

Likhita Japa

The Science of Repetitive Mantra Writing

From the teachings of
Swami Sivananda Saraswati



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Likhita japa is an enjoyable and practical way to practise meditation. Mantra japa is the practice of repeating the mantra or name of the divine verbally or mentally. In likhita japa, you repeatedly write the mantra. The benefits of likhita japa are powerful. This is the case with any japa, yet somehow writing the mantra brings a purity of focus and a peace in the heart and mind that can be difficult to achieve with other forms of japa. The likhita japa method engages part of the body-mind structure that other forms of japa do not engage.

Likhita japa is an enterprise that is always successful and is attended by no risks. Those who attempt other practices of meditation often complain of distractions of a visual or sensual nature. The mind runs hither and thither like a maddened monkey. Who can really expect to control the organ of the mind, which is obdurate and possessed of a will of its own? Only long practice makes one a master of one's mind. However, the likhita japa meditation has no such limitations. Deceptively simple as the practice is, it is powerful.

The hand and fingers, having an abundant supply of nerves, the eyes, the bridge between the outer and inner worlds, and the mind, are all cooperatively involved in writing; the distractions are necessarily absent. After writing the name of God, wishes miraculously get fulfilled, seemingly with no effort. Those writing without harbouring any wishes progress rapidly on the spiritual path.

The practice of sitting quietly in one place and writing the name of God supplements every other spiritual practice. When one resolves to write the name of God daily for a fixed number of times, or a fixed number of verses, one undertakes a *satsankalpa*, a meritorious resolve.

In other methods of meditation, prayer or worship, there is little chance of being able to concentrate all your senses at one time, without a lot of practice; however, this is not so in the case of *likhita japa*. When all the senses, the mind, the eyes and limbs cooperate together to concentrate, the positive outcomes of *likhita japa* are realized. This makes *likhita japa*, the written reflection, a powerful and transformative tool. It takes the practitioner to a deeper level than you can otherwise go. It calls the quality or energy of the divine into you, and thus into the world.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati





TOOLS FOR LIKHITA JAPA

Likhita japa can be done plainly, as in writing in a notebook. Ideally, you should have a pen and a notebook or journal purely for likhita japa.

While you can do likhita japa with any implements that you may have on hand, when you use the same tools repeatedly and only for likhita japa, they build up the resonance of the mantra. This makes it easier for you to enter into the spirit of the mantra. Find a pen that writes and feels beautiful to you; look for a book which makes writing more pleasurable.

On a practical level, writing the mantra can help in day-to-day tasks. Doing likhita japa as a form of sacred doodling, when you would otherwise be letting your mind wander restlessly or wallow in negativity, is very beneficial. Even if you write the mantra while sitting in a meeting or classroom or talking on the phone, it will help reawaken your consciousness to divine virtues. Though this does not substitute for pure likhita japa meditation, you will make use of otherwise injurious mental gaps.

METHOD

The following steps may be followed to become established in likhita japa meditation practice.

Step 1 – Fixation of mental energies: Take the first few minutes of your practice to quieten the mind and focus the emotions on what you are doing. Then direct all your efforts to become attuned with your ishta. This attitude may not always be possible. If not, then acknowledge your negativity and offer it to the divine.

Step 2 – Posture: Keep your spine upright. Become aware of the posture you are in.

Step 3 – Relaxation: Keep your muscles relaxed. Watch, in particular, the muscles of the face, the neck and shoulders

for tension. Release your tension by mentally guiding your awareness to these regions.

Step 4 – Concentration: Stay free of distractions such as music, television, telephones, etc. Focus your mind on the mantra.

Step 5 – Sankalpa (intention): Intention is vital. As you write, intend for the mantra to purify you in body and mind. It is beneficial to imagine your personal deity seated in your heart, showering you with blissful vibrations.

Step 6 – Stay with the mantra: It is vitally important not to rush off after finishing a mantra. Stay with it for about ten minutes, either in silence or humming the same mantra. Feel the presence of your guru or ishta. As routine duties commence, the spiritual vibrations remain intact, establishing you in a meditative awareness during the performance of actions.

With sincere and continuous effort, the practice of likhita japa brings a steadily deepening communion with the divine and release from emotional imbalances, eventually bringing one into harmony with the Self.





RULES FOR LIKHITA JAPA

1. Physical and mental purity should be observed. Before sitting for mantra writing, the face, the hands, the feet and the mouth should be washed. Effort should be made to keep the mind pure: free of lust, greed, envy, jealousy, hatred, etc. Drive out these thoughts.
2. Select a mantra, whether a universal mantra or guru mantra, and write it in a notebook or journal, in any script or language, filling one to three pages daily.
3. Observe *mouna*, silence, during the practice. Too much speaking results in wastage of energy. Silence helps in an increased turnout of work.
4. If possible, though not mandatory, sit in the same place at the same time daily. Regularity and punctuality should be observed.
5. Continue to sit in one pose for as long as possible. Frequent change of posture or *asana* should be avoided, as the mind also moves if the body moves. Sitting in one posture will increase your power of endurance and preserve energy.
6. Avoid looking hither and thither. Fix your eyes on the notebook. This will bring concentration of mind and bring the dissipated energies into focus.
7. Repeat the mantra mentally while simultaneously writing it in the notebook. This will make a threefold impression on the mind: that of chanting, writing and unification of mental energies. Gradually, your whole being will be involved and engrossed in the mantra.
8. Adopt one uniform system of writing, from top to bottom or left to right. This will bring concentration as well as order and discipline into the mind.
9. Fix a particular number of mantras for each sitting. This number of mantras should be written at once in continuity, in one sitting. Do not break the mantra in the middle

when you come to the end of one line. Keeping the right awareness will help you complete the mantra in the same line. This will keep your meditation intact, and you will never lose touch with the mantra.

10. When a mantra is selected by you, try to stick to it tenaciously for life. Frequent change of mantra is not advisable, as it may lead to subconscious agitations leading to inner conflict. It is better to dig one hole twenty feet deep than dig twenty holes one foot deep. This helps you in getting acquainted with the *chetana* or consciousness of the mantra, leading you to evolve consciously.
11. Do not rush with the writing. Write clearly and legibly.

BENEFITS OF LIKHITA JAPA

The above rules, if strictly observed, will help you greatly in your spiritual evolution. You will develop higher degrees of concentration. By prolonged and constant practice, the inherent power of the mantra, the *mantra shakti*, will be awakened, which will fill your very existence with the divinity of the mantra.

The benefits of mantra writing or *likhita japa* cannot be adequately described. Besides bringing about purity of the heart and concentration of the mind, *likhita japa* gives you control of *asana* or posture, control of the *indriyas* or senses, particularity those of eyes and the tongue, and fills you with the power of endurance. You attain peace of mind quickly. You move closer to your *ishta* through *mantra shakti*.

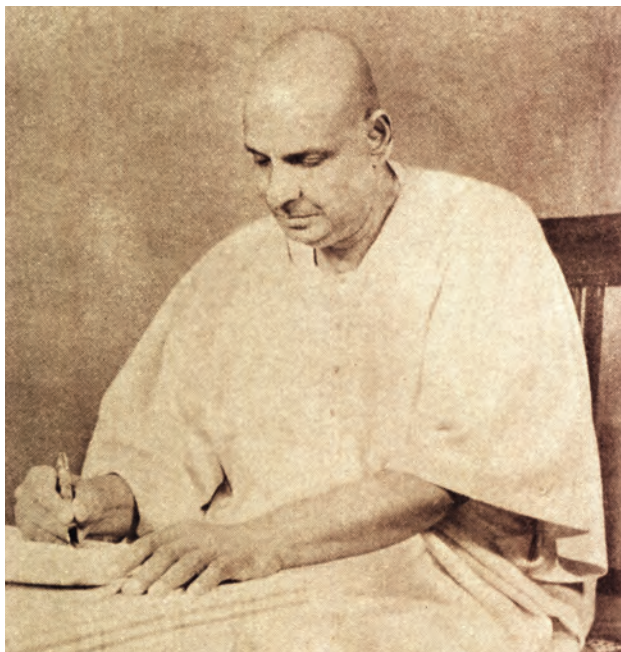
These benefits can be experienced only through a regular and incessant practice of *likhita japa*. Even if you take to this practice for half an hour daily, you will realize the benefits within six months.

In a nutshell, *likhita japa* leads to:

- *Concentration*: Distractions are minimized as the mind, tongue, hands and eyes are all engaged with the mantra. This increases power of concentration and efficiency in work.



- *Control:* The mind is controlled by the power of mantra and it will work better and quicker for you.
- *Evolution:* Due to repeated impact of the mantra on the subconscious mind, subtle spiritual impressions are made which hasten the soul's progress in evolution.
- *Peace:* If you are disturbed due to worries or untoward incidents, the mind will become calm and peaceful.
- *Force:* A mighty spiritual force is generated in the course of time in the atmosphere of the place where you write mantras or keep the notebooks. It helps in spiritual progress. The notebooks should be well-maintained and treated with respect and purity. When completed, they should be stored in your prayer room or another clean, designated place. The very presence of these mantra notebooks will create favourable vibrations which are a requisite for sadhana.



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This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines on a white background, typical of notebook or composition paper. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

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