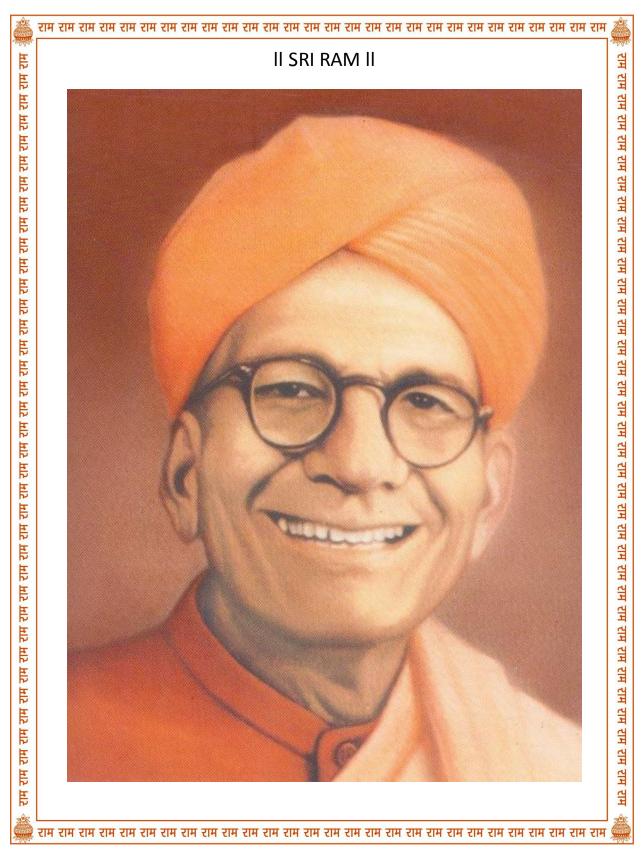
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#### THE LIFE OF DEVOTEE

It is indeed befitting that the devotee of 'Ram-Naam' makes Its 'jaap' (i.e. Ram-Naam's jaap) an integral part of his life. 'Naam-jaap' ought to be accorded highest priority in one's daily routine. Those devotees who worship the Lord's name and devoutly undertake daily remembrance of 'Ram-Naam Mantra' as a rule and who have gained immensely from it, counsel us from their experience to daily practise 'Naam-jaap' in excess of ten thousand.

The mode of bestowing and receiving initiation in our 'Satsang' is a mystical phenomenon wherein 'Ram-Naam' - the vibrant and celestial 'mantra' - is reposed (by the 'Guru') in the inmost recesses of the Saadhak's being as an act of self-willed divine benediction. As it is, constant remembrance (adoration) of 'Ram-Naam' is akin to the adoration (veneration) of the 'mantra'. Practised as such, this 'mantra-yog' (spiritual practice) imparts happiness and is easier to attain as also more fruitful than other forms of yogic practices. The more awakened, livelier and stronger the faith a 'Saadhak' has in the effectiveness of 'Ram-Naam Mantra', the farther is he bound to progress on the spiritual path.

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En route this spiritual pilgrimage, Sri Ram, being the presiding deity of this 'mantra', is Himself the facilitator and guide. The devotee practising 'mantra-jaap' should have the firm faith that by doing this, he is bringing himself closer to Sri Ram and is rightly becoming the recipient of His Grace. The devotee who practises 'jaap' with such a conviction is sure to attain oneness with the all-pervading Spirit of the Universe. Such is the significance of 'mantra-yog'.

All aspects of spiritual progress are inherent in the 'mantra' verily in the same way as the tree is inherent in the seed. Through the adoration and veneration of the core syllable ('beejaakshar') of 'Naam', the rest of the 'yog' evolution takes place by itself. The devotee does not worry about the progress of 'yog' and is conscious only of 'mantra-jaap'. Showering fulfilment 'saadhak' facilitating his/her the and on advancement on the path of spiritualism is the incumbent responsibility of the 'mantra' deity whom the realized saints most certainly believe to reside in the 'mantra' itself. This secret of the mystical path ought to be firmly established in the consciousness of the spiritual aspirant.

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### THE THOUGHTS OF DEVOTEE

The devotee should have purity of thought and an absolute faith about God's presence in the inmost recesses of his heart. While working or moving about, the devotee should undertake 'mantra-jaap' remembering every now and then, "I am not alone. Lord, the Supreme Being, the presiding deity of the 'Naam-mantra' is inseparably associated with me and is always close to me; He helps and protects me". This faith should be so resolute that the notion of God's non-existence or Him being at a distance should never ever appear in the consciousness of the devotee. The mind of the 'saadhak' should always, doubtlessly, be in such a state.

A decisive and organized devotee with firm faith achieves success in every sphere of life. All the hurdles disappear and his spiritual path unfolds by itself. 'Naam-jaap' is actually a kind of 'vichaar-yog' (Yoga of Thought). The more one establishes 'Naam' in one's thoughts, the more potent becomes one's mental, vocal and intellectual strength. This results in a very strong will-power. He who deliberates and contemplates on 'Naam', becomes capable of spreading auspiciousness far and wide by his will. Just as the blooming flowers emanate fragrance, so does goodness appear effortlessly in the life of the devotee.



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When the devotees worship 'Naam', they tend to generate very strong vibrations of theism, truth and religious thoughts in the cosmos. These vibrations automatically generate and prompt strong tendencies of faith, devotion and righteousness in the people living far and wide. Just as sound and images are transmitted by etheric waves from one place to another, so also does the resolve (determination) go a long way. There are people who have tremendous power of reception and absorption. They assimilate these vibrations in the waking as also in the dream state causing auspicious tendencies to appear in them effortlessly. So the devotee should have the faith that while spiritual practice of 'Naam' is making him progressively better, this spiritual discipline is also spreading the seeds of auspicious influences and tendencies far and wide. Hence, it behoves a spiritual aspirant to meditate on 'Naam', practise 'Naam-jaap', and keep on glorifying 'Naam' through its soulful chanting (recitation) with ardent feeling and devotion. This spiritual practice is very benign and wholesome for the world.



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### THE CONDUCT OF DEVOTEE

Conduct, in the opinion of the scholars well versed in Ethics, consists of deeds and actions enacted through the mind, speech and body. A person's conduct reveals his inner and external life. Wise men believe that righteous and virtuous conduct ('Sadaachaar') renders the life of everyone around happy, pure and illustrious, besides bestowing these good things on oneself. As such, the conduct of the devotee ought to be righteous, ethical and virtuous for his own sake as also for bringing about all round well-being of friends, relatives and the people at large. Such a righteous devotee exercises a positive and benign influence on the life here and hereafter.

Often, it is mistakenly believed that righteous and virtuous conduct does not extend to lending gentleness, sweetness, poise and nobility to the natural tendencies in people. Most people construe good conduct to be limited only to external manners, behaviour and conventional actions. However, the devotee should always remember that undesirable passions and tendencies like anger are definite signs of worsening misconduct.



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It is for this reason that the devotee of Sri Ram should aspire to be good, simple, sincere and quiet-natured. Never should he become impulsive and short-tempered while working, discharging duties for the family or fulfilling the social obligations. He should consider anger to be the root cause of all the ills and evils that ruin one's life. The devotee's life should be extremely mild and pleasant. Sweetness of 'Ram-Naam' should dwell not in his heart alone, but should also flow from his words just as pure and cool water gushes from a stream.

Speaking rashly or angrily is surely no civilized way of getting anything done or of attempting to improve or reform anybody. Instead, it must be realized that simplicity, cordiality, calmness and sincerity of conduct are more effective in getting things done, besides being instruments of reform. Close friends, relatives and acquaintances should

vouch for the quiet, soft-spoken, truthful, graceful and cultured behaviour of Sri Ram's

devotee. In this manner, it would be understood beyond doubt (as it ought to be) that the life of the spiritual aspirant is having its desired impact on all others around him.



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Jealousy, hatefulness and quarrelsomeness have no place in the life of a spiritual aspirant. While on the one hand, these tendencies work to scorch (burn) the lotus grove of the spiritual aspirant, they also create unrest in the family as well as the society. The people at large should vouch for the devotees of Sri Ram to be beyond discord and strife, attachment and envy, partisanship and obstinacy (fanaticism). Sri Ram's true devotee does not betray these vices and, instead, does more good than those who happen to be afflicted with vices like partisanship, factionalism, discord and strife. It should be known for sure that simple and truthful life acquired through control over passions becomes a potent instrument in reforming and elevating one and all.

Truthfulness, humility and modesty should be deeply rooted in the life of Sri Ram's devotee. Absence of these auspicious traits in a spiritual aspirant is a sure indication of his spiritual journey not progressing in the desired direction and, as such, he remains entangled in the worldly passions. Hence, the spiritual aspirant should be courteous, well-behaved, goodnatured, considerate, deferential towards there and pleasantly agreeable in speech besides being a person of few words.



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Slander and talebearing (backbiting) are the two vices which play havoc with a man's life. Condemnation of others only leads to accumulated impression of their vices within oneself. This results in complete ruin of one's own life. The devotee should understand that malicious criticism of others never served as a means of reforming, improving or elevating anyone. The devotee who does not betray these flaws should be looked upon as a person of high order. As it is, we have innumerable flaws and deficiencies. Careful and critical analysis of one's own deficiencies followed by repeated repentance over them would refrain one from noticing the faults and foibles of others. Often, those who never introspect and fail to notice their own failings, keep themselves engaged in exaggerating the faults and weaknesses of others. A devotee who constantly undertakes critical self-examination has neither the inclination nor the time to go about exposing others.

Likewise, slandering, talebearing, exaggerated gossip and creating dissensions - all this gives rise to the filth of malice and ill will. This is a hateful sin. The devotees must be free from it.



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It is the bounden duty of the devotee to acquire gentle, winsome, pure and serene disposition by attempting to win over anger by love; vanquish animosity by amity; subdue pride and ego with humility and devoted care of the hapless and the needy and through self-effacing service. The devotee should root out envy through affability, overpower avarice (greed) through charity and overwhelm censure and slander through wholehearted appreciation of the qualities and good deeds of others. It is indeed very necessary for the devotee's life to be receptive to virtues and be characterized by wholesomeness (auspiciousness), sociability and altruism.

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### THE BEHAVIOUR OF DEVOTEE

Behaviour (demeanour), to the discerning people, is the way one interacts with friends and relatives, treats one another in the family and community, at work or otherwise. In behaviour, the devotee's life should be simple, artless, truthful, guileless and free from deceit and deception. Such a pure life would bear a testimony to the influence of prayer and devotion on the devotee.

If the behaviour of a person of devotion ('Upaasak') also happens to be like those worldly people who often resort to trickery, deceit, misdeeds and misconduct in their dealings, then it is clear that prayer has had no effect on his life, social interaction or business transactions. Ideally, a person's speech and actions should express and reflect his heart. It is only when the humane sentiments of devotion are expressed in virtuous actions that it becomes evident that the devotee has known and practised devotion in its true sense. If this does not happen, the devotion happens to be sheer rote learning and downright pretension. Indeed, the society learns of the person's inner purpose by his behaviour. For this reason, a devotee's inner feelings should shine through his behaviour in much the same way as the stars shine brightly in the sky at night.

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सम In his behaviour, the devotee should be gentle, mature, polite, and should also exhibit genial and good disposition. His dealings in business, trade and occupation should be upright and straightforward. The devotee, instead of being miserly, should always be liberal in showing respect and magnanimity to others. राम राम राम राम राम

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# **PUBLIC SERVICE**

Helping others, sympathizing with them, supporting their noble ventures and doing good unto them are all aspects of public service.

The devotees who have tasted the sweet bliss of Ram-Naam and have attained peace, mental steadiness and in whom Ram-Naam has established Itself, should find time from their daily routine to involve themselves in improving the lot of the needy and deprived sections of the society.

It is rare to come across anyone who remains engrossed all day long in worship, meditation or the study of scriptures. Such practices are to be undertaken only for a few months by the spiritual aspirants observing strict spiritual discipline and austerity. If someone were to spend years in these pursuits, he would end up wasting time in sloth, confusion, needless activities and aimless wandering. Hence, those who have attained some success in their spiritual practice and have relished the bliss arising thereof should utilize their leisure in serving the society. It will be very beneficial for the nation and the community if good people, endowed with serene nature engage themselves in social service. This will enhance social well-being.

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Those who have leisure, intellect, strength, ability and capacity for work, should devote their time to public service. That would lead to a lot of good for the people at large.

In fact, the devotee should consider the noble acts of public service, beneficence, altruism etc. to be different elements of Sri Ram's devotion only. These acts should not be considered a waste of time. These acts are also as noble as 'jaap', reading scriptures, meditation and regular study of sacred texts. Hence, it has been very rightly said:

"Swakarmanaa Tambhyacharya

Sidhim Vindati Maanavah"

Man worships that Supreme Lord by means of his virtuous actions and thereby attains perfection.

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For the devotee, service is indeed an ingredient for the devotion of Sri Ram. For those who revere Sri Ram-Naam enshrined in the sanctum-sanctorum of their heart, all selfless acts of public service are verily the flowers, leaves, incense, lamp and offering that are needed for veneration of God's beautiful Image within.

The spiritual aspirant should fully understand that spreading Ram-Naam among others, urging them to study religious and scriptural books, encouraging them to attend 'satsang', inspiring them to make their lives sublime — all these are acts of service. Similarly, uplifting the downtrodden, spurring them forward on the path of progress, helping the hapless poor, spreading education and participating in reform activities, doing and encouraging others to do deeds that enhance wellbeing in society — all these virtuous acts are aspects of social service.

The devotee should have firm belief in his heart that while all the aforesaid selfless actions aid and enhance his meditation and remembrance of God, they also serve as the principal gates for the Descent of Sri Ram's Grace and Benevolence.

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Vridhi-Aastik Bhaav Kee,

Shubh Mangal Sanchaar,

Abhyudaya Sadd-Dharm Kaa,

Ram Naam Vistaar.

: A devout and selfless invocation to God of Gods - Sri Ram:

'May, with the Grace and Benevolence of the Supreme Soul - SRI RAM, the world be led into abiding faith and knowledge of the all-pervasive godliness, goodness and well-being! Let true spirituality permeate the universe and the holiest of the holy Ram-Naam transcend (rise above) all barriers!'



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# **GLOSSARY**

Beejaakshar: The core constituent of 'RAM' is formed by the unison of 'R' of 'Agni', 'A' of 'Surya', 'M' of 'Chandra' - the three essential cosmic elements (fire, sun, moon).

Guru: Spiritual Guide/Teacher.

Jap or Jaap or Recital of Ram-Naam keeping

Naam-Jaap or

Mantra-Jaap: in mind its true meaning.

Kirtan: Devotional and soulful singing/chanting of the glories of 'Naam' and/or God (Sri Ram).

Mantra: The sacred word or group of words, endowed with exceptional powers through a process of constant meditation. 'Mantra' ought to ennoble, enlighten and liberate the human soul from the mortal bondage (physical prison-human life).



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Mantra-Yog or Mantra-Yoga: A spiritual practice whereby recitation of Mantra leads to God-realization. In short, faith, 'Dhyaan' and 'Samaadhi' in unison with 'Mantra' result in 'Mantra-Yoga'. It follows 'Naam-Jaap' performed with complete devotion and faith.

Ram-Naam: The blessed name of the Supreme Lord-Sri Ram is the holy syllable 'Om' ('Pranav') of the Vedas. The Name is identical with the Lord, that is to say, as soon as one utters The Name, it is understood to mean Sri Ram Himself. It is truly said that the Name of the Lord is greater than the Lord Himself. This holy Name of the Lord has saving powers and by Its repetition, one's body, mind and soul become absolutely pure thereby facilitating the attainment of salvation.

Sadaachaar: Righteous and virtuous conduct. The conduct which makes one's own life and the life of others happy, pure and illustrious.

Saadhak: The devotee who remembers God.

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Satsang: Religious congregation or company of holy people.

Sri or Shree: Honorific prefix to the name of a deity; denotes wealth; qualities of person like fame, honour; a title for the goddess Lakshmi.

Upaasak: Person who worships God and prays to the same.

Vichaar-Yog: Yog of Thought or Discrimination.

Yog or Yoga: Word(s) derived from the Sanskrit root meaning 'to join'. It means to join us to our true reality i.e. God. Both the goal and the method/practice employed for reaching it are called Yog. The methods of sattaining the end of religion are called Yog and different forms of Yog are adapted to different temperaments and as such every man must pursue the Yog according to his own nature or temperament.



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