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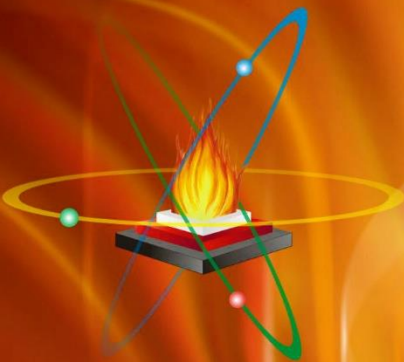
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Perspective

Deciphering ‘*Idam-na-mama*– This is not mine’ as the core tenet of a Yagya based life-style

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Abstract

Yagya is the pillar of Vedic culture. It is an integral part of the collective Indic culture, which upholds the sanctity of the Vedas. Yagya is mostly considered as a ceremony incurring several steps. It is merely physical aspect of yagya in which after initial rituals and mantra chanting herbs are offered to fire as sacrifice. The physical process in itself is beneficial in several aspects for individuals, environment, nature etc. However the significance of yagya is not restricted to this sacrificial fire-process. It has much wider philosophy and deeper meaning. Ancient scriptures emphasize more onto subtle learning embedded within the rite and give an

insight within the yagya based life-style associated with it.

The phrase ‘*Idam-na-mama*’ implies ‘This is not mine’. ‘*Idam-na-mama*’ signifies the central theme of Yagya. Life lived in accordance with the lessons from yagya experience holistic and cohesive development, many modern research findings have evidenced these phenomena.

Keywords

Yagya, Yagya based life-style, *Idam-na-mama*, Philosophy

Yagya hold an indispensable place in Indian culture. They are woven in India's cultural, social, spiritual fabric of living. The foundation of the vedic culture emanates from the philosophy and science of yagya. It is an integral part of our religious customs. All the important ceremonies - including the *sodas samskaras*- the 16 rites of life since conception till death, are conducted with some yagya elements howsoever minimal(1).

In the ritual of Yagya, there is a stream of mantra - infused oblations in the consecrated fire. Different mantras such as *Gayatri Mantra*, *Mahamrityunjay Mantra*, etc., are recited, followed by a word '*Idam-na-mama*' and the oblations of medicinal herbs are placed in the fire. The phrase '*Idam-na-mama*' meant 'This is not mine'. '*Idam-na-mama*' signifies the central theme of Yagya. The continuum of yagya is the nucleus of continuous activities in the world and the cosmic expansion. *Atharvaveda 09/10/14 "Yagyao vishwavsya bhuvanasya nabhih"*, *Rigveda 01/164/36 "Ayam yagyo vishwavsya bhuvanasya nabhih"* elucidates yagya to be pivotal in the existence and sustenance of the cycle of nature. The creation of nature is an eternal yagya. It is the genesis of the flourishing manifestation of nature. The sentiment of yagya indwells in the ecological balance and harmonious activities of nature. The creation of all that exists in the visible and the invisible folds of nature thoroughly discussed in *Srimad Bhagvat (1)*.

Yagya as a ceremony is only the physical process or ritual of *yagya*, which has scientific significance and various benefits. However the meaning of *yagya* is not confined to this sacrificial fire-process. It has much wider and deeper meaning. Yagya is not merely a ritual rather a way of life. The philosophy of *yagya* appears to be the life of Indology (1).

The *Rigveda*, while explaining the importance of *Yagya* inspirations in the first '*Mandala*'(chapter), the first '*Sukta*'-"*Om Agnimeele purohitam. Yagyasya devamritwijam. Hotaram ratnadhaatmam*" has likened a *Yagya* to a *Purohit*, a priest, because by following his teachings, we can improve our

status here, in this life and in the life hereafter (2). *Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya* highlighted a different perspective of *yagya* as a moral teaching for *yagyaiya* life style through *Sutra Padhdati* in *Yug Yagya Padhdhti*. Underlying philosophy of every ritual is given prime importance followed by physical process of procedure imbued with emotions, feelings and actions by individual while performing *yagya* ceremony (3).

Yagya as ceremony or physical process is mostly perceptible to the individuals while *yagya* in its true spirit is to inhabit in *yagya* way of living or life style. It is the central philosophy of Yagya for living an ideal human life. It has been said that performing *yagya* is like rehearsing the art of living. Just as little children are taught how to count by giving them little colored balls, fixed on a frame (abacus) so also the scenario of the Yagya worship is an example which shows people that life should be lived on the basis of *Yagya* thoughts and feelings by involving in *Yagyik* activities, through willing service to others (2).

'This is not mine but it is for supreme power i.e. for universal welfare' - the perspective attempts to explain the meaning and message of the phrase '*Idam-na-mama*' of Yagya as described in scripture with respect to Yagya life (4,5). He, who follows this principle in life is instrumental in bestowing enormous benefits, not only in society, but also on himself. All sages and saints have followed this principle (2).

Nature teaches us '*Idam-na-mama*' through its incessant unbreakable natural cycle of *yagya*. The behavior pattern of nature follows the spirit of Yagya. The ocean is generous and gives its water to the clouds and the clouds in turn, carry their precious load from one place to another and finally pour them down as rain. Rivers and streams emerge from the soil, fed by this rain and they flow steadily to drench the earth and quench the thirst of all beings, Trees and fruits give themselves up for the good of others and flowers bloom to give joy to all beholders. Whatever functions are performed by the sun, moon,

stars, wind etc. are not for themselves, but for the welfare of others only. Each part of body is constantly working not for its own sake, but for the well-being of the whole body. Whenever, we turn our eyes we can see that the cosmos is run on the yagya spirit. If this spirit of self-sacrifice is absent, then all the beauty and harmony of creation will turn into chaos and destruction. *Rishis* have said that yagya is like the hub of the wheel of creation and if this hub breaks, then it is impossible for the wheels to move and the chariot to go ahead (1,2).

This fact is reminded during Yagya rite in which Gayatri Mantra sacrifice is followed by chanting of '*Idam Gayatryai Idam nam ama*' – This is not mine; this is for Gayatri – supreme power - for universal welfare. The message is ideal for living a noble life and is capable of enabling a journey into the highest possible growth of human kind. Human life contains all kinds of possibilities and according to Indian *Rishis*, '*Idam-na-mama*' is capable of achieving highest of possibility of human life. When person lives the message - 'This is not mine, it is for universal welfare' in life, each action becomes for universal welfare, and his life can be termed as Yagya life. This practice results in fundamental personal and social benefits in the person life and leads human life to an ideal state. Few of these benefits are: 1) proper utilization of resources, builds good karma, 2) attachments to the mundane things goes away, 3) person experience peace and happiness and so on. At social level, practice of '*Idamnamama*' helps in social harmony, social welfare and equal development of all beings. Human life is dependent on others from childhood. All personal growth resides on generous help from others. If this feeling of cooperation is decreased in society, all kinds of issues arise in the society, hence, one has to return back to the society. This process is very important for human kind progress. For which, the fundamental message to be implied by all being is to practice 'This is not mine', which is the center of Yagya philosophy (4,5).

Each person has thought, emotions and action which he naturally gets when come to life. Through

thoughts, emotions and actions he utilizes all his resources (money, affiliations, talent, etc). The highest goal of human life, is achieved through utilizing these resources for universal welfare, for which, the philosophy of '*Idamnamama*- This is not mine' needs to be practiced throughout life. When every emotion, thought and action is oriented for universal welfare, it is the form of highest renunciation. As mentioned in *Shrimad Bhagawad Geeta*, renunciation results in the peace (12/12), and without peace there can be no happiness (2/66). Converse to this in the modern age when the teaching of yagyaiya life style '*Idamnamama*- This is not mine' has changed to '*Idammama*- This is mine' the unremitting cycle of nature has interrupted which has incurred various catastrophes and dangerous for human civilization. '*Idammama*- This is mine' takes us away from the true spirit of yagyaiya life style with meaning of selfless sacrifice for noble purposes. Sacrificing of the ego, selfishness and material attachments and adopting rational thinking, humane compassion and dedicated creativity for the welfare of all which is indeed the best yagya which should be performed by all human beings.

The philosophy of yagya teaches a way of living in the society in harmony, a living style to promote and protect higher humane values in the society which in indeed the basis of the ideal human culture (6). Many modern findings have evidenced these phenomena. Generosity is a first step towards renunciation. When anyone generously share anything to the needy, the donor immediately gets peace and happiness. Studies have shown that giving to others returns emotional rewards in terms of happiness and wellbeing (7-11). A study by researchers from Department of Psychology, University of British Columbia, in 2015 demonstrated that in a controlled study, adults purchasing goods for other individuals showed greater positive emotion than adults receiving resources for themselves. Besides in their study they also showed that this relation of generosity and happiness is present universally regardless of their location (9).

Generosity is part of the life when one practices the Yagya philosophy of '*Idam-na-mama* – This is not mine'. Aforesaid researches demonstrated relation of generosity with happiness through controlled relationship studies. In addition to the relation, the phenomena emotional reward-happiness is also evidenced through changes in neuronal network of brain when practiced generosity. A group of scientists i.e. 1) Department of Psychology, University of Lübeck, Germany, 2) Department of Neurology, Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University, Chicago, USA and 3) Laboratory for Social and Neural Systems Research, Department of Economics, University of Zurich, Switzerland have demonstrated a neural link between generosity and happiness. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging of brain, study was conducted on participants who were provided money to spend for others (experimental group) and themselves (control group). Study reported that participants who spend for others had more self-reported happiness and had distinguished changes in the brain portion of temporo-parietal junction, which indicated an important linking between commitment-induced generosity with happiness (8).

Conclusion

Indian *Rishis* have demonstrated commitment induced generosity reflected in the philosophy of '*This is not mine*', throughout their life. They showed that whole life is Yagya i.e. not for self but for upliftment for others. They have lived this principle throughout their life and even sacrificed their life for living the ideal. Indian scripture and stories regarding their life evidenced that their all actions, thinking and feelings were for universal welfare and upliftment for all beings, the first step to achieve this is the practice of '*This is not mine*'. All great spiritual leaders in the world have preached through their life that they have lived selflessly and generously for other's welfare. This feeling is made in practice through symbolic fire-offering ritual during Yagya with the repetition of phrase '*Idam-na-mama*'.

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