

# Philosophical Insights of Yagya from Srimad Bhagavad Gita

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**Abstract.** Yagya, a cornerstone of Indian culture, is deeply embedded in the Vedic philosophy and rituals that have evolved over time. Initially simple domestic practices, these rituals became complex ceremonial sacrifices, reflecting their importance in promoting social, political, and cultural harmony. The Bhagavad Gita, delivered by Lord Krishna during the Mahabharata war, articulates Yagya's profound meaning as both a physical and an existential act of sacrifice. It teaches that selfless actions performed without personal desire embody Yagya, leading to liberation from the bond of selfishness.

This manuscript explores the historical evolution of Yagya, its philosophical foundations in the Bhagavad Gita, and the thirteen types of Yagya described within the text. By examining these elements, the study underscores Yagya's enduring relevance in contemporary Indian society, where it remains integral to significant life events. Ultimately, Yagya serves as a guiding principle for leading a purposeful and harmonious life.

**Keywords.** Yagya, Vedic Philosophy, Bhagavad Gita, Sacrifice, Indian Culture

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## Introduction

The foundation of Indian culture is deeply rooted in the philosophy and science of Yagya, which is a perennial symbol of this divine tradition. Extensively discussed and a core subject in the Vedas, one of the oldest texts of Indian culture, Yagya formed the cornerstone of the Vedic lifestyle. Within Vedic society, it was widely believed that Yagya was essential for the upliftment of human life and thought processes. These rituals were pivotal for all-around progress, prosperity, and happiness during the Vedic age, a belief supported by the insights of the Rishis, who, through their extensive research, developed the various modes of performing Yagyas.

In the Rigvedic period, the Yagya process matured and was imbibed into daily life. Also, during Valmiki's time, every household in Ayodhya engaged in the Agnihotra, a daily fire ritual. In both Ayodhya and Lanka, individuals maintained domestic fire. Five thousand years ago, during the Mahabharata period, Yudhishtira conducted the Rajasuya and Ashwamedh Yagya bringing cultural and geographical unity. During the Mahabharata War, Lord Krishna counseled Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, addressing the multifaceted nature of Yagya as both physical sacrifice and deeper existential significance, implying KarmaYoga, BhaktiYoga, GyanYoga.

Ancient Indian history, rich with literary and archaeological evidence, underscores the importance of Yagya, its theory, and its practice. The fundamental idea of sacrifice of this ancient ritual has been fostering a balance between the individual and society, humanity and nature, and Atman and Brahma.

Today, despite the passage of time and changing contexts, Yagya remains integral to Indian cultural practice. All significant ceremonies, including *sodas samskaras* from birth to death, are performed with Yagya at their core. The marriage ritual occurs in the presence of sacred Yagya flames, while the funeral process embodies a final Yagya, where the body is offered to the pyre, transforming it back into its elemental

state, returning to nature [1–3].

The present manuscript aims to focus on the fundamentals of Yagya and its philosophy, which has been at the core of these rituals since ancient times.

## Yagya in the Bhagavad Gita

The Srimad Bhagavad Gita occupies a unique and unparalleled position in world literature, being a crucial part of the epic Mahabharata. This dialogue between Lord Krishna and the disciple Arjuna unfolds on the eve of the great Kurukshetra war. Beyond its religious dimensions, the Gita is infused with profound ethical and philosophical significance, comprising 18 chapters and 700 shlokas. It offers valuable insights and solutions for seekers, focusing on the essence of pure Reality—unchanging and eternal.

The Gita synthesizes the essence of the Vedas and is part of the Prasthanas Traya, which consists of three foundational texts for human welfare: the Vedic Prasthanas (the Upanishads), the Philosophical Prasthanas (the Brahma Sutras), and the Smart Prasthanas (the Bhagavad Gita). Numerous commentaries have been written, and fresh interpretations continue to emerge, illustrating its enduring relevance. Its straightforward yet profound style makes it accessible while inviting deep exploration.

The Gita elucidates extraordinary means for securing the highest goals in life. It emphasizes the need to transcend the perception of varied modes of existence and focus on the ultimate truth. The text encompasses not only devotion but also the integration of knowledge and action, presenting a holistic approach to life.

The term Yagya resonates throughout the Bhagavad Gita, symbolizing that life is fundamentally about sacrifice. Indian philosophy can be encapsulated by the concept of Yagya—every moment involves a sacrifice directed toward a higher fulfillment. Thus, sacrifice signifies gain rather than loss; for example, when a seed is sacrificed to the earth, it returns in manifold abundance [3].

Type of Yagya	Description	Verse Reference
Brahma Yagya	Realizing the doer, action, instrument, and object as Brahma. Oblation becomes one with fire, emphasizing unity with God.	Gita 4.25
Dev Yagya	Viewing actions and objects as belonging to the Lord. Performing sacrifices to God, acknowledging Him as the lord of all.	Gita 4.25
Samarpan Yagya	Identifying oneself with matter, performing all actions for the welfare of others, and recognizing no independent existence apart from God.	Gita 4.26
Indriya Yagya	Offering the senses into the fires of restraint, not allowing mental inclinations towards sensual objects.	Gita 4.26
Atmasanyam Yagya	Concentrating the mind, sacrificing all functions of senses and breath into the fire of self-restraint, achieving a trance-like state with full consciousness of God.	Gita 4.27
Dravya Yagya	Utilizing all materials for the service of others in a selfless manner.	Gita 4.28
Tapo Yagya	Facing difficult circumstances happily for societal welfare, exemplified by the sage 'Daghi Muni' who donated his bones for the Devas.	Gita 4.28
Yoga Yagya	Maintaining equanimity in success/failure, praise/blame, honor/dishonor, and pleasure/pain, without attachment or aversion.	Gita 4.28
Swadhayaya Yagya	Studying sacred scriptures, chanting the Lord's name, and self-study as a form of sacrifice.	Gita 4.28
Gyan Yagya	Providing the gift of knowledge, helping others discover their real nature and source of happiness.	Gita 18.69
Ahar Yagya	Regulating diet and offering life-breaths (prana) as a sacrifice, emphasizing moderation in eating.	Gita 6.16-17
Pranayama Yagya	Control of breath through inhalation, retention, and exhalation.	Gita 4.29
Japa Yagya	Chanting of mantras, as described by Lord Krishna in the tenth chapter.	Gita 10.25

Table 1: Types of Yagya in Bhagavad Gita

In Chapter 3 of the Gita, Krishna explains that mankind is bound by actions performed with desire for personal gain, contrasting this with actions undertaken for sacrifice. Every duty performed without expectation qualifies as a Yagya. This encompasses actions for the welfare of others, asserting that true freedom from the bondage of actions arises when one serves the world selflessly, offering one's body, talents, and resources without seeking rewards.

Lord Krishna advocates for performing actions selflessly and passionately, free from attachment, desire for fruits, and biases. According to the Gita, Yagya encompasses all forms of service—sacrifice, charity, penance, oblation, pilgrimage, and more, extending even to one's profession. Any pursuit motivated by personal benefit leads to bondage, while the true striver acts for the welfare of others without expectation of personal salvation.

In essence, the Gita encourages individuals to dissolve their attachments through selfless service, emphasizing that true liberation is attained not by seeking worldly rewards but by renouncing selfish desires and acting for the collective good.

## Types of Yagya in Bhagwad Gita

There are various kinds of Yagya/sacrifice mentioned in the fourth chapter, from the twenty-fourth verse to the thirtieth verse, and another type of Yagya in the tenth chapter. In total, thirteen types of Yagya mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita are as described in Table 1 [4–7].

## Conclusion

Yagya, as explored in this manuscript, is not merely a ritualistic practice but a foundational element of Indian philosophy and culture. Rooted in Vedic traditions, it has evolved to encompass various forms of sacrifice that contribute to individual and collective well-being. The Bhagavad Gita illuminates the multifaceted nature of Yagya, emphasizing that selfless actions, performed without personal desire, lead to liberation from the bondage of selfishness.

The thirteen types of Yagya outlined in the Gita, including Brahma Yagya, which fosters

unity with the divine, Dev Yagya, which acknowledges the Lord in all actions, and Japa Yagya, emphasizing the power of mantra chanting, illustrate the diverse ways individuals can engage in this sacred practice. Each type reflects a unique aspect of sacrifice that promotes not only personal growth but also societal welfare.

By integrating these forms of Yagya into daily life, individuals can cultivate a deeper sense of purpose and connection to the world around them. Thus, Yagya remains a guiding principle for leading a purposeful and harmonious life, affirming its enduring relevance in contemporary Indian society.

**Compliance with ethical standards** Not required.

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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