



S.K.S. SWAMINARAYAN TEMPLE (LONDON) – BAL YUVAK MANDAL

Westfield Lane, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 9EA Est. 1966 Charity Reg. No. 271034

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Jap & Mala

WHAT IS JAP?

Jap is the continuous, non-stop, habitual recitation of the Lord's name. Each sampradaya has its own jap.

- e.g.
- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Swaminarayan Sampradaya | – Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan |
| Shaivaites | – Aum Namoh Shivay |
| Vaishnavas | – Aum Namoh Bhagwate Vaasudevay Namah |

WHERE AND WHEN CAN JAP BE DONE?

Jap can be done anywhere, at anytime. Ideally it is recommended that one is in a pure state of body and mind as this is easier and fertile for meditation.

WHY DO WE DO JAP?

- “Kare jap to chhutte lap”. Jap is the best way to please the Lord and seek his assistance in solving our problems.
- Jap is most helpful in clearing the mind of impure conscience. It spreads positive vibes around you, and even cleanses the thoughts of those around you. When Chanakya Hrishikesh was doing jap, the whole village became tranquil.
- Jap is most powerful in clearing ‘antah-shatrus’ (kam, krodh, lobh, moh, matsar, irshya, kapat, ahankar, agnan, etc) for one to become ‘atma-chaitanya’.
- Jap helps us do dhyana of the Lord and by dhyana we attain the Lord, and with it salvation.
- Jap is part of Smaranam bhakti – thinking about the Lord.

In Bhagwat: Ajameil said (NOT recited) NARAYAN because he was calling his son, hence God came to improve his moksha and averted his definite Yampuri, BUT he did not get ultimate moksha as he had not met the other requirements.

In G.M.P. Vachnamrut 35, Maharaj says: “If a jeev is doing:

- upasna of Bhagwan,
- AND singing and listening to Bhagwan's leelacharitra,
- AND doing smaran of Bhagwan's naam,
- AND complying with ones advised Bhagwat Dharmas,

then his moksha is not difficult. It becomes as easy as crossing the ocean in a ship.”

HOW DO WE COUNT THE ABOVE JAPS – DO WE CONCENTRATE ON DOING THE JAPS OR ON COUNTING THE JAPS DONE?

- For the literate satsangis they can write Jap in a defined number of grid boxes in books.
- Hrishis have given us a mala to reduce the multiple counting we have to do.

Origins of the Mala:

1. Early days: Yogis used to push a few counted grain seeds (say 1000) in a plate-like vessel made of sticks joined with cowdung and purified with prasadi sindoor, by moving one seed across every time they said a Jap mantra. They then repeated this for a certain number of times in a day. (This seed method is still done today as a mode of doing Jap). This counting was not possible for the ordinary illiterate folk.
2. A chain of seeds was finally made and ordinary folk obtained these from the hrishis. (That's why we get mala from mandir and don't buy from outside shops). But these seeds started getting dry and deformed over time especially when the hrishis were travelling.



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3. Hrishis came up with beads, and most types of material used were, changing over time:

- Tamarind (amli) tree
- Dry lotus (kamal) seeds
- Rudraksh beads
- Reeds (darbh)
- Sandal wood (Sukhad)
- Tulsi wood

MALAS USED BY OTHER SAMPRADAYAS:

- Hindu: - Vaishnavs use mala made from kamalaksh and tulsi shankh.
- Shaivites use rudraksh and bhadraksh malas.
 - Ganpati devotees use mala made from haridwa.
 - Others use mala made from vidrum and even mag (green grams)

Non-hindu: (Concept of mala copied from Hinduism)

- Muslims use a plastic mala.
- Maran: devil worshippers use a mala made of snake bones.

Final choice was the Tulsi mala and this is used in our Sampradaya to make malas and kanthis.

WHY WE USE A TULSI MALA:

Religious:

- Tulsi is the Lord's daasi and is a symbol of 'samarpan' – bowing down to the Lord with humility. This body does not belong to us – it belongs to Maharaj and should be used to serve Him.
- When doing mala, friction between the second finger and the thumb generates all 3 satvik, rajsik and tamsik gunas (vibes). Tulsi absorbs and destroys the rajsik and tamsik vibes leaving only the satvik gunas (vibes) with us.

Scientific: Tulsi has great herbal and medicinal value, its fragrance does not allow certain hazardous bacteria to be around us. (imagine the Amazon-like forests where the hrishis lived).

WHY DOES MALA HAVE 108 BEADS?

108 is an auspicious figure:

- Janmangal Namavali has 108 names of the Lord – say one name per bead.
- 108 is the recognition given to the bhavi Acharya – symbolising the future of our Sampradaya and our continued commitment to supporting the present Acharya as well as the future Acharya.
- On average humans breathe 15 times in a minute, i.e. 21,600 times a day. To do jap at every breath, doing smaran of Swaminarayan mantra per bead, means doing 200 malas x 108 beads. But doing only one mala with jap and utmost devotion is equal to doing these 200 malas, hence we get the rewards of 'swas-uswas smaran' (having done smaran while breathing in and out).
- In Mandvi, Khaya Khatri asked Swaminarayan Bhagwan 108 questions that obscured him from knowing the greatness of Maharaj. By doing mala we are avoiding similar 108 obstacles from coming up in our minds and obstructing our dhyana and understanding of Maharaj's swarup and mahatmay.

WHY COUNT NUMBER OF JAPS DONE?

Agni Purana says: Uncounted japs are not successful as they are taken away by Rakshasas. Hence we must do complete japs or malas that we have taken Niyam for.



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WHY IS THE FIRST FINGER NOT USED WHEN DOING MALA?

First finger is a sign of self-pride (used in pointing at someone) hence is rajo-guni as ego and anger stem from it.

Out of all the five, the second finger is directly connected to the heart by a single artery while the other fingers are connected by branches of that artery. We want to attain the Maharaj who resides in the heart so we use the straight route.

WHY MALA AND NOT ANYTHING ELSE?

Adharanand Swami says: Mala is an approved 'sadhan' – vehicle – that helps do 'dhyān' (meditation) without losing concentration and helps to please Maharaj. It has been sanctified by Maharaj himself and the Vedas and puranas.

Not doing mala is like beautifully dressing a corpse, or like a line of zeros without a leading figure 1 (bhakti with no direction).

Other forms of worship like worshiping with kumkum, etc, require one's attention to the activity itself and makes one deviate from the essence of that activity, so though important, are harder to perform correctly. When doing mala we continue doing the action of moving the beads yet do not have to focus on it; instead can allow the mind to be occupied by thoughts of Maharaj.

SOME THINGS WE MUST NOT DO WITH THE MALA.

Apart from the obvious DONTs like not throwing mala, breaking it, swinging it, etc, some things must not be done because we would be doing Maharaj's work without having the powers to do it

In Pad 1 of nitya chesta we sing:

*Sahaj swabhava re, betha hoy Hari jyare;
Tulsi ni mala re, kar lai ferve tyare.
Ramuj karta re, rajiv neyn rupada;
Koi harijan ni re, magi laine mala.
Bevdi rakhi re, ba-bbe manka jode;
Ferve tani re, kaink mala tode.*

1. *Tulsi ni mala re, kar lai ferve tyare.*

Mala should only be done using the right (pavitra) hand and should not touch the legs (and also the ground, hence is done in Gaumikhi).

2. *Bevdi rakhi re,*

- Maharaj used to do the mala two-fold into two rows – one symbolising the atma (us) and one the parmatma (himself).
- This confirms our all time bond with Him, that He came to earth to always be with us and to help us attain salvation.
- We are ansh (part), he is the anshi (whole). We may not remember Him but He always remembers us.
- Remember salvation is only by Maharaj's krupa. We can't give salvation to others so cannot fold the mala and do two rows of beads at a time.

3. *ba-bbe manka jode;*

- When Maharaj was doing this he meant one bead is Bhrahmrup soul (us) and the other is Parbhrahm (Him). We have to become Bhrahmrup hence mala is an effort in making us that, and that is the maximum we can become. We can never become Parbhrahm.

4. *Ferve tani re, kaink mala tode.*



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Maharaj pulls a mala, swings it around and sometimes breaks it. This symbolises the Law of Karma and Lakh Chorasi that is hovering over us, and He makes us free from that by breaking us from that chain. We cannot free ourselves or anyone else.

Hence Jap and Mala are not a meaningless creation of idle minds trying to keep other idle minds like ourselves occupied, but are a very symbolic and effective instrument designated by hrishis to help us mumukshus attain salvation.

JAY SWAMINARAYAN