

# Chamakam: Desires for Fulfillment in Life

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## Introduction

Many of us ask questions like, what is the driving force of human beings; what is the purpose or objective of human life etc. Our scriptures say that it is the desires that drive the lives of human beings; the objective of human beings is to achieve happiness. So the driving desire culminating in happiness becomes the means and the objective of the life in human beings. Here the words 'desire' and 'happiness' are used in the widest application of their meanings encompassing both the material and spiritual aspects of life.

It is to be noted that a human being is an integration of body, mind and spirit. It is to be expected that different people have different types of desires and also differ in their concept of happiness. Vedic scriptures advise that happiness at physical, mental and spiritual levels have to be in harmony within each person. The happiness derived (through fulfillment of desires) at the body and mind levels ('material' level) is transient happiness, whereas the happiness or bliss at the spiritual level is eternal in nature. So, one must manage his material desires tuned to seek advancement towards eternal bliss rather than being content with short term pleasures.

## The Fourfold objective of life.

The Vedas and Vedic literature clearly provide vision and guidance for a human being to manage his desires through the four fold objectives that are interdependent called *Purushartha* – *goals to pursue*. The sages of *Sanatana Dharma* enumerate *purushartha* as consisting of these four objectives, namely *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. *Dharma* is the principle that holds us all together, and practice of which protects us here and hereafter. *Artha* is the earning of material wealth. *Kama* is the pursuit of desires ranging from basic needs to material abundance. *Moksha* is freedom from the bondage of life. Yogi-Seer Sriranga Sadguru says “ the order of enumeration of four objectives of life, - *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* is proper and should not be interchanged. This is because *artha* and *kama* should be pursued within the bounds of *dharma* and *moksha*”. Thus leading our lives by pursuing *purushartha* ensures both worldly happiness (short term happiness) and ultimately spiritual Bliss (eternal happiness).

It is to be noted that when a desire is within the confines of *dharma* as an element of *purushartha*, then that desire could form the building block towards eternal happiness. Lord Krishna says in Bhagavad-Gita that, “In all beings, I am the desire that does not *confront* the *dharma*” (7-11). Whereas, when a desire does not follow *dharma*

in the pursuit of short-term body/mind happiness, then that desire becomes *adharmic – towards the path of regression...* The chain of emotions –desire (*kama*), anger (*krodha*), greed (*lobha*), delusion (*moha*), arrogance (*mada*) and jealousy (*matsarya*) – leading to the destruction of the individual is documented in the Bhagavad gItA (2-62,63). Thus it is to be noted that a person experiencing any of five states of mind namely anger, greed, delusion, arrogance and jealousy, is due to the pursuit of this adharmic desire.

Thus given that human life is driven by various desires, one is faced with the question of what desires to pursue for fulfillment in life. Fortunately, *Chamakam* (*Taittiriya Samhita*) provides a long list of coveted desires, the pursuit of which can advance one towards moksha through the pursuit of *purushartha*.

### **Chamakam**

*Chamakam* comprises the Veda mantras traditionally chanted after *Namakam*. *Namakam* and *Chamakam* together are generally referred as *Sri Rudram*, *Sri Rudraadhyaya*, *Shatarudriya* or *Rudropanishat*. *Namakam* is the fifth and *Chamakam* is the seventh chapter of the fourth book of *Taittiriya (Samhita)* rescension of Krishna Yajur Veda. *Namakam* and *Chamakam* get their names because the word 'Namaha' (salutation) repeats 183 times and the words 'Cha me' (and to me) repeat 358 times respectively. *Chamakam* - its *pArAyaNa* and / or usage in worship bestows on the devotee, the various material needs and inner virtues that he seeks in the life's journey through the practices of *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama* towards *moksha* (fulfillment in life) .

There are two available commentaries on *Chamkam* - by Sayana and by Vishnusuri. The commentary by Sayana emphasizes the approach of *karma kanda* (for carrying out *Yajna*), whereas the commentary by Vishnusuri emphasizes the approach of *jnAna* (spiritual practice). It is important to note that both the *karma* (ritualistic) and *jnAna* (spiritual) approaches are like two sides of a coin – karma is a pre-requisite for *jnAna*. Towards the end of a homa ritual, the *Chamakam* is chanted in its entirety during the *Vasordhaara*. – causing a continuous stream of clarified butter to flow into the sacred fire through a long wooden ladle made of special wood (*Oudumbara*).

*Chamakam* provides a detailed list of needs that a devotee desires or asks for, both for worldly living and spiritual fulfillment. It is generally observed that one would not know what things to seek or pray, which would bring long term happiness in physical, mental and spiritual domains. It is for this reason, it is said that the Vedas are like mother (*Vedamata*) who bestows impartially what is truly good for us for both worldly and spiritual happiness. A brief overview of the 11 *anuvakas* (paragraphs) of *Chamkam* is given below with references to the first few words of respective *anuvakas*:

anuvAka	# Desires	Objects of desires included in the prayer
1	36	Nourishment of Body and Mind to help in Divine worship ( <i>Vajash cha prasavash cha...</i> ),
2	38	Personality Development to motivate worship of Rudra ( <i>Jyesthyam cha may, adhipatyam cha..</i> )
3	36	Materialistic and spiritual Happiness ( <i>Sam cha may, mayas cha...</i> )
4	38	Grains and food for himself and for worship (( <i>urkcha may, soonruthaa cha..</i> )
5	31	Materials for Home construction and yajnya ( <i>ashmaa cha may mruththikaa cha...</i> )
6	20	Vedic Deities, Supreme Being, the indweller in them ( <i>Agnischa may indras cha...</i> )
7	29	Vessels for holding juices for sacrifice; denotes levels of Spiritual knowledge ( <i>agumshus cha may reshmis cha...</i> )
8	22	Accessories to perform yajnya; individual Self merging in to Supreme Being ( <i>idhmas cha may barhis cha...</i> )
9	21	Success – Fruits of yajnya including spiritual knowledge ( <i>agnis cha may gharmash cha...</i> )
10	31	Merging of Faculties in him and Supreme Being - Bliss ( <i>garbhaash cha may vathsaash cha...</i> )
11	41	A Benediction - odd and even number together signifies many faculties and things in the universe ( <i>ekaa cha may thisrash cha...</i> )

A detailed study of *Chamakam* reveals that it lists hundreds of things that are legitimate desires for a spiritual aspirant. It is interesting to note that some things listed in *Chamakam* are simple, yet rarely prayed for by the devotees. Some examples of such simple yet very important desires are: May Lord *Rudra* grant me (1) pleasant and good mind, (2) truthful speech, (3) anger about my negative tendencies, (4) intellect to take right decisions (5) desires which are beneficial to me, (6) relatives who are in harmony with me (7) courage in times of difficulties (8) good bed (for good sleep), (9) a good morning associated with taking bath and *sandhyavandana* (10) knowledge in Vedas and *Shastras* and (11) knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma Vidya*). The list of desires that is desirable to be prayed for, include the seeking of final realization of the Supreme Being. The devoted study and the contemplation along with the chanting of *Namakam* and *Chamakam* in the ritualistic homa will bestow on the devotee, the blessings of Lord *Rudra* who is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient.

### Concluding Remarks

Even a brief study of *Chamakam* reveals that it describes the needs that a devotee seeks to nourish his body, mind and the spirit resulting in his internal and

external development spanning physical, mental and spiritual domains. *Chamakam* and *Namakam* articulate manifestations of Lord Rudra as the Omnipotent Supreme Being. The purpose of doing the yajna such as *Ekadasha-rudra*, *Maharudra* and *Atirudram* is for material well-being and spiritual development of devotees through the worship of Lord Rudra as Supreme Being.

## References

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