

# **VEDIC RITUALS-----THEIR RELEVANCE TODAY** **(IMPORTANCE OF SANDYAVANDANAM)**

**Mannaragudi (Late) Prof. V. Gopaldaswamy Aiengar  
memorial lecture**



*By*  
**Sri V.R Narasimhan**  
**(Former Director, CPRI)**

*Organized by :*  
Sri Ramakrishna students' home on the occasion of founders day,  
in association with  
Indian Institute of World Culture  
Aug 5, 2012

# VEDIC RITUALS - Their relevance today

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The general belief is that Vedic rituals are religious in character and as such may not be relevant in present day scientific environment. It must be remembered that long time ago there was no segregation of science, philosophy etc. All knowledge was under one package. Vedas are the first source of knowledge. Gradually humankind started learning more about universe and its relation to mankind.

Vedic rituals are grouped under two categories, namely *Nitya karma* (rituals to be done everyday) and *Naimithika karma* (rituals performed occasionally). Why did our sages prescribe certain karmas to be done daily? There must be some reason. Unfortunately the rituals have remained while the spirit behind it is lost.

Some twenty years ago S.T.S.K sabha took up the work of preparing a book on 'Sandyavandanam'. *Sandyavandanam* is a nitya karma, that is, to be performed daily. This work was entrusted to me. This gave me an opportunity to go through various references on the subject and also studies in areas of neurology and kirlian photography. This survey indicated that Sandyavandanam is essentially a vedic exercise for health of humans. Studies connected with Sandyavandanam are given in subsequent paragraphs.

## 2.0 VEDIC CONCEPT OF HUMAN BODY

If one asks the question regarding the vedic concept of human body, the answer will be *Pancha Bhutas*. If details of *Pancha Bhutas* are sought, the answer will be *Agni, Vayu, Akash, Prithvi* and *Aap*. For us, who are used to the physical appearance of the body, these answers convey nothing. The truth is that *Pancha Bhutas* are the real regulators of our body but we know nothing about it. Our sages knew about it and

formulated rituals to harness it for our benefit. Recent research in medical sciences helps to understand the approach of our sages.

Medical science believed for long that heart was the nodal organ regulating the activities of the human body. Recent research established that, the brain held the key in the functioning of human system. The human brain functions as power house, computer, and telephone exchange. It functions as source of power supply to organs, muscles, nerves etc. There are 2.4 billion cells in the brain producing electricity. It produces electricity at various frequencies starting from one cycle to meet the demands of various human activities.

The electrical measurements are referred to as E.E.G. Based on E.E.G measurements, the electricity produced by brain is classified as under:

***Alpha waves*** - Slow rhythmic waves in the frequency range 8 to 13 cycles per second. They are found in adults with healthy outlook, balanced and relaxed personality. Meditation is found to improve alpha waves. Similarly closing of eyes.

***Beta waves*** - Asynchronous waves with frequency above 14 cycles per second. Sometimes it can be as high as 80 cycles. These are found in states of anger, tension, worry or turbulent mind.

***Theta waves*** - These are waves in the range 5 to 8 cycles. They are found under emotional conditions. The emotion can be due to happiness or Worry.

***Delta waves*** - They are less than 5 cycles. It is found during sleep.

The brain electricity flowing in the body is a mix of all the above. The mix decides the individual's character, personality, outlook, temperament etc. Presence of Alpha waves in the mix is important.

The brain electricity is called *Pancha Bhutas* in vedic terminology. According to our sages,

- Mix of *Pancha Bhutas* decides health, character, personality etc. (agrees with medical science)
- *Pancha Bhutas* function in five groups - five left five right – corresponding to five fingers.  
They start from head and flow all over the body and terminate at the feet
- Palm and feet have all the five groups in them.(This is the reason that washing feet is considered worship)
- *Pancha Bhutas* are named as *Agni* (thumb), *Vayu* (fore-finger), *Akash* (middle finger), *Prithvi* (ring finger) and *Aap* (little finger).

{Note; Vedic grouping appears to be functional viz., energy, respiration, brain and nervous system, muscles and blood}

- All the five are present in all parts of the body. For example, Agni corresponding to thumb will have 50% of Agni and 12.5% of each of the other forms.  
Similarly vayu (fore-finger) will have 50% of vayu and 12.5% of other four. And so on.
- The character and personality produced by pancha bhuta mix are classified as *Satwa*, *Rajas*, *Tamas*.
- One with Satwa mix will be truthful, honest, devoted to duties and God etc.(This compares with Alpha waves of Bio-electricity classification)
- One with Rajas will be mischievous, destructive, etc. (Beta waves)
- One with Tamas will be greedy, short tempered (Beta waves)
- Pure satwa can be found only in Vaikuntam. In this world, the character of individuals will be mixture of all the three.
- Respiration causes production of brain electricity.
- Respiration is both voluntary and involuntary.

- The voluntary faculty in humans can be used for improving the bio-electricity mix.
- Thus, there is broad agreement between vedic approach and approach of modern science.

Another group of scientists known as pranic healers found emission of electrons from our body. They carried out intensive studies with the help of Kirlian photography. Their studies brought out the following:

- (1) Emissions were strong and varied with the emotions of the individual.
- (2) It formed an Aura or energy body around our physical body.
- (3) The energy body followed closely the contour of our physical body and also had close relation with the physical body.
- (4) Disease manifests in energy body first before entering our physical body,
- (5) The energy body in normal cases extends upto 8 to 10 inches.
- (6) During meditation the size increases.(even Vedanta Deshika mentions this aspect)
- (7) One who practices meditation regularly, the energy body will be strong and large. It serves as immune system.
- (8) Kirlian photo of people with missing limbs showed that the energy body was complete, that is, amputation had no effect on energy body.(This is referred to in Bhagvath Gita too)
- (9) According to pranic healers, the concept of energy body was known to ancient Indians.

According to our sages, they considered the existence of energy body thus:

- Pancha bhutas extend their domain beyond the physical body and it forms an energy body (as identified by pranic healers)
- Pancha bhutas establish contact with universe (God) through this energy body
- There are points in the energy body which can absorb cosmic energy as well as throw out energy from our body. They are

called CHAKRAS. Important organs such as heart, liver, etc have special chakras.

- There are chakras in the palm and finger tips of left hand. They always absorb cosmic energy.
- Similarly, there are chakras in the palm and finger tips of right hand. They always exhaust or emit energy from the body.

*{NOTE:This is the reason we cross our hands during abhivadanam. In this way we connect our pancha bhutha in parallel with that of elders.}*

- There are seven important chakras along the spinal column. They are *Mooladara, Swadista, Manipura, Anahata, Vishudha, Ajna, and Sahasrara*. They control important organs including heart and endocrine glands.
- All chakras function in a synchronous manner.
- There are energy lines also in the energy body. They are called *Nadis*. There are three important nadis, namely *Ida, Pingala* and *Sushumna*. They also follow the spinal column.
- *Ida* and *Pingala* nadis start from *Mooladhara* chakra and terminate at the nostrils, enroute they pass through arm pits.
- Breathing through left nostril stimulates *Ida* nadi and right half of brain.
- Breathing through right nostril stimulates *Pingala* nadi and left half of brain.
- *Ida* carries mental energy while *Pingala* carries pranic energy. (energy for functioning of body. Also influences personality)
- Yoga texts give great importance to nadis, as it influences health.
- There is also a nadi connecting the bottom of ring finger of right hand to brain.
- Thus, the vedic concept of panch bhutas is that it is an energy system, which functions as electricity inside the physical body and in addition forms an energy body with necessary infrastructure surrounding the physical body (to draw cosmic

life energy from universe to provide various faculties such as speech, hearing, sense of touch and smell etc). Panchbhuta inside our body will be referred to as “Bio-electricity” and pancha bhuta outside our body as ‘energy body’ in subsequent paragraphs.

### **3.0 VEDIC APPROACH TO HEALTH**

It is a recognised fact that quality of motive energy influence the quality of end product. This we can notice even in our daily life. Quality of rice cooked in pressure cooker is different from the quality of rice cooked in open vessel. Hence it is essential to regulate the quality of motive energy. Our sages recognized this fact.

Our sages after realizing the presence of energy system called pancha bhutas regulating the physical body, felt efforts should be made to regulate the energy system for good health. In principle, it is similar to regulating voltage and frequency in a power station to provide consumers safe electricity. For this purpose they have only the following facilities.

- \* Chakras in left hand palm and right hand palm
- \* Voluntary facility in respiration

Thus, the nitya karmas use the above facilities to the chant of Veda mantras for this purpose.

Now we discuss a few nitya karmas.

### **4.0 ACHAMANAM**

#### ***4.1 Procedure***

i) This is considered as a purificatory ritual. It is used in all vedic activities.

- ii) Sit comfortably with hands between legs.
- iii) Twist the right palm so that little finger, ring finger and middle finger are stretched while first finger is bent inwards forming a hollow in the middle of the palm. The thumb will remain separate from the first finger.
- iv) Put a small quantity of water from the vessel (Tumbler) in the right hand palm (only a small quantity of water should be taken), swallow (not sip) this water chanting the mantra–“*Om Achutaya Namah*”.
- v) Repeat (iv) above two more times chanting mantras “*Om Anantaya Namah*” and “*Om Govindaya Namah*”
- (vi) Swipe the lips with the palm of right hand.
- (vii) Recite the following Mantras, and touch the different parts of the body with the tip of different fingers of right hand: -

	<b>Mantra</b>	<b>Finger</b>	<b>Part to be touched</b>
1.	Om, Kesavaya Namah (Salutation to Lord Keshava)	Right thumb	Right cheek
2.	Om, Narayanaya Namah	Right thumb	Left cheek
3.	Om, Madhavaya Namah	Right Ring finger	Right eye
4.	Om, Govindaya Namah	Right Ring finger	Left eye
5.	Om, Vishnave Namah	Right fore finger	Right side of nose
6.	Om, Madusudhanaya Namah	Right fore finger	Left side of nose
7.	Om, Trivikramaya Namah	Right little finger	Right ear
8.	Om, Vamanaya Namah	Right little finger	Left ear
9.	Om, Sridaraya Namah	Right middle finger	Right shoulder
10	Om, Hrishikesaya Namah	Right middle finger	Left shoulder
11	Om, Padmanabhaya Namah	All right fingers	Navel
12	Om, Damodaraya Namah	All right fingers	Top of head



## ***4.2 Explanatory notes***

- i) All groups of bio-electricity are available in the palm of right hand. During Achamanam, the water is energized by the palm chakra to the chant of veda mantra. By swallowing this energized water, the blood gets energized.
- ii ) Similarly all the Bio-electricity groups are available along the length of lips. By swiping, Bio-electricity lines are short circuited. This helps to remove any blocks in the path of Bio-electricity lines. Thus free flow of energy from head to foot(particularly right hand) is established.
- iii) By touching different parts of the body, we are injecting specific group of Bio-electricity at the point touched. This is the important part of Achamanam .

Our activities do have influence on Bio-electricity mix. According to Ayurveda, there are three categories of flaws that can occur. They are *Kapha*, *Vata*, and *Pitta*. They are referred to as *Tridoshas*. Kapha is imbalance of *earth* plus *water*. Vayu is imbalance of *Vayu*. Pitta is imbalance of *fire* plus *air*. According to our sages, Achamanam removes Tridosha. In other words , Achamanam preserves the quality of Bio-electricity (very similar to maintaining voltage and frequency at power stations)

## ***4.3 Application***

- i) This ritual is must for all as it helps to preserve the quality of Bio-electricity.
- ii) Those performing Sandyavandanam automatically get the benefit of this ritual.
- iii)Those who are not performing sandyavandanam must do 10 Achamanams twice a day of which one should be close to sun rise.

Those who have some health problems can increase the duration of Touch contact by chanting the mantra twice.

iv) If one is taking any treatment , Achamanam will help the efficiency of treatment. Hence they also should do it .

v) A healthy Bio electricity means a lot.It helps in healthy functioning of our organs and system and thus helps in protection against a number of ailments.Further this ritual is simple and all can easily learn and practice.

## **5.0 PRANAYAMAM**

### ***5.1 Procedure***

i) This is considered as a purificatory ritual. Hence used in all vedic activities.

ii) Sit comfortably with body in vertical position.

iii) Close the left nostril with the ring finger or ring finger and little finger of right hand. Exhale or breathe out from right nostril completely.

iv) Now close the right nostril also with thumb of right hand.

v) Now open the left nostril and take in air slowly to fill the lungs to the maximum.

vi) Afterwards close the left nostril also as before, so that air is held inside the body and relax completely [after relaxing one feels as comfortable as during normal respiration].This is called kumbaka.

vii) Remain still and chant the following mantra three times [mentally]

*OM BHUH / OM BHUVAH/ OM SUVAH / OMMAHAHA / OM JANAHA / OM TAPAH*

*OM SATYAM (This is called Vyahriti)*

*/ OM TATSAVITURVARENYAM / BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAH / DHIYO YO NAH PRACHODAYAT*

*/ OM APAHA / JYOTHI / RASAH / AMRITAM / BRAHMA / BHURBHUVASUVAROM /*

Note: While chanting the above Thumb and first finger of left hand should be in contact with left hand palm facing upwards

- viii) After recitation, Open the right nostril and release the air slowly.
- ix) Say 'OM' and touch the right ear.

## ***5.2 Explanatory notes***

(i) As nostrils are closed, oxygen is supplied from the stored air in the lungs while energy is supplied by the energy body for the working of various systems in the body.

(ii) The energy body becomes functional with chakras drawing cosmic energy from universe and nadis distributing energy to all parts of the body.

(iii) The holding of air in lungs is called 'kumbaka'. During this stage, we are chanting Pranayama Mantra. Pranayama mantra is prayers invoking deities of earth, moon, sun, regions beyond Solar system such as Mahah, Janaha, Tapaha, Satyam, Water, Light, taste and smell etc. This helps the energy body to draw energy from these regions and provide facilities of speech, hearing, seeing etc.

(iv) We take in air from left nostril. This activates IDA nadi and right hemisphere of the brain, IDA nadi carries mental or conscience force all over body. This helps in healthy functioning of organs and body systems.

(v) The seven major chakras, namely Mooladar, etc. start functioning and they provide vital energy to endocrine glands. The chant of mantras *OM Bhuh* etc. help to regulate energy supply to gland for normal secretions. It is well known that secretion from glands has great influence in the working of body systems, including behaviour, mood, character etc.

(vi) Regular practice of pranayamam helps to increase the lung capacity. Taking more air itself is a great remedy.

(vii) Holding air in lungs for some 15 seconds helps in providing protection against environment in a way similar to vaccination as used by Pasteur for protection against small pox.

(viii) Thus, Pranayamam regulates the functioning of the outer energy body, while Achamanam regulates the bio-electricity.

### ***5.3 Application***

(i) This ritual is a must for all as it helps to preserve the quality of the energy body. It is the energy body that provides life energy for the functioning of organs and all body systems.

(ii) For those performing Sandyavandanam, this is covered automatically.

(iii) Those not performing Sandyavandanam, must do 3 pranayamams twice a day (out of which, one should be close to sunrise)

(iv) Pranayamam without any chant during Kumbaka or chant of any holy name is also in use. This can be performed by all.

(v) One may experience difficulty in doing pranayamam in the beginning. This will go away after a few days practice. Hence; one should not be disheartened because of hurdles in the beginning.

(vi) Even if one is taking any treatment, pranayamam can be done. Sage Hamsayogi in his work 'Yoga rahasya' says "one who binds the air through pranayamam at chakras starting from Mooladara by chant of Vyahariti, will conquer disease and will be free from it"

## 6.0 JAPAM OR MEDITATION

### 6.1 Procedure

(i) During Japam one sits comfortably and concentrates on one word or group of words known as mantra. The mantra is a hymn with words and alphabets specially chosen and addressed to God or deity.

(ii) There is a set procedure for performing Japam

Step 1 : Condition the body to absorb energy by performing two Achamanam and one Pranayamam.

Step 2 : Invite the deity presiding over the mantra.

Step 3 : Chant the mantra. Mode of chanting is important-Silent mental chanting with eyes and mouth closed with performer hearing.

Step 4 : Bid farewell to the deity after the chant.

(iii) There are number of mantras for Japam. Gayathri mantra is the most popular one.

### 6.2 Explanatory notes

(i) Yoga experts have promoted the benefits of Japam or meditation. No further information is needed.

(ii) Some yoga experts have carried EEG studies to understand the benefits of meditation. Measurements have been made on both people who do not practice meditation and also on people who practice meditation regularly. The results are as under:

- In the case of those who have not practiced meditation only Beta waves were found before experiment and during experiment Alpha waves would come and go.
- In the case of those who practiced meditation regularly
  - (a) Alpha waves were found before experiment and voltage increased during experiment
  - (b) Frequency spectrum of Alpha waves showed downward trend i.e. moving towards theta spectrum

- (c) Alpha waves were found in the front portions also.
- (d) Bio-electricity was more organized.
- (e) Alpha waves were present even after meditation, that is leaving a residual effect.

(iii) Pranic healers also reported increase in size of energy body during meditation.

(iv) From the above, it is clear that *there is close co-ordination between Bio-electricity and performance of energy body. Meditation through chant of mantra helps to regulate the energy body through Bio-electricity*. Our sages are credited to have given Veda mantras for this purpose.

## 7.0 SANDYAVANDANAM

Sandyavandanam is a unique vedic exercise that integrates Achamanam, Pranayamam and Japam to obtain best regulation and control of Pancha Bhuta.

## 8.0 CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, the following facts emerge

- (i) In 17<sup>th</sup> century, Kepler and Newton enunciated a law-force is essential for work or work cannot be done without force. This principle was extended by Newton to formulate laws of motion. Our sages have applied the same principle for human body.
- (ii) According to our sages Panchabhuta is the energy source for working of human systems as well as human activities. It functions as bio electricity inside our body and as plasmic energy body outside our body.

(iii) Our activities, particularly profession and domestic problems, have tendency to introduce distortion or deficiency in Panchabhutas. Hence necessary corrections are essential. Sandyavandanam fulfills this role.

(iv) Why nitya karma? It is essential to understand the working of a nitya karma. For example if a person with high BP performs meditation, BP comes down only during meditation and will go back to original value after meditation. However at each performance it leaves behind a residue. If done regularly every day, the residue accumulates and after sometime the normal value of BP shows downward trend. Thus it is a slow process. Similarly the distortion or deficiency of Panchbhutas is also slow. Hence ailments in the physical body appear after several years. Added to this, regular monitoring of Panchabhutas is not possible. By making Sandyavandanam as a nitya karma distortion and rectification will take place on a daily basis.

(v) Those not performing Sandyavandanam, need not be disheartened. No age is late for Sandyavandanam. They can start immediately with Achamanam which is a simple and easy to learn ritual. In the beginning they may use some holy name for Pranayamam and japam. Gradually they can introduce Sandyavandanam in their daily routine.

Thus Sandyavandanam, a nitya karma is relevant for all times to come. I would like to thank managements of Sri Ramakrishna students' home and Indian Institute of World Culture for providing me an opportunity to bring out the benefits of Sandyavandanam.

## *About the lecture*

Though the title is Vedic rituals, the lecture covers rituals in Sandyavandanam. According to our sages all humans are provided with an energy source which they call as Panchabhuta. It functions as bio electricity within the body and also forms an energy body external to the physical body. Health of Panchabhutas is essential for health and happy living. Our daily activities tend to introduce distortions and deficiencies in Panchabhutas and corrections are essential. Sandyavandanam helps to achieve this.

The lecture also gives suggestions for those who have not been performing Sandyavandanam in the past. The lecture brings out how one can use nature for healthy and happy living.

Sri Ramakrishna students' home and Indian Institute of World Culture deserve compliments for organizing a lecture on this topic.

Bangalore  
Oct 24, 2012

Printed and circulated for promotion of Sandyavandanam by:

Sri V.R Raghuram and Sri V.R Chittaranjan  
148,7<sup>th</sup> main 5<sup>th</sup> block,Jayanagar,Bangalore-560041