

Introduction

Japji Sahib is timeless and universal. Recited daily (*Jap*), it becomes a companion, slowly revealing insights of your inner journey of self-realization and bringing light and strength to your divine self, your “ji.” The recitation of Japji acts as a medicinal salve or remedy to heal the injuries and the challenges encountered during your life. It can be seen as a handbook or instruction guide that can be studied and savored, constantly revealing new insights and wisdom. It is precisely for these reasons that the Siri Singh Sahib often spoke of the wisdom and transforming qualities of Japji. He taught his students to make the reciting of Japji Sahib the first part of their *sadhana*, or daily spiritual practice, regardless of whether or not they chose to live as Sikhs. This book is based on understanding Japji Sahib, its transforming power and its spiritual depth, through the life-long teachings of the Siri Singh Sahib.

Guru Nanak begins Japji Sahib with the *Mul Mantra*, a powerful declaration of how to understand the Infinite Creative Consciousness of the cosmos, or what we often refer to as God. The clearest philosophy of Japji is expressed in the very first line when Guru Nanak states that the entire universe, all things and all beings, are One; *Ik Ong Kar*. From that he affirms that there can only be one Creator, one God – for all things, all time, and all people. The experience of God, according to the teachings of Guru Nanak, is at the same time both personified and without a distinct form. *Personified* in that we can pray to, express gratitude to, and be in discourse with the Divine. But Guru Nanak helps us to understand that the Oneness of the Infinite Creative Consciousness is formless, everywhere, in all things, and, at the same time, beyond it all. The One is beyond even our full understanding.

With each *pauree*, steps in poetic verse, Guru Nanak progressively reveals wisdom to the reader. After the concept of Oneness in the Mul Mantra, you learn *Sunni-ai*, to listen deeply. Then, *Mannai*, to be in acceptance of the *Hukam*, the Divine Will, saying “Yes” to living in divine alignment. You learn to experience the vast diversity, the *Asank*, of countless forms and manifestations of the Divine presence in all.

In Japji Sahib you encounter the concept of *Naam*, which is

crucial, yet illusive, to understand. As Guru Nanak shows us, defining this vast and esoteric concept is an impossible task. The Naam is sometimes mentioned in translation as the “True Name” or the “Name of God.” And, although there is an association to a word or a sound that defines or identifies it, it is not limited to simply a name or a word. Guru Nanak directs us to repeat or meditate on this Naam and yet he only hints at the exact nature of it.

Naam is often used to refer to all of the actual words that comprise the writings of the Sikh Gurus as well as all the words contained in the Siri Guru Granth Sahib – also referred to as *Gurbani*. One can recite the Naam, or even study the Naam, but you are also encouraged by the Guru's teachings to become immersed in the Naam. In this way you can experience the Naam as communion with the Divine. Here it becomes your ideal spiritual identity, achieved when one merges the individual identity with the energetic essence of the cosmos. It manifests both through the meaning of the sacred words and through the frequency of the vibrations of the very sounds you make as you recite Gurbani aloud. By entering into this ecstatic state, there is an alignment of the frequency of the individual consciousness in harmonic resonance with the macro-frequency of the universal consciousness of the One.

This experience of Naam pervades all of Japji Sahib. It is a transformational experience to read Japji, and especially to recite it aloud. Guru Nanak's teachings certainly extend beyond Japji, but there is no doubt that it all begins here, with Japji as a primary declaration of belief and practice. It is a launching pad for all who choose to walk a path of consciousness and is a touchstone and anchor for all who continue each day to navigate this path with heart and soul. May this book serve as a point of entry for you to develop a relationship with Japji Sahib, with Guru Nanak, and with the Infinite Soul within each of us.

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Guru Nanak could have said one pauree and the matter would have ended. But he made the Japji in 40 paurees. Everybody has to grow step by step. Everybody has to go day by day. Everybody has to learn thing by thing. And we are not here to push and we are not here to take. If we take up the matter, we will take it with God. If we give, we will give in the Name of God. **Siri Singh Sahib - July 3, 1988**