

The Adi Shakti Mantra and the Meaning of Sadhana

A contemporary prophet once said, “Oh, the times they are a-changing”. And along with those changes come stress—at work, at home, in our communities, and even the environment. We’ve been blessed to have a Teacher that gave us a way through these challenging times—sadhana. Sadhana cultivates steadiness and vitality in the face of change. Sadhana allows us to know the unknown and to face the present moment with security and stability. So our task in the morning—you may think of it as your chore—is sadhana, self-discipline. “Oh! I have to discipline myself.” It sounds so forced, doesn’t it? And yet with sadhana, we have an opportunity to remove a lot of stuff from our subconscious. It can be quite joyful; and that’s why I called it sweet fulfillment.

If you’re one who considers sadhana a chore, how do you begin to hold it in a different way? How can we change our relationship to sadhana so that it becomes a delight? How can we cultivate a self-discipline that is both sweet and fulfilling? I like to think of sadhana as a beautiful dance, Shiva Nataraj, Shiva dancing; sadhana is the entire universe dancing around you and you’re simply trying to get into rhythm. Part of the rhythm is simply showing up. I think you should show up even if you don’t know why. It’s a good idea to be regular in your sadhana, even if you’re irregular as a person.

Sadhana isn’t only a discipline; it is this universal dance—a dance with certain steps. In every single sadhana, you want to complete those steps. You want to internalize them, because if you don’t, you never get into rhythm. You’re always heading in the wrong direction. Sadhana is a dance between the body, the mind, the soul and the universe; sadhana is the discipline to know when to lead and when to follow. So much has changed and yet there is a common element that remains—the Adi Shakti Mantra or Morning Call. Let’s think about this dance, this thing we do in sadhana, from the basis of the very first one—because that never changed. It acts like a thread weaving together all the changes over the years: Ek Ong Kar Sat Nam Siri Wahe Guru.

What does it mean? Wake up! Awaken—it is the kundalini awakening mantra. And each syllable within the phrase can be thought of as a gesture—a step in the dance. First we say Ek; it means ‘one’. If you vibrate with the word, then you become instantly open to everything at once. If you are truly one with the gesture, you will experience no boundary—all barriers will drop away. As soon as you say Ek, you’re totally open; you’re one; you haven’t divided anything yet; you’re without thought. Does that make sense? There are other experiences available from this same word—for example, you could feel strong by chanting a long Ek, drawing it out; or, you could say to yourself, “I’ve really had it with all this stuff” and the sound becomes more like ‘Ick’. Your subconscious is funny. There are many potential experiences, but as a sadhana, Ek consolidates total openness in an instant, poof, all at once.

The next word is Ong, the sound of the gong, which always expresses a sense of expansion. So first, we experience total openness, Ek, there’s no distinction; and then Ong, the universe taking birth; me giving birth to me. Does that make sense? First—Ek—I’m me without any prejudice, without any judgment, without any fragmentation; then Ong, the creative energy to express my destiny.

Ek Ong Kar: You’ve expanded and now you project out, because Kar means all those thoughts and actions in the creation. So think of it—Ek Ong, the universe has

created the field of action; Kar, so you act. Ek Ong Kar—what a joyous state to start with! So we're already in pretty sweet fulfillment and we're only through the first third.

What's the next word? Sat. What's the energy of Sat? The expression of Sat? The word Sat means existence—what is—because what's true is what is; what is, is what's true. There is no gap. Sat is your being in existence, that sense of coming into your being, crystallization of the self. And the Self is unlimited.

Nam is an interesting one. We translate it noun, identification, identity. All of existence gains an identity. What's the gesture of identity? What's the dance of identity? What do you do when you have an identity? What does that mean? There are things I can do and there are things I can't do as Gurucharan—right? If I'm a human, if that's my identity, there are certain things I can do and not do as a human, correct. Identity has a *bantar** and *jantar*; it has structure. So identity requires a confrontation, a qualification.

Many people enjoy Sat, that great vast being: I'm being; I'm one with existence. But then Nam comes along and—oops, identity crisis. Because Nam demands that you qualify yourself: Does this thought or action qualify as Nam in this moment? It requires discipline and surrender and courage. Yogi Bhajan asked again and again—can you qualify? So Nam is the poke, provoke, confront, and elevate. It's not that we poke each other or confront each other, but rather our Self—in our sadhana! Nam is your greatest gift. Sometimes we get lost, we hook into self-existence, Sat, as the essence, the 'real thing'. Yogiji would say, So what? Everything has existence. You can't get out of it. So that's not so interesting. But Nam, now that's interesting, because every identity, every word we speak, creates identity and shapes our total effect in the world and our experience of ourselves.

So the fundamental gesture in sadhana is confronting the thought. If you go through your entire sadhana and never confront the thought, did you really do sadhana? I don't think so. This took me a long time to learn, because I would sit down and all I wanted to do was just bliss out. Nothing wrong with that is there? So I'd chant Ek Ong, bliss out, and say, I could go on for 20 hours—the more bliss the better. But in the end, there's a kind of bliss that should come from your being, your mastery of your Self. So during sadhana, Nam is not just generating a good feeling or going to a positive place or entrancing yourself in a certain thought because it feels good and you don't want to deal with your other stuff; that's not it. Sat--you're in your being; Nam—this is me, my identity. So be it, be it so. Sadhana must have this aspect to it, this gesture. Otherwise you've gotten vast, you've projected, but you've forgotten Nam and your sadhana is incomplete.

What's the next word, Siri. What's it feel like? What happens to the mind? Siri brings you to *shuniya*, a moment of stillness. It means great; it means beyond; it means you went past whatever you had been feeling, thinking, living. Suddenly you're a hero; you've gone beyond the ordinary. And if someone sees a heroic act, they say Wah! You've stilled your former, small self and for a moment, you've become zero. So Siri is a stillness, a focused *shuniya*, because without that you can't manifest Wahe. Without that moment of *shuniya*, you're just hoping. Wahe becomes a question not a reality, not the true merger, the vastness, the surrender, the experience that is Wahe Guru.

And what's the final word? Guru. Guru is transformation. You have all that you've gone through, you've cleaned out the closets of the mind, you've gone to the temple, you've presented the being, you've totally opened, you've expanded, you've

merged, you've bowed; now the instruction comes. Guru is the teacher; guru shows you the way. So, what are you going to correct? How are you going to do it? That's when you're given an experience, an insight, a transformation.

When we practice sadhana as a life-long discipline, it frees up so much energy, so much vitality and grounds us in such a vastness of reality that we can take on anything, anytime, anywhere. It gives us flexibility and resourcefulness, caliber and character. It gives us courage. Think about it, you can live drawing energy from any chakra. And when you're young, you don't have to worry. Everything is working—hormones are balanced, cells are regenerating, there's lots of energy from the first three chakras. Then you get into middle age; things are still pretty good. You've been working out, doing okay, no problem. Except—if you're still drawing on the same source of energy as when you were young, you're going to eventually fall apart. You have to tap into that energy of compassion and connection, clarity in your projection, or you start messing up. It's a different energy, different bodies, make sense? You have to have emotional relationships that make sense. You have to have a lifestyle that supports your identity. You get a little older and you have to start drawing energy from your subtlety, from your spirit.

In the old days, to be an elder meant possessing a special force. It was a time of enormous vitality. Baba Deep Singh, at the age of 80, took up a great sword and went to war. The story goes like this: the enemy cuts off his head and he just grabs it and keeps going, walking toward the Golden Temple! Freaks everybody out! As he approaches the temple, he throws his own head through the gates and onto the prakarma. And the enemy says to itself, "I'm not dealing with this guy!" and retreats. So what is that? Oh, he's weak and old. No! You can be; but you can also switch to a source of energy that goes along with this stage of life, this subtlety, this enormous power. When you find that source of vitality that is your consciousness itself, that's called living, that's called sadhana. Sadhana gives you a link—through all the chakras—to that core energy that is you.

Until then, it's not actually an experience. It's imagination, fantasy, emotional satisfaction. It's called all sorts of wonderful things. It's what drives Country Music. So we're describing this simple way of being. Take up the mantra and in the vastness of our group psyche (that's why we do group sadhana)—somebody's sad, somebody's mad, somebody's glad, somebody's bad—you can always accept somebody else's problems more than yours. So their stuff slips in, your stuff slips over there, the whole thing gets exchanged, and sure enough this Nam thing starts happening, and you get catalyzed, you become you. Otherwise, you can locate yourself in a nice safe corner where you can say, I did sadhana. But ask yourself: Is sadhana doing you? You have to do the dance. That's where you get your sweet fulfillment and delight. To enter into that play and allow the confrontation, the expansion and the energy of sadhana to transform you. It's going to be fantastic!

[Bantar and Jantar are two stages in the sequence of creative expression from inner essence to full manifestation: *antar*, *bantar*, *jantar*, *mantar*, *tantar*, *patantar*, and *sotantar*. Bantar is associated with structure in time and space, when the thought begins to have dimension. Jantar are the qualities associated with the form.]