yog - path of desireless deeds

karta - doer

kartepan, kartruttva - doership

kripa - grace, divine grace

kuldaivat - a family deity

likhit jap - written jap

mala - chain of bids

mani - bids

mantra - cosmic sound forms for remembrance, prayer, worship

moksha - liberation, final release from transmigration

moun jap - non-verbal *jap*

mukti - liberation

naam - divine name

naammantra - seed letters for meditation on the form of the lord

naamvidya - path of naam, a branch of self-knowledge

naivedya - food offering

nirguna - formless

nirupadhik - unconditioned, condition-less

nishkaam - undesirous, dispassionate, desire-free

nishkaam naam - desire-free divine name

niyama - discipline, religious duties as ordained for the second of the eight stages of yoga

om tat sat - That (*brahman*) - the supreme is real

pranayam - breath control

prapancha - wordly life, mundane life

prarabdha - fate, the residual results of one's deeds

pratyahar - withdrawl of senses from objects

saakshitva - observership

sadguru - the great Master, the true or perfect Guru

sadhana - a path towards liberation

saguna - in form

sakaam naam - desirous divine name

sakshi bhaav - neutral observation

samadhi - 1) complete union with the divine, the last of the eight stages of yoga
2) memorial

sankalpa - volition, attachment - here predecision on a spiritual activity - Quantum of jap etc.

satsang - elevating association, noble association

sattva-raja-tama - the mixture of three motivating, fundamental forces manifesting as qualities-tendencies, making up the world - the pure, the activity-

oriented, the impure (negative) respectively. mostly characterized as white-red-black respectively.

savadh - aware, conscious, spiritually alert

shishyatva - desciple-hood

siddhi - ability of bringing out miraculous feats

tat-tvam-asi - 'That thou Art'- You are that

upadhi- conditioning, the optionally attached things

upadhis - conditionings

upasya daivat - propitiation deity

vaikhari jap - verbal jap

vasana - predispositions, propensities of the mind in the present life, due to the experiences of the former lives, as added by the deeper impact of the present life

Vasana deha - desirous body, invisible bundle of predispositions and propensities accumulated in the life

vikaras - *vikaras*, temperamental drawbacks

vyapak bhaan - broad comprehension, broad aware ness

yama - self-control

* * *

* REQUEST TO READERS *

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NAAM

A universal way to peace and harmony-inner and outer

Translation of a Marathi classic on the subject for benefit of the universal readers