



The Sadhana Companion

A practical guide for keeping your
spiritual practice thriving.

Excerpts from various discourses
given by Babaji on practice.



SONOMA · ASHRAM



Welcome to Your Practice

Once we have acknowledged our hunger to go deeper, carving out time and making a commitment to our daily practice (*sadhana*) is a wonderful gift that we can give to ourselves.

The mantra that you have been given is like a seed, that is why it is called “*beeja mantra*.” A seed will grow and flourish when it is planted in cultivated ground and given the right environment to grow. Having a hunger to go deeper in our practice and fine-tuning our *bhava* (inner sentiment or disposition) towards our Gurū, this mantra is cultivating the ground.

There are four steps to our practice of *jap* (repetition of *mantra*): (1) *pranayama*, (2) *pranava*, (3) *dhyan*, and (4) *jap*. The first three steps help us to fine-tune or cleanse our inner environment, and the fourth step, *jap*, is being with our friend, the *mantra*.



Pranayama

The first step of our practice

- a) Sitting comfortably with our head and spine straight, we join our palms together and bring them to our nostrils.
- b) Blocking the right nostril with the middle fingertip of the right hand, we breathe in through the left for a count of three.
- c) Hold the breath for a count of nine (three times longer than the inhalation). While holding the breath, keep your eyes calm and chest relaxed. Enjoy this moment of absorbing the *prana*.
- d) Breathe out through the right nostril for a count of six (twice as long of inhalation).

If you have difficulty holding your breath for nine counts, you may want to inhale only for two counts, hold for six, and breathe out for four. In the beginning, it is not necessary to fill your lungs with a long inhalation.

What is important is the time ratio of 1:3:2 of inhalation, retention and exhalation. Repeat this cycle at least three times (nine times is optimal and will bring you more benefit), each time taking the breath in through left nostril and out through the right.

Note: This *pranayama* is very specific to your *mantra*, and it should not be confused with any other kinds of *pranayama*.

Caution: Pay attention to any anxiousness that may arise during *pranayama*. If you start to feel uneasy, keep your eyes calm and chest relaxed. While holding the breath in, staying relaxed and enjoying the retention is important.

Usually people want to get right to the *jap* (repeating of the *mantra*), but these steps make the journey very sweet.



Pranava

The second step of our practice

Right after doing *pranayama*, we take in a deep breath or two, and then move into *pranava*: resonating our inner universe with the *beeja mantras*: “*OM - MA - KRINg.*”

- a) First take a breath. Keeping your spine straight, raise the sound of OM from the naval and take it all the way to the crown. Vibrate the crown with the ending humming sound of “*mmm...*” We do three *OMs* in a row, and then follow it with the sound of *MA*.

- b) While resonating with *MA*, evoke the sentiments of yearning and sweetness in your heart as if you are calling out to the perfect Universal Mother, the nurturing energy that is within you and all around you. During this process your heart fills up with sweet loving sentiments for that Universal nurturing energy or presence. We do this three times in a row then follow it with *KRINg*.

c) We do three *KRINGs* in one breath, raising the sound from the naval, touching the heart ending with vibrating the crown. (The “I” sound in *KRING* is pronounced as a short “I” sound like in the English word “BRING.”)

This is one cycle of *pranava* and it should be done a minimum of three rounds and as much as your time permits.

Note: After *pranava*, take a few moments **to become absolutely still**. Try not to move any part of your body in this time for at least a minute or so. Be the stillness...



Dhyan (concentration)

The third step of our daily practice:

After *pranava* (resonation of *OM MA KRING*) and momentary stillness, gracefully we move into *dhyan*. There are two points where we bring our attention to:

First, we bring our attention to the heart and ***visualize*** the form of our *mantra* sitting on the heart lotus granting fearlessness and boon. (At the time of your initiation, Babaji will explain the form that is associated with your specific mantra.) If you feel more comfortable with no form, just imagine a blue flame and take that to be the form of the deity of your *mantra*. Mentally offer a flower to this presence and receive blessings.

Then saturated with the emotion of this sweetness, we bring our attention to the center of the forehead. We meditate on the Gurū, sitting on the lotus clad in white in the center of the forehead. Gurū's form is also granting us fearlessness and boon. If there is no form emerging, visualize white light and take that to be the presence of the Gurū.

Note: *Dhyan* is a very important aspect of cultivating the inner environment. We can spend anywhere from two to five minutes with *dhyan*. Cultivation of sweetness and connectedness enriches our practice many fold. The sweetness of devotion in our heart and the feeling of being protected establish a deeper connection with our *mantra*.

After *dhyan* (concentration) and being still for a few moments, we enter into the fourth step, *jap* (repetition of our *mantra*).



Jap

The fourth step of our practice

Some *mantras* are done with the breath and some with mala beads. The prescribed way to hold and use the beads is:

Let the *mala* hang freely between the loop made by joining the tips of your thumb and the ring finger of the right hand.

Pull each bead with the middle finger towards you with each *mantra*. We don't touch the beads with the index finger. The best place for the hand holding the *mala* is to rest it against the chest while doing *jap*. If it gets tiresome, the hand could also rest in the lap.

The middle finger of the left hand touches the ground for grounding purposes. Once in a while a tremendous amount of energy is generated during the *jap* and this provides grounding for that energy.

While doing *jap* we keep our focus on the center of the forehead

Sutra: while doing jap, in the center of your forehead, hold the form of the Gurū clad in white, sitting on a white lotus or hold the image of an intense white light (almost blue) the size of a pearl.

* After finishing *jap* we do three *pranayama* again before getting up from our meditation.

Helpful Hints: In order to maintain our stillness between *pranava* and *jap*, it is helpful to take out our *mala* before starting *pranava*. This way we are positioned to begin *jap* in stillness. During the whole *jap* try to be as still as possible. This helps us to go deeper. When the urge to move comes, see if you can breathe it out. If it begins to hurt then adjust slightly and go back to stillness.

Here ends the technical information about our daily practice.



Mantra sutra (link)

Mantra mitra (friend)

Mantra astra (a weapon)

In our practice, working with the mantra is the foundation.

Mantra is a *mitra* which means a “friend,” and cultivating this friendship is our life long task.

Mantra is our unconditional friend that comes to our side when no one else can. It is said, after receiving your *mantra*, you are never alone again. There is a presence all around you provided you are present to acknowledge it. With every *jap*, a special kind of energy builds within you connecting you with the inner strength in the form of trust, that is already there.

The other aspect of the *mantra* is “*sutra*” - a thread or link that connects you with the spiritual power of the all the enlightened beings from our tradition. There is a sense of belonging to the family of enlightened

Mantra can also be like a weapon (*astra*) or shield that is given to you to protect yourself from harmful events and situations. When pressed against the wall and there is no help to be found, it is this friend that comes to our side. At the time of your initiation, you are given the instruction on how to summon the accumulated power of your *mantra* to protect yourself against adversities.



Beauty and grace of our practice

Initiation with a *mantra* is an act of transference of trust from the Gurū to the initiate. *Mantra* is given to us by our Gurū as an unconditional friend. *Mantra* has its own presence and personality. One is never alone after receiving a *mantra*.

Our friend the *mantra* comes to our side when and where no one else can. After imparting the *mantra*, the Gurū leaves a protective shield around the initiate which becomes more obvious as the connection with the *mantra* deepens.

In our practice, deepening the friendship with our friend the *mantra* is our life long work. As Baba says, “the day you begin to trust your *mantra* and the *mantra* begins to trust you, nothing seems impossible for you.”

How do we cultivate this kind of love and trust? Just as in our worldly life when we try to come closer to someone special, we find time for that person. Being around that person is not a chore or an obligation. We look forward and cannot wait until we can spend

more time together. This kind of inner disposition towards our *mantra* and practice is needed to grow in our practice.

In order to have this kind of sweetness and longing, the quantity of time is less important than the quality of time spent with our *mantra*. Carving out a little time in your daily life to be with your “friend” the mantra is the most important part of your practice. This time could be anywhere from five minutes to half an hour.

Mantra is a direct link or connection with the powerhouse in the form of the Gurū and Gurū’s lineage. There is a sense of belonging to a spiritual home after the initiation. The collective spiritual power or grace of all the enlightened beings from the lineage becomes accessible to the initiate through the *mantra*. Protection, guidance and inspiration flows towards the practitioner just by remembering and knowing the connection.

Meditating on the Gurū or Gurū's Gurū fills us with grace.

It is a good idea for the initiate to learn more about the enlightened beings from the lineage. their stories, contemplating their teachings and meditating on their forms, imagining their closeness to oneself brings about benediction in our lives. Such activities also enrich our inner environment and enable us to open ourselves to receive.

How often to do jap?

An initiate should do a formal sitting at least once in the day. During the formal sitting all four aspects of the practice (pranayam, pranav, dhyan and jap) should be done as prescribed.

During the day while engaging in the usual activities like walking, jogging, gardening, relaxing, cooking etc. it is a good practice to repeat our mantra in our mind.



Notes & FAQ

When you sit for your practice with your legs crossed, place your left leg inside the right one .

While repeating the mantra, your tongue should not move, keep it pressed to the upper palate.

If during *jap* you become restless, complete the *mala* you are doing, and do a few rounds of *pranyama*. Then come resume your *jap*.

Once you have completed your *jap*, mentally bow to your *ishta devata* in your heart, and to the *gurū* in your third eye. This is called *visarjana*, (leave-taking).

While doing *jap*, do not rush and do not go too slow. The time devoted to each *mala* should be about three to five minutes.

When you reach the end of your *mala*, remember to turn it before commencing the next *japa-mala*.

It is important to keep your *samkalpa* (the number of *jap* you have chosen to do everyday).

If you live near the ashram or your situation allows you to do or participate in Havan, it is very helpful to keep your practice strong.

Always complete the *mala* you are doing. Never leave the *mala* in the middle. If necessary, you can go faster if someone needs you, but be sure to complete the *mala* you are doing.

What to do if I drop the *mala*? I kiss the *sumeru* and I start again from the beginning.

Never face South during *jap*.

During *jap* cover yourself with a shawl, and be careful to keep the right hand covered under the shawl

Kiss the mala at the beginning, as well as at the end.

Before starting the practice read one of Baba's teachings.

In *pranava*, the sound KRING: the 'g' is silent.



Keep your practice thriving

In order to keep your practice thriving it is important for you to make some efforts to keep connected with the ashram and its events.

If you can manage, participating in any of the two Navaratri that are observed at the ashram in the spring and fall, is a good way to get a taste of going deeper in your practice.

Traditionally, every initiate makes a point of participating in Gurū Purnima (Full moon of July) celebration held at the ashram every year.

If you can not be present physically, express your connection and honoring of the Gurū through some gestures.

If you are not in the driving distance of the ashram, you can make a point of spending a few days every year at the ashram, this way your connection keeps intact.

If there are other initiates in your area, it is a good idea to make effort to gather once in a while in the name of satsang and reflect of the teachings and your experiences.

In this day of technology, plenty of material is available on the website of the ashram, study them, listen to satsangs etc. that are offered via our website.

You can always check in with Babaji via emails.



Puja

Do **prānāyāma** three times, in through left nostril, out through the right.

Do **āchamanī** by putting drip of water in right palm and charging it with the mantra **om tat sat**. Do this three times.

Manasik pūja: Mentally invite the Divine Mother and the Babas and offer a seat.

Make offering of water (bathing) in the name of Gurū, Param Gurū and Ādi Gurū, reciting:

Om Srī Gurū charana pādukābhyo namah

Om Srī Param Gurū charana pādukābhyo namah

Om Srī Ādi Gurū charana pādukābhyo namah

Then for each, repeating same mantra, replace **namah** with:

Patram pushpam samarapayāmi

Then offer a white flower to each Gurū.

Make offering of water and flower to the Divine Mother,
using 3 names:

A. Recite the mantra:

**Om shring hring shring kamale kamalālaye
Prasīd prasīd shring hring om mahā lakshmaye namah
Mahā lakshmaye cha vidmahe sarva shaktaye cha dhīmahī
Tanno devī prachodayāt**

Sprinkle water, then offer flower with this mantra:

**Om māteishwari charana pādukābhyo patram pushpam
samarapayāmi**

B. Recite the mantra:

Rāng tat kring rupāy sarveshwari namah

sprinkle drop of water, then offer flower with this mantra:

**Mā sarveshwari charana pādukābhyo patram pushpam
samarapayāmi**

C. Recite the mantra:

Hung tat tat shānti satya rupadhāri kapālika namah

sprinkle drop of water, then offer flower with this mantra:

**Mā kālike charana pādukābhyo patram pushpam
samarapayāmi**

Silent offering of incense and lamp.

Pronunciation tips:	<u>a</u>=short a (ultra)	<u>ā</u>=long a (father)
	i =short i (ink)	<u>ī</u>=long i (feel)
	u=short u (pull)	<u>ū</u>=long u (moon)





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