

Nama Vs Other Dharmas

1. Yugas and Dharmas

There are 4 Yugas, Namely Kritha Yuga, Thretha Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. They are collectively called as 'Chathur Yuga' meaning 4 Yugas. Each Yuga has its own dharma called the Yuga dharma. Yuga dharma is that aspect of dharma that is valid for that Yuga through which the Jeevas can realize The Lord.. The following are the dharmas prescribed by vedas for the four yugas.

In the Kritha Yuga (Satya Yuga), the mind of people was basically pure. They had no distraction and meditation was easy and natural for them. That is the reason why contemplation has been prescribed for Kritha Yuga.

In the Treta Yuga, materials for the performing Yajnas or sacrifices were easily available and also the people are competent enough to perform Yagnas. Therefore it was easy for them to perform Agnihotra, Jyotistoma, Darsa-Paurnimas and other Yajnas. That is the reason why Yajna has been described as the external form of Sanatana Dharma in that age.

In the Dwapara Yuga, there was the manifestation of Avatars and people could easily have direct worship of God. Hence, worship was prescribed as the principal form of Sadhana in that age.

In the Kali Yuga, there are many distractions for the mind. People lack in Brahmacharya, strength of will and power of enquiry or rational investigation. It is very difficult to procure materials for the performance of sacrifices.

In the Kali Yuga, people are incapable of doing any dharmas. The concept of Dharma will lose its foot hold in Kali Yuga. Kali Yuga is a period of decadence of all Dharma by all sects of people. The following are few dhosha gunas that one can easily find in the people in Kali Yuga.

- People will do what they are not supposed to do.
- People shall not do what they are supposed /expected to do.
- Tradition would be thrown overboard.
- Each sect will boast itself as Supreme.
- Virtues like chastity, righteousness and obstinacies would be interpreted according to their own whims and fancies.
- Evil and transgression would be wide spread.
- Woman folk would indulge in falsehood, adultery, and deceit and speak harsh languages.
- Bachelors (Bhramachaaries) will no longer follow their duties and daily virtues.
- House holders will neglect their prescribed rituals like charity and sacrifice
- Vanaprasthas would not retire to the forest, but cling to cities.
- Sanyaasis would have relationship with their kith and kin.
- Kings would levy burdensome taxes and fail to protect their subjects.
- All the four group of people, Brahmins, Vysyaas, Kshatriyaas and Sudraas would commit offenses.
- Having become slaves to their senses, fools and villains will continue their evil actions.
- Dharma will survive in some corner of the world.

Therefore, in Kali Yuga Nama Sankeerthanam (Loud chanting of the Divine Name) has been recommended as the principal forms of Sadhana.

| YUGA | DHARMA |
|---------|--------------------|
| Kritha | Meditation |
| Thretha | Yagna |
| Dwapara | Pooja |
| Kali | Nama Sankeerthanam |

In the following sections a genuine attempt has been made to highlight the greatness and significance of Nama Sankeerthanam with respect to the other Yuga dharma and insist on the very fact that Nama Sankeerthanam is the one and only way and there is no other way out to realize the Lord.

2. Nama Vs Dhyana (Meditation)

Dhyana is the 7th stage in the ashtanga yoga (8-limbed). The following are the various stages of ashtanga yoga

Stage 1: Yama (internal purification through moral training preparatory to Yoga)

Stage 2: Niyama (discipline: cleanliness, contentment, mortification, study, and surrender of the ego)

Stage 3: Asanas (Physical postures)

Stage 4: Pranayama (Breath control)

Stage 5: Prathyahara (Withdrawal of the senses)

Stage 6: Dharana (Concentration)

Stage 7: Dhyana (Meditation)

Stage 8: Samadhi (The highest superconscious state)

To get in to Dhyana, one has to practice and should cross the six stages (preconditions) namely Yama, Niyama, Asanas, Pranayama, Prathyahara, and Dharana. Being mastered all these stages one will be qualified for Dhyana. Whereas, with Nama the 'Samadhi' can be reached without much effort.

In Kali Yuga it is not possible for one to perform Dhyana. Due to the nature of the yuga and since the nature of the people, it is not possible to perform Dhyana in Kali Yuga.

There is no need to seek the Lord by retiring to forests, Just have his name in your lips. He will come willingly to you. That is what the great 'Bhagawada Dharma' teaches.

This does not undermine the efficacy of Dhyana, but it is only meant to exalt the greatness of Nama Keerthanam. There is no other way but to chant His name. It strengthens your faith, purifies your soul. The mind is a wanderer, only God's name can give it a direction. "God's name on lips, salvation in hand" that is the experience of many. Meditation brings one untold gain; the chanting of God's name.

3. Nama Vs Yagnam / Yagas

The Yagnas / Yagas are prescribed as the dharma only for the Thretha Yuga. However performing Yagnas in Kali Yuga may not be useful, not in the sense that Yagnas are not capable enough, but due to the fact that we are not capable enough of doing it. As a performer (Karta), we do not have the competency to perform Yagnas as how it should be performed (as prescribed in Vedas).

Yagna has many preconditions. If any abachara has occurred in Yagna (if the preconditions are not satisfied), Yagna will not give the expected results, at worse if the preconditions are not satisfied, yagna may deliver unexpected results also. Whereas in case of Nama, Nama has no preconditions.

The following table lists the preconditions for yagna and also highlights how Nama is superior than the former.

| Constraints | YAGNA | NAMA |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Adhikaari | Only Agnihotris (one who has Agni with him always) can perform Yagna | All human beings regardless of caste, creed, community, religion, sex are eligible to chant the Bhagwan Nama |
| Swaram | Mantra swara should be perfect | Nama chanting do not require Sruthi, Raga, Thala. It can be even be shouted |
| Suddhi | Includes, Mantra suddhi, Dhiraviya suddhi, Paatra suddhi, Sthala suddhi, Jala suddhi, Mana suddhi, Chittha suddhi etc., | Nothing in the universe can contaminate Nama or reduce its purity. Whereas Nama purifies everything |
| Shradhai | To be performed with concentration | Chanting Nama needs no concentration. In time course of Nama chanting concentration comes of its own as a natural process without any extra effort |
| Kaalam | Yagna should be performed in a very auspicious time (Shuba muhurtha) | Nama is not bounded by time. Any time spent in chanting Nama is very auspicious time (transformed to auspicious time) |
| Desam | Yagnas should be performed only in Bharatha varusha (Karma bhoomi), Yagna performed in Videsa (Abroad- Boga bhoomi) is useless | Nama is not bounded by place or time. It can be chanted any where at any time |
| Palan | Yagna gives only the palan for which it is performed (Sankalpa) | Nama grants everything that is good to you |

Others facts of Yagna

- Atmasamarpan Mantra - Atmasamarpan Mantra will be chanted at the end of all yagna, without which the yagna should not be completed.
- Yagna is dependent on Nama.
- Yagna has many preconditions. If any abachara has occurred in Yagna (if the preconditions are not satisfied), Yagna will not give the expected results, at worse if the preconditions are not satisfied, yagna may deliver unexpected results also.
- Yagna completely dependent on the competency of the performer (Karthi) who performs it.
- Yagna is only for Thretha Yuga.

Other Significances of Nama Sankeerthanam

- Atmasamarpan - Chanting Nama itself is Atmasamarpanam
- Nama is not dependant on any other means of worship or dharma
- Nama will only delivers good things
- Nama is not dependent on the competency of the performer (Karthi). It is self competent
- Nama Sankeerthanam is the very dharma for this Kali Yuga. As it is the Yuga dharma, Nama Sankeerthanam surpasses all other forms of worship and actions prescribed by the Vedas.
- Nama Sankeerthanam is endorsed by the Vedas
- Nama has no preconditions

By the way, Nama is not against Yagnas or any other dharmas. In this Kali Yuga, all the other dharmas have lost their perfectness. Even those who are doing (leave apart the fame and money part) can do it for the sake of preservation of the dharma.

Karma yoga is prescribed for those who do not set interest in Nama Keerthanam and its greatness. So one has to perform dedicated Karma Yoga for 3 Bhramma kalpa to get interest in Nama Keerthanam

4. Nama Vs Mantra

Upakarma is a Vedic rituals practiced to date every year. Its main significance is to rejuvenate the Veda mantras. After the proper observance of Upakarma, the power of Veda mantras gets increased. This event is conducted once in every year.

Nama do not have rather require any such rituals for rejuvenation as the full potency of the Lord is present within His holy name,

Namnam Akari Bahudha Nija Sarva Shaktih

Meaqrng, "In the names of the Lord exist all of the Lord's energies."

- Birds, Animals, Insects those hear the Divine name attain the feet of the Lord
- Even the grass and shrubs are waiting to hear the Divine name
- Animals, Birds and Insects are Gods creation. They too have atma. By making them hearing the Divine name, we can help them too. So loud chanting of Nama (Nama Sankeerthanam) is the best. That is the greatest help we can do for one
- Nama Japa : Nama Japa is performed in Silence. For Nama Japa, Dhyana is an attribute. Count is important for Nama Japa
- Mantra Japa: Mantra japa, direction and posture (Asana) are attributes. Count is important
- Nama Chanting: Nama chanting is different from Nama Japa. Nama Chanting can be performed loudly and count, direction and postures are not required.

5. Nama Vs Karmanustanam

Doing punya karma's like performing penance, learning Vedas, doing great rituals, gifting, getting dipped in holy water, performing one's prescribed duties without fail, for thousand and thousands of birth is mere tool to get into Nama Keerthanam. They are just tools, not the ultimate fruit.

Karma yoga is prescribed for those who do not set interest in Nama Keerthanam and its greatness. So one has to perform dedicated Karma Yoga for 3 Bhramma kalpa to get interest in Nama Keerthanam.

Srimad Bhagavatham says that, Karma (duties) need to be performed until one realizes the greatness or takes interest in "Bhagawada" Dharma (having the Divine Name always in lips) and hearing to the stories of the lord.

(Still to come...)

RadheKrishna!!!