

Nitya Puja Vidhanam

February 21st 2024

Shri Nagabhushan Sharma, Hoskote, Karnataka



With the blessings of His Holiness Sri Vijayendra Saraswati, who is in Srisailam for Maha Kumbabhishekam, I will delve on Nitya Puja Vidhanam. It is the Acharya's Sankalpam that concept of – Daily Prayer Procedure - which is practical to follow - should reach people.

Here are the 10 questions that will elucidate the importance of Nitya Puja (Daily Prayer).

1. What is Nitya Puja?

Nitya Puja is a bridge to connect to the Almighty.

Man is the only creation of God that is endowed with consciousness (*Chaitanyam*) and the intellect to question – Who am I?

Lord Rama built a bridge across the ocean to reach Sri Lanka. The bridge was built by monkeys. Monkeys represent our mind that lacks concentration. Lord Rama gave the monkeys, the mantra – Sri Rama. Under his guidance the monkeys built a bridge on the water and won the battle with Ravana and rescued Sita.

To summarize, we need an able leader and a system that will help us retrieve what we have lost over decades.

Nitya puja enables the jiva (individual self) to reach the Para Brahman (Almighty).

2. From whom and how did it originate?

Prasthanas Traya texts comprise of the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras. (The word Prasthanas means journey towards a destination.)

The Bhagavad Gita speaks of one's ordained duty in the 3rd chapter.

*niyataṁ kuru karma tvam karma jyāyo hyakarmaṇaḥ
śharīra-yātrāpi cha te na prasiddhyed akarmaṇaḥ*

Meaning: You should thus perform your prescribed Vedic duties, since action is superior to inaction. By ceasing activity, even your bodily maintenance will not be possible.

Lord Brahma says that he created the Devas and these Devas would help mankind. He has created a system where Devas would oblige if they were satisfied. The Devas dwell both inside the human body and outside it. While bath purifies the external body, Nitya puja purifies the mind. It is the connectivity between us and the Devas (or the Almighty or the superior power).

2500 years back, Adi Shankaracharya brought 5 Siva Lingas from Kailasham. One of the lingams, is the Yoga lingam kept at Kanchi by Adi Shankara. The unbroken lineage of Acharyas have performed Nitya puja for Yoga lingam over centuries. It is carried out for 6 hours everyday and is not captured on camera.

The Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam is not only involved in social activities but also tell us about Dharma. Qualified people from the Peetam will guide the audience on the procedure.

3. Who needs Nitya Puja?

Whoever has worldly aspirations will benefit by Nitya Puja as announced Lord Brahma. The devatas will satisfy all the desires be it education or anything.

Second, it purifies the mind.

Finally, and most important, Nitya Puja helps in atma uddharana (Upliftment of Atma) or self-realization.

4. Who doesn't need and never gains this knowledge?

Quoting from Bhagavad Gita

*śhraddhāvānllabhate jñānam tat-parah sanyatendriyah
jñānam labdhvā parām śhāntim achireṇādhigachchhati*

Meaning: Those whose faith is deep and who have practiced controlling their mind and senses attain divine knowledge. Through such transcendental knowledge, they quickly attain everlasting supreme peace.

The one who has faith alone attains divine knowledge.

A mother points to the father and tells her son that he is the father. The son believes it throughout his life.

One requires Shraddha (conviction and commitment) and also unshakable faith in the Nitya Puja. It should not become mere mechanical but must have involvement.

The Kanchi Acharya says that we perform puja for the welfare of the world for hours together every day. People need not do elaborately as they have worldly pursuits and may not get all the required puja materials. But it is imperative that they set aside sometime every day for Nitya Puja.

Though the sun is far away, its rays fall on the Earth. People use it differently. Some use the rays for its medicinal qualities, some others may use it as solar heaters. Nitya Puja can help you satisfy your desires, bestow well-being of your family and also help your spiritual upliftment.

Nitya Puja should be kept as a Vratam (vow) and done with unflinching faith.

5. What are its benefits?

Chitta-Shuddi-Karaka (Purifies the chitta). Mind is unsteady and it is called *Manas*. When it is steady, it is called *Bhuddi*. When it records (impressions), it is called *Chittam*. *Ahamkara* is when we say – I have done it.

The Manas (mind) is purified as one does Nitya Puja which can be witnessed gradually. The Abhisheka water (holy water) is taken as prasada and the flowers offered by us is kept on our head as prasada.

Faith is stronger in less educated as we see some people smear the mud trodden by holy men on their foreheads. As a child holds on to his mother and reaches his destination, Nitya Puja leads us to our destination by purifying our minds.

Since Nitya Puja has prominence of Bhakti, everyone is entitled to practice it without any apprehension or need for a Guru as in Yoga or other paths.

Also like some Vratas or Homas where a priest is required, you do Nitya Puja all by yourself.

6. What is the original source of this system?

Nitya Puja is not something new, but has been practiced for Yugas. Lord Narayana himself is our Guru. Lord Brahma is our creator and we have a part of him in us.

Lord Rama after bringing back Sita from Lanka, worships a Saikata (sand) Lingam at Rameshwaram.

7. Why are people generally disinterested in this method?

The 3 reason why a person doesn't perform a task is –

He doesn't know how to do it.

He might not have someone to tell him to do it.

Lack of interest.

*manuṣhyāṇām sahasreṣhu kaśchid yatati siddhaye
yatatām api siddhānām kaśchin mām vetti tattvataḥ*

Meaning: Amongst thousands of persons, hardly one strives for perfection; and amongst those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth.

We see some faiths having countless followers. Adi Shankaracharya had only 4 principal followers. Quality is important not Quantity. Gradually train your mind to take small incremental steps – could be 10 minutes to begin with.

The body is used to lethargy for long years. You have to gradually train it with love.

Those who are disinterested will reach the destination, if not now later. We will pray for them.

8. Why is Nitya Puja the greatest amongst all spiritual paths?

When there are many paths like bhajan, charity and pranayama why is the stress on Nitya Pooja?

Some people think giving charity is a better alternative compared to performing Shradha (yearly ritual) for departed soul. But celebrations like birthdays and marriage anniversary are not compromised for the fear of breaking of the relationship.

In the same way we should convince the mind to perform Nitya Pooja.

Even if you do not have bilva leaf, you can wash the old one and reuse once. The Rishis who were always on move often would not get many materials needed for worship. They had the foresight and wanted to propagate these rituals for the future generations. They said that no sins would accrue in case we did something wrong. Bhakthi is the

most important. Adi Shankara took it to the next level where he performs Manasa Pooja (in the mind) to the gods.

During the Kurukshetra war the soldiers had to perform Sandhyavandhanam in the battle field but there wasn't any water. At that time Lord Krishna advises the warriors to use sand instead of water. It is known that sand particles contain water.

We should not have any fear of getting any sin if we do anything wrong during the Nitya Pooja. We should think that we are sitting near God who is our friend and who will protect us.

bhakto 'si me sakhā cheti rahasyam hyetad uttamam

Meaning: I am today revealing unto you, because you are My friend as well as My devotee, who can understand this transcendental wisdom.

It is important that we do Nitya Pooja fearlessly as our Guru has told us. Rest is left to God.

Lord Rama went to Nasik with Sita Devi. Ravana abducts Sita from there.

If you search the Ramayana, you will find it is full of gratitude. My father - I must listen to his words. My wife - I must protect her. And so on.

Sri Rama came from North to South. Lord Krishna travelled from East to West, Adi Shankaracharya traversed the country thrice within his short lifespan of 32 years. We are from that country of Adi Shankara and that's our identity.

When Sri Ramachandra is searching for Sita Devi, he finds pieces of garments thrown by her. Anasuya Devi had presented the Sari and jewels that doesn't cause hunger, thirst and other natural problems. At Kishkinda, there is a Udhabava Lingam. Lord Rama places the wedding ring on the Siva Lingam and does prayer every day.

Once Lakshmana asks why it took so much time as all Lord Rama had to do was pour Tunga Bhadra water on the lingam.

Sri Ram decides that he had to exhibit the greatness of Nitya puja to Lakshmana. He tells Lakshmana that he had forgotten the ring inside and asks him to get it. Lakshmana goes into the cave and finds many similar rings on the Lingam. The Nitya Puja gives Shakti to the Lingam.

Archakasya tapah falam

If you do Nitya puja with faith, the idol will get shakti and speak to you. Just like wiping a mirror everyday will reflect you better.

Lakshman requests Lord Siva to give his ring back. Lakshmana apologizes to Rama for doubting his ritual. Rama explains why he used to keep the ring everyday on the Lingam and do pooja.

He would give the ring to Hanuman (to protect him from negative energy) who would carry it in his mouth across the ocean. With the power of Rama nama and shakti of

Siva, Hanuman accomplishes his mission. Sita Devi recognizes the ring and give Hanuman Choodamani in return.

With his Nitya Puja, Sri Rama invoked the power of Lord Siva in the ring.

With Nitya Puja, one would experience divinity.

Arjuna performed Nitya Puja and went to heaven and acquired Pashupatastram.

Here are 3 important benefits -

1. Wealth in the form of education, friends and so on.
2. Health (because you would have bath), Satisfaction (you would offer Dhoop, deep, naivedhyam and distribute prasadam.), Will power
3. Knowledge

Without fear of acquiring any sins, we should perform Puja with love, gratitude and devotion to God. When we start our Nitya Puja with conviction, the Gods out of compassion will show us the way.

9. **Can we get peace and harmony in our families and society?**

Yes. The Acharyas also perform Nitya Puja for harmony of the society as a whole.

Start the Nitya Puja and you will experience harmony in family.

10. **What is the vision of the person who does Nitya Puja?**

At the end of the prayer we say – Sarve janah Sukino bhavantu – Let there be peace and harmony in the world. We acquire - the desire for well-being of all and the maturity of loving all.