



Significance and Characteristic Features of Yajña (Yagya), Yāga and Iṣṭi - A Review

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Abstract. The Vedic texts and their allied works are intimately related to Vedic sacrifices, i.e. Yajñas (Yagya) and Yāgas. Hence, an understanding of the Vedic sacrificial system will definitely help us to understand and esteem, not only the Vedas, but also the Upaniṣads. Yajña is the central subject matter of the entire Veda. The Yajurveda contains the knowledge of doctrines and the methods of performing Yajñas and Yāgas as approaches for global welfare, aspects of which some modern studies have examined for their environmental and health effects and many more. In this article, some general rules to be followed to perform Yajña / Yāga / Iṣṭi, classification of Yajñas, brief account of some well-known Yajñas, havis / food and fruit oblations, R̥tviks or Priests, Yajñāgni, Yajña implements, several terms commonly used in discussions of Yajña, and other requirements, are discussed. Yajña-Yāgas exerted a great influence on ancient Indian society, either directly or indirectly. Hence, it is considered important to perform Yajñas periodically — traditionally believed to purify the environment supported with many modern findings and to benefit both society and the individual — a practice that still survives in various forms today.

Keywords. Yagya, Ṛigveda; Taittirīya Saṃhitā; Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa; Śukla Yajurveda; Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa

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Classification of Vedic Texts

Bharata Mata (India) is the *Vedabhūmi*, the *Tapōbhūmi* and the *Yajñabhūmi*. Those who have viewed the Veda mantras are called *Ṛṣis* or seers or sages. This heap of Veda mantras heard by our *ṛṣis* was codified and classified by the great sage Veda Vyasa Maharṣi along with other *ṛṣis*. Vedas are sacred texts originated in ancient India. They are: (1) *R̥gveda* - Wisdom of the Verses (deity descriptions etc., textual knowledge through suktas and are called *R̥ks*, (2) *Yajurveda* - Wisdom of Sacrificial Formula (Yajurveda teaches the principles of Yajña and the manners of performing Yajña sacrifices and are called *Yajus*, (3) *Samaveda* - Wisdom of the Chants (Śloka jñāna and are called *Samans*, and the (4) *Atharvaveda* - Wisdom of Atharvan *Ṛṣis* (descriptions of human diseases and medicine. *R̥ks*, *Yajus* and *Samans* are combined in this Veda).

The 'Caturvedas' have emerged as a reward for Indians. Vedas are the most ancient and sacred literary scriptures and also the first worded texts for the human civilization. These texts provide immense knowledge for the intellectual and all-round-development of an individual. It is the foundation for the Indian culture and tradition. They were the beginning of our spiritual knowledge. Vedic texts play an important role as a model teaching the righteous way of life. It is the invaluable mother of the Indian literature and languages [1–3].

Establishment of Sanatana Dharma Monasteries (Mattas)

Following the Caturvedas, Sri Adi Śaṅkara Bhagavatpada consecrated the establishment of Sanatana Dharma Monasteries (Mattas) as follows: (1) Purvamnaya Sri Govardhana Peetha or Govardhana Math, Puri, Odisha - R̥gvedic Monastery, (2) Dakshinamnaya Sri Srigeri Sarada Peetha, Sringeri, Karnataka - Yajurvedic Monastery, (3) Paschimamnaya Sri Sharada Peetha or Dwarka Sarada Math, Dwarka, Gujarat - Samavedic Monastery, and (4) Uttaramnaya Sri Jyotir Peetha or Jyotir Matha, Garahwal, Uttarakhand - Atharvavedic Monastery [4].

Veda Excellence

Veda means 'Knowledge' and is derived from the Sanskrit root '*Vid*', meaning 'to know'. The original knowledge is the teachings of the Vedas. | वेदयतीति वेदः | means 'To make known' and hence it is Veda. | स्वयं सर्वं वेत्ति वेदः | Another definition is the sense of 'omniscience'. Vedas are '*apauruṣeya*', which means they are not compilations of human minds - a faculty

beyond mind. Sāyaṇācharya in one of his commentaries gave definition of the Veda as the supernatural way to attain the desired object and to get rid of the harmful things. Vedas are compared to desire tree because they contain all things knowable by man. To quote the Sage of Kāñchipuram (Kanchi Matt), Paramāchārya, Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati Mahāswāmi VIII (1894 - 1994), the 68th Jagadguru of Kanchi Kamakoti Matt, Kāñchipuram, Tamil Nadu, India, "*Vedas are collection of sound waves. Vedas which are in the form of sound waves are as ancient as the origin of sound. Vedas are eternal. Vedas are as old as the creation*" [5]. Vedas have been handed down orally from generation to generation and have not been taught or learned from any written text. That is how they got the name of 'Śruti'. He also emphasized that "the Vedas are the root of all. The Vedas reveal the 'One Truth' to us in the form of many deities. The worship of each of these divine beings is like a ghat on the river called the 'Vedas'. The Vedas are the source not only of various divisions of Hinduism, all the religions of the world may be traced back to them. It is our bounden duty to preserve them for all time to come with their glory undiminished". According to Indian traditional thoughts, 'Veda' is regarded as a "revealed scripture, self-evident, and self-authoritative".

Yajña Sutra

Yajña Sutra means the 'Sacred thread' or Brāhminical thread' or Yajnopaveetam'. Yajña Sutra as it qualifies the performance of Vedic Rituals (*karmacharaṇa*). Brahma sutra is the reason for meriting the study of Vedas (*Vedādhyayana*). At the time of Upanayana it is Brahma sutra. When the thread hangs from the left shoulder, crossing the chest and back diagonally down to the right hip, it is worn as *Upavita* (the sacred thread as worn in the usual manner). When the Yajña sutra is like this, all deity works can be done. When the Yajña Sutra is worn around the neck like a necklace, it is *Nivita* (so called when worn round the neck as a necklace). Yajnopaveetam should be kept in the *Tarpaṇa* (a religious rite offering of water to the mane of the deceased ancestors) to *Pitru*, *Ṛṣi* etc., and is repositioned during acts of excretion [2, 6].

Yajamana or Yajñakarta or Sacrificer

The presiding person of the Yajña - Yāgas is called the 'Yajamana or Sacrificer'. The word Yajamana derives etymologically from yajña, meaning 'one who

performs the sacrifice' (Yajñakarta). All the expenses of the yajña are borne by the Yajamana and he is the one who gets the fruits of the yajña. The wife of the Yajamana (called 'patni') also had important roles to play in the Vedic sacrifices. Her required presence was not merely symbolic: several rites, including the Patnisamyājas (oblations offered jointly with or on behalf of the wife), could not be validly performed without her [7]. Both of them will be initiated for the yajña. *Dikṣa* or Vow is a ritual performed at the beginning of the Yajña [2, 6, 8].

Yāga

Puruṣa in *Adimithuna* (a couple) is the sacrifice. Śrauta Karma is nothing but worshiping the deities. इज्यते देवताः आहुतिभ्यः अत्र (*ijyamte devataḥ ahutibhyaḥ atra*) - That is, to offer oblations in the Homa Kuṇḍ and requesting Agni to handover to a particular deity. There are five important features in a Yāga. They are - (1) *Aśrāvaya*, (2) *Astu śvausaṭ*, (3) *Yaja*, (4) *Yē yajāmahē* and (5) *Vaṣaṭ*. These are the main mantras that make up the Yāga. The things done before and after these, the gestures that are made are all like the ornaments of clothes. In this *Aśrāvaya* is the initial form. The last is telling the word *Vaṣaṭ*. *Krishna Yajurveda Taittirīya Saṁhitā* compares Yāga with *Kamadhenu* (the celestial cow) and explains these five aspects. The Yajña mantras (words) are considered as the form of *Kamadhenu*. Yajña mantras (words) are the auspicious and veracious words. The Yajamana (sacrificer) invites a milch cow (*Vāk Dhenu*) which is in Yajña form by reciting the mantra called '*Aśrāvaya*'. The second aspect is the calling of *Kamadhenu* to the calf for milking. '*Astu śvausaṭ*' mantra is recited for this. The third factor is preparing the vessel for milking. The mantra for this is '*Aja*'. *Dogdha*, i.e. the owner of the milker, approaches cow (*Dhenu*) by reciting the mantra '*Yē yajāmahē*'. The last part is to achieve the desired goal through Yajña. The Śruti states that this is completed with the mantra '*Vaṣaṭ*'. These five mantras have a total of seventeen (*Saptadaśa*) syllables [8].

Some of the famous Yajña / Yāgas are given under: *Agnadhānam*, *Darśapūrṇa māsā*, *Piṇḍa*, *pitryajña*, *Āgrayaṇa*, *Cāturmāsya*, *Nirūḍha paśu bāṇḍha*, *Sautrāmaṇi*, *Aupāsana*, *Vaiśvadēva*, *Sthālīpāka*, *Sarpabali*, *Satrayāga*, *Īśānabali*, *Aṣṭakānyaṣṭaka sōmayāga*, *Agniṣṭōma*, *Atyagniṣṭōma*, *Ukthya*, *Ṣoḍaśi*, *Vājapēya*, *Atirātra*, *Āpturyāma*, *Sarvatōmukha*, *Rājasūya*, *Paumḍarīka*, *Abhijitta*, *Viśvajitta*, *Aśvamēdha*, *Br̥haspati savam* and *Aṁgirasa*. All these sacrifices are elaborated in the *Yajurveda Saṁhitā* and *Brāhmaṇas*. These are briefly described later in this article.

Iṣṭi

Iṣṭi means 'desire'. *Iṣṭi* is a minor process when compared to Yajña and Yāga. *Darśa* and *Pūrṇa māsā* (full-moon) are also called *Iṣṭi*. A Yāga is performed with the desire to get a child. It is called '*Putrakāma Iṣṭi*' or '*Putrakāmyeṣṭi*'. Here below are the *Iṣṭis* designated in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* [3] are briefly described here:

1. *Annakāmyeṣṭi* (*Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 1/3/8) – This *Iṣṭi* proposed for obtaining plenty of food for the Yajamana. Oblations (*havis*) are offered to *Agni* and *Vishnu*.
2. *Ādityeṣṭi* (*Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 2/3/1) - *Iṣṭi* to be performed by kings to acquire kingdom. Oblations (*havis*) are offered to *Aditya*.
3. *Ātithyeṣṭi* (*Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 6/2/1) – This is a part in the *Somayāga*. *Iṣṭi* in honor to *Soma* to obtain his blessings.
4. *Paśukāmēṣṭi* (*Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 2/1/1) – This *Iṣṭi* is to be performed in order to obtain plenty of cattle. Oblations (*havis*) are offered to *Soma* and *Pushan*.
5. *Sākamprasthāyīyeṣṭi* (*Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 2/5/4) – This *Iṣṭi* is also performed to obtain plenty of cattle. Oblations are offered to *Agni*.
6. *Trayāmbakēṣṭi* (*Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 1/8/6) – This *Iṣṭi* is prescribed to avoid rid of the cycle birth and death. Also for a painless death, untimely death and premature death and. Oblations are offered to *Rudra* / *Trayāmbaku*.
7. *Karīrēṣṭi* (*Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 2/4/9) – The *Iṣṭi* is in praise of Lord *Varuṇa* for fetching rains. *Karīra* (*Capparis decidua*) fruits are offered as oblations (*havis*). When a kingdom or a state is troubled by the effects of drought, *Karīrēṣṭi* is performed.
8. *Nakṣatrēṣṭi* (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 3/1/4) – The *Iṣṭi* that invokes divine glory or splendor, spiritual pre-eminence, the sanctity or superhuman power of a Brahman. Oblations are offered to the 'priest of the Gods' or name of the preceptor (the planet *Jupiter*).
9. *Nakṣatrēṣṭi* (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 3/1/4) – A wish to be made for abundance of cattle. Oblations are offered to Lord *Rudra*.
10. *Traidhātaviyēṣṭi* (*Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 2/4/11) – This *Iṣṭi* is to be performed to fulfill all desires.

11. Pavamānēṣṭi (Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 1/1/5) – This Iṣṭi is performed with auspicious offerings to Agni to attain divine glory, radiance, and cure chronic diseases.
12. Ahoratreshṭi – Kings used to perform this Iṣṭi for a wish made to regain the kingdom. Oblations and devotion to Varuṇa.
13. Kāmyēṣṭi – In order to acquire immense wealth and regain the kingdom this Iṣṭi is performed. Oblations are offered to Āditya (the solar deity).
14. Vasukāmēṣṭi – This Iṣṭi is executed for the growth and development of grains and money.
15. Prajākāmēṣṭi – To fulfill the desire to beget worthy sons. Oblations to Prajāpati.
16. Āyuskāmēṣṭi – This Iṣṭi is performed to fulfill the wish for a healthy body and long life and provide relief to those suffering from chronic diseases.
17. Sarvapṛsthēṣṭi – Performing this Iṣṭi will increase the virility.
18. Śatakraśnalēṣṭi – Performance of this Iṣṭi will remove the fear of death.
19. Yaviṣṭhēṣṭi – Iṣṭi that protects from Vāmatantra (It refers to one of the four classifications of Tantras belonging to the Śāk-tāgama or Śāktatantra tradition, according to the Pratiṣṭhālakṣaṇasamuccaya of Vairocana).

Yajña

The name 'Yajña' is derived from the root 'Yaja'. Yaj + Nañ - 'ījyātē haviḥ dīyatē atra' - Oblations (havis) are given in the Yajña. 'Ijyante poojyante devataḥ atra' - Deities are worshiped here, and so this is a yajña. 'Yajñō vai Viṣṇuḥ' – Hence Viṣṇu is Yajña Puruṣa and Yajña bhōkta. The meaning of the word Yajña is 'Adhvarah' and 'Śivah'.

Agnihotra is a ritual to please the deities. These are roughly three types namely Paka Yajña, Havirya Yajña and Soma Yajña. Again, these are seven types of each. There are seven types of culinary sacrifices namely, (1) Aupāsana, (2) Vaiśvadēva, (3) Sthālīpāka, (4) Sarpabali, (5) Īśānyabali, (6) Aṣṭaka māsi and (7) Śrāddham. These Yajñas performed using Smārtāgni. All these are Yajñas such as Rajasuya, Paundarikam, Brihaspati Savam, etc., are performed for welfare, happiness, prosperity of the people. A brahmin must perform five maha Yajñas and they

are: (1) Dēva yajña, (2) Pitṛ yajña, (3) Bhūta yajña, (4) Manuṣya yajña and (5) Brahma yajña. Aupāsana is important in Deva yajña. This is done by worshipping Suryagni. Pitṛ yajña means *Śrāddha Tarpaṇa* performed in remembrance of the paternal deities. Bhūta yajña means feeding or providing to animals, birds, ants and other beings. Manuṣya yajña means giving food to human beings. Brahma yajña means constant study of Vedas. The descriptions of above-said Yajña methods are well explained in the Āpastamba Sutra [2, 6, 8].

Main Purpose of Yajña and Yāga

The Yajurveda describes the knowledge of doctrines and methods of performing Yajñas and sacrifices as methods for the welfare of the world (scientific evidences of many of the benefits are documented [9, 10]). Yajurveda Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇās are the historical Vedic Dharma. It provided the ritual and cosmological knowledge considered necessary to perform Yajña sacrifices. Agni is known as 'Deva Mukha' and is the central deity of Yajña. No Yajña/Yāga can be performed without using the plant/tree and its products. Yajñāyudha or sacrificial implements are mostly made of wood and the names of these trees are revealed and explained in the Yajurveda. Our sages became our mentors by conducting Yajñas and providing guidelines and procedures for the implementation [3].

Variations of Yajña

Although there are many Yajña-Yāgas, they are mainly of two types namely 'Prakṛti' and 'Vikṛti'. The Yajñas and their procedures are informed by the Śruti (Veda). If the Śruti is not informed only about the special parts, then they are Vikṛti. What the Śruti does not say about the Vikṛti has to be understood from the Prakṛti. For example 'Vighavam' is Vikṛti Yajña. For this one needs to understand some aspects from the Prakṛti Yajña called *Agnihoma*. The 'Vedasāra Ratnavali' provides more details about this [11].

Yajña, Yajña Sacred Precept, Benefits

Yajña is the key to understand Yajurveda. The mantra bhaga (liturgies) in the Yajurveda Saṃhita describes in detail the procedure for performing various Yajñas, Yāgas, Hōmas and Iṣṭi. The various benefits arising from performing Yajñas are described in detail in Śukla (18/1, 18/2, 18/6) and Krishna Yajurveda Saṃhitās (4/7/5, 4/7/9) and indicates that are used for the performance of Yajña -

Yajñēna kalpantām / Yajñēna kalpatām. The Yajurvedic texts elaborately describe the benefits of Yajña, such as: abundance of food (*vaja*), wealth (*prasava*), efficiency in work (*prayati*), mental acuity (*dhiti*), enlightenment (*jyoti*), physical strength (*ojassu*), longevity (*dirghayuvu*), health (*anamaya*),

tranquility (*Śarma*), fearlessness (*abhya*), friendship (*anamitram*) and blissful sleep (*sukham sayanam*). At the beginning of the Yajña, the Yajamana (sacrificer) prays that his life will be fulfilled through the Yajña (Taittirīya Saṃhitā 4/7/1).

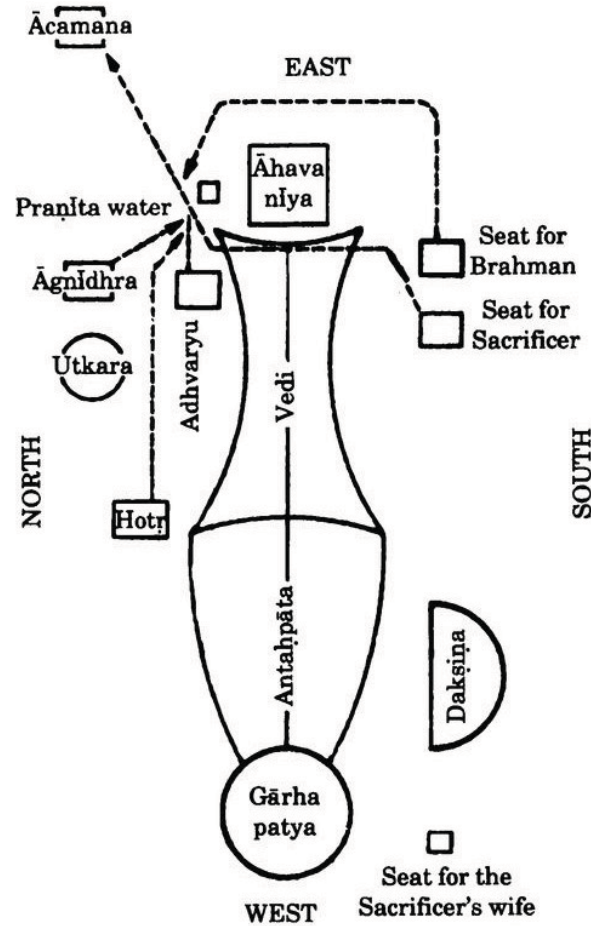


Figure 1: Yajñavēdi for Agnihotra, Darśapūrṇamāsēṣṭi and other Iṣṭis. Dotted lines indicate the saṃcaras of the Brahman and others.

Details of Yajña in the *Sri Rudram*

In the eighth anuvāka of *Sri Rudra Chamakam* (Taittirīya Saṃhitā 4/7/8), the worshiper prays Lord Rudra and requests to grant the objects and materials required to perform a Yajña. They are: the holy sets faggots or kindling wood (*edhma*), the darbha (*barhi*), the Yajñavēdi, the Homa Kuṇḍa, the Sruk, Sruva (sacrificial ladles), *Rtviks* to execute Yajñas, seats for sitting (Darbha mats), stones used for extracting Soma juice (*gravana*), wooden knives (*svaravascha*)

for cutting Darbha and soma branches, for extracting soma juice wooden planks/plates (*adhishavana*), for storing soma juice a large wooden vessel (*dronakalasa*), for drinking Soma juice (*Chamasa* vessels), *Purōḍāśa* oblation (Havis), the wood-chips that fall down while making the *Yūpastambha*, earthen vessels namely *Vāyavya*, *Pūtabhṛt* and *Ādhavanīya* for use in Yajña, *Agnidhra Rtvik* (assistant to Brahma, who sits to the north of the Yajñavēdi and ignites the Yajña fire), *Havirdhana* (the place where Havis is kept), canopies for the members who have come to

witness the yajña, may I sacrifice the homa oblations (*drayava*) and with *svahakara* completely to the fire on the occasion of *Pūrṇāhuti*!

After the completion of the Yajña, the Yajamana, his wife and their children are bathed in holy water by the *Ṛtviks*. This event is called '*Avabhṛtasnāna*'. During this time, the Yajamana and his wife completes their 'Yajña vow' (*Dikṣa viramaṇa*) taken during the initiation of Yajña. The last step prescribed as part of the Yajña is to compensate for any mistakes or errors happened during the performance of the Yajña.

Yajñavēdi (Yajña Altar)

Yajñavēdi (Yajña altar) is a raised or excavated place. This altar is filled with Darbha grass and the Yajñāyudha or yajña implements and utensils are placed. It is built in a rectangular shaped area. Its north and south sides are concave. As described in the Śrauta texts, the dimensions and shape of the Yajñavēdi varied according to the type of Yajña-Yāgas performed. The height and the other dimensions of the Yajñavēdi are considered based the Yajamana's (sacrificer) height is the unit.

Associated with the Yajñavēdi is *cayana* or *agnicayana*, the rite of piling the bricks for the fire-altar, in *Sōmayāgas*. The altar is built with five layers of bricks. It may have several shapes such as *Suparṇa* (eagle), *Śyena* (hawk) and *Droṇa* (trough). The bricks used may also be of various shapes - triangular, oblong or square. The constructions of Yajñavēdi involve geometrical measurements and architectural designs. An example of a *Yajñavēdi* for performing the *Agnihotra*, *Darśapūrṇamāsa* and *Iṣṭis* [12] is depicted in Figure 1.

The construction of any sacrificial chamber should be done in accordance with the respective rules. First, the place for worship and performance of various sacrificial rites is selected. For example, the site satisfying the following specifications should be selected for performing the soma sacrifice. The site for the soma sacrifice should have water on its eastern side. The soil at this site should not be saline and it should be fertile land. There should be ample growth of vegetation and various kinds of plants are intermixed. The ground should be sloped towards the north-east, so that the water would flow towards the *catvala* as it is located near the north-east corner of the *Mahāvēdi*.

The various structures of the Yajñavēdi, their geometric dimensions and architectural patterns are well-detailed in the Baudhayana, Āpastamba and Kātyāyana Śrauta sutras [13, 14].

Yajña Management - *Ṛtviks*

One who receives money from the Yajñakarta and performs Yajña is called 'Ojja'. Some *Ṛtviks*/pundits who have read Vedas are needed to perform Yajña-Yāgas. Along with those performing the Yajña, those performing the Yajña also have to take *Dikṣa*. The Gopaṭha Brahmana describes the process of initiation. *Ṛtviks* are mainly four members. And each one will have three assistants. Each represents one of the four Vedas. (1) **Hōta** (*Ṛgveda*) – his assistants are: Maitrāvaruṇa, Acchāvāka, Grāvastuta; (2) **Adhvaryu** (*Yajurveda*) – his assistants are: Pratiprasthāta, Neṣṭa, Unnēta (3) **Udgāta** (*Samaveda*) – his assistants are: Prastōta, Pratiharta, Subrahmanya; (4) **Brahma** (*Atharvaveda*) – his assistants are: Brāhmaṇacchaṃsi, Pōta, Āgnīdhra. So, a total of sixteen (16) *Ṛtviks* are present in a Yajña. The number of priests in a Yajña / Yāga varies according to its needs. All the sixteen *Ṛtviks* actively participate in the Somayāgas. The one who emits light the Yajñāgni (sacrificial fire) in Yajña is called 'Āgnīdhru' [3].

A brief description of some famous Yajñas and Yāgas

The Yajña-Yāgas are classified into several groups. A comprehensive description of Yajñas is given in the Bodhāyana-Gṛhya sutras (1.1.18.21) as follows:

Yajñas are classified into twenty one groups in total. These Yajñas are performed with the recitation of the *Ṛk*, *Yajus* and *Saman* mantras of the three Vedas. Domesticated animals, wild animals, plants and plant/tree products are the substances used as food oblation (havis). Yajñas can also be classified into four types: (1) Svadhyayajña, (2) Japayajña, (3) Karmayajña and (4) Manasayajña. Each subsequent yajña is ten times more fruitful than the previous one. 'Svādhyāya' means studying and memorizing the Vedas learned in *Gurukula*. 'Japa' is Vedic repetition of chants or mantras. 'Karma' is the actual performance of prescribed karmas. These are based on Vedic rituals. The last 'Manasayajña' is considered the best of all.

The descriptions of Yajñas are based on the Vedic and Śrauta Sutras now available and are as follows [13, 14]:

Agnihotra

Agnihotra is prescribed and to be performed on a daily basis. This sacrifice that must be performed from the day the yajña begins. In this, food oblation (havis) is cow's milk or flour or cooked rice or curd

or ghee is used. If the owner is not present at that time, his wife or his son or his student can perform on his behalf.

Agniṣṭōma

It is the first in the Somayāga and is a model of nature. This Somayāga is to be performed over five days. The Somayāga is administered by all sixteen Ṛtviks/priests. It is to be held annually in spring season. Soma juice is extracted in the *madhyandināsavan*. The Agni praise mantras from the Samaveda are recited which the end of the Agniṣṭōma yajña. In this Yāgya, the Yajña fee is also distributed to the Ṛtvijas by the Yajamana.

Somayāga

Those who perform Somayāga sacrifice are called 'Somayāji'. The yajña to be performed after Agniṣṭōma is called 'Atyagnisthoma'. It is a Somayāga. Agniṣṭōma, Atyagnisthoma, Atirātra, Aphoryama and Vājapeya are the Soma Yajñas. Soma juice is extracted from the Soma plants. The Ṛtviks and the Yajamana will drink the Soma juice during the yajña. This yajña is performed for three years is called 'Somayāga'.

Aptōryāma

Aptōryāma is the modification of Agniṣṭōma. It is performed to fulfill any desire. The Śruti vidhi requires that the master of this yajña should gift 1000 or more cows. A chariot should also be given to the Hota Purohit.

Aśvamēdha

Aśvamēdha is a Maha Yajña. According to the 'Kalpa Sutra', this Yajña is performed for three days. First day is *Catuṣṭōma*. The second day is *Ukthya* Yajña. The third day is the *Atirātra* Yajña. In the earlier days, there was a custom of sacrificing wild animals and village animals in the *Aśvamēdha* Yajña. The horse used for Aśvamēdha Yajña is called 'Aśvamēdhīyam'. It is a sacred precept that a person who performs 100 Aśvamēdha Yajñas reaches Indra's position. According to Śatapatha Brahmana 'Agnirva asvah ajyam medhah' – means one who pours ghee in the Agni is Aśvamēdha. Some of the earlier kings used to let the horse go as it pleased for conquering the worlds in the directions, using it as an excuse to conquer enemy kings, and following some other despicable practices. There is mythological evidence that there was opposition to them even then. Such practices are not part of contemporary performance of the Aśvamēdha and are widely regarded as later distortions inconsistent with the ritual's original

intent. The analyses of many people who believe in and respect the Vedas and are due to the influence of non-Vedic rituals have entered the Yajña Kanda.

Atirātra

It is also a Somayāga (an optional form of *Jyotiṣṭōma*) and is performed for one day. Purōḍāśa is offered to Aśvinī Gods. A sheep or ram is sacrificed for Goddess Saraswati.

Cāturmāsya

In fact, the Cāturmāsya Yāga consists of three Yāgas in a span of four months. They are: Vaiśvadeva, Varuṇapraghāsa and Śākamēdha. Sometimes the Sunāsiriya Yāga also has to be performed. Each of these marks indicates the beginning of a season. They are performed on the full-moon days of Phālguṇa or Caitra (February/March), Āṣāḍha (July/August) and on the full-moon days of Kārtika or Mārgaśira (October/November) months. Purōḍāśa and Caru are the main sacrificial oblations in this Yajña.

Darśa-Paurṇamāsa

This is a must-do sacrifice. It is a kind of Iṣṭi. It starts on the full-moon day and may extend for two days after the *Agnyādhāna*. Four chief priests participate in it.

Nirūḍhapaśubandha

Nirūḍhapaśubandha Yajña has to be performed once every six months or once a year. It involves the sacrifice of a goat or a sheep. Indra and Agni, Surya and Prajāpati are the deities to be appeased by this sacrifice. Six priests perform this Yāga.

Piṇḍapitr Yajña

This *Piṇḍapitr* Yajña closely follows the *Darśa* Yāga. In this Pitr Yajña, pindams or lumps of rice balls (pinḍas) are prepared. Three pinḍas (each subsequent one is larger than the previous one) are presented to the father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

Satrayāga

The duration of *Satrayāga* can be from 12 days to a year or more. There are no priests in Satrayāga. All participating Brahmins become the owners of the sacrifice. Their number should not be less than 17 and not more than 24. In this *Satrayāga* there is animal sacrifice. An interesting feature of this Yāga is the 100-stringed vena instrument made of munja grass (*Saccharum benghalense*) which is a special attraction.

Sautrāmaṇī Yajña

This Yajña in which Indra is the deity is called Sautrāmaṇī Yajña. It is related to Havir Yajña. These are seven types of Havir Yajña. Sautrāmaṇī Yajña is of two types: 1. Caraka Sautrāmaṇī - It is a part of Rajasūya Yajña, 2. Kaukilī Sautrāmaṇī - It is an independent Yajña. It is performed to regain a lost kingdom or to gain prosperity.

Rajasūya Yajña

'Rajasūya Yajña' is a yajña performed by the king himself and his tributary princes on the occasion of the coronation of the supreme sovereign or the universal emperor.

It is a very complex Yajña. It spans over two years and consists of several Iṣṭis and Soma Yāgas. It can only be administered by Emperors or Kings. A huge fee of 2,40,000 cows had to be paid to the Ṛtviks / priests. *Abhiṣēkanīya vrata* (a religious vow) is held and the anointing of the king or emperor is performed with holy waters. It is considered as the main one.

Vājapeya Yajña

The Vājapeya Yajña, which is performed for unlimited supremacy, has many special features and characteristics. The number 17 is very important in this vrata. For example: 17 animals are sacrificed, 17 goods are distributed as a fee. And this Yajña will continue for 17 days. The host of the Yajña also participates in the chariot race conducted yajña. And another interesting thing is that he always helps to 'win'.

Ati Rudra Maha Yajña

Rudrābhiṣēkam is a procedure of providing a ceremonial bath to Siva or Rudra, who is in the *Lingākṛti*. Once Namaka and Chamaka are uttered and anointing is called 'Eka Rudram'. Doing this eleven times is 'Ekādaśa' *Rudrābhiṣēkam*. It is also known as 'Rudrī'. If eleven Ekādaśa Rudrābhiṣēkas are performed, it is called *Laghu Rudrābhiṣēka* (11 x 11 = 121). Eleven Laghu Rudrābhiṣēkas (121x11 = 1331), it becomes *Maha Rudra*. If such Maha Rudras make eleven (1331x11 = 14641), it is called 'Ati Rudram'. *Mahānyasa* (means the Yajamana becoming Lord Siva) is chanted before the Rudrābhiṣēka is performed.

In the Ati Rudra Maha Yajña there will be a total of eleven Yajña *kunḍas*. Around each Yajña *kunḍa*, eleven Ṛtviks who took vow sit around it. *Aruṇa Parāyaṇa* will be recited on every morning in the *yajñāśāla*. Mahānyasa Parāyaṇa and then Ekādaśa Rudrābhiṣēkam will be performed. Subsequently Rudra Homa is performed in all the eleven Yajña

kunḍas. For Rudra Hōma, unhusked rice (paddy), sesame seeds, jaggery pieces and sugarcane pieces are mixed and used as food oblation to Lord Rudra. Along with this, dried bilva fruits, bilva leaves and lily flowers are offered to Lord Rudra on Rudra Hōma for eleven days.

Food Oblations to Deities

Havis means an oblation that is offered to deity through Agni Devata. These are described in Yajurveda *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇās* [15]. These oblations are mainly ghee, wood sticks, plant fruits, grass grains, cooked products and others (Table 1). The names and types of oblations offered during Yajña/Yāgas/Iṣṭis to the Agni are explained here below:

1. *Ājya* (ghee) – Only native cow ghee is used.
2. *Brahmaudana* - Rice cooked and offered to the deity Brahman. The residue is eaten by the priests.
3. *Caru* - A food-oblation cooked of the grains of rice, barley etc.
4. *Purōḍāśa* - A cake made of rice, barley etc. It is baked on potsherds of variable number, on the *Gārhapatya Agni*.
5. *Dhāna* - Grains of barley parched and pounded.
6. *Karambha* - De-husked barley grains, slightly parched and pounded.
7. *Lāja* - De-husked fried rice grains, not pounded previously.
8. *Yavāgu* - It is type of congenial preparation of cereals, like rice, wheat, barley etc.
9. *Māsara* - Beverage obtained from a mixture of the hot watery scum of boiled rice, powdered barley and the extract of some vegetables like ginger.
10. *Nagnahu* - Coarse portion of the parched barley grains.
11. *Odana* - Grains (generally rice) cooked with milk or other items like curd.
12. *Taṇḍula* - The unhusked grains, usually rice.
13. *Parched grain* - Grains / seeds that are cooked by dry roasting.
14. *Saktu* - Powder of parched grains.
15. *Parivāpa* - It is made from parched rice fried in butter.

16. *Piṇḍa* or *Śrāddhapīṇḍa* - Cooked-rice made into a ball offered to departed souls. It is a Sanskrit word in the Indian literature.

While offering havis to Agni, one of the five

mantras ‘Svāhā, Śrausaṭ, Vauṣaṭ, Vaṣaṭ, Svadhā’ is to be recited depending on the occasion. For example: ‘Agnayē Svāhā’. ‘Astu Śrausaṭ’. ‘Śkhāyai Vauṣaṭ’. ‘Vaṣaṭ karoti’. ‘Svadhā Pitṛbhyaḥ’.

Term	Description	Scriptural References
PURŌDĀŚA - पुरोडाश	Purōdāśa (cake) is prepared of Vrihi and Yava. It is baked on potsherds of variable number, on the Gārhapatya Agni.	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 3/2/6-7
CARU - चरु	It is prepared of the grains of Amba, Garmut, Gavīdhuka, Nivāra, Priyangu, Yava, Vrihi and Śyāmāka.	Taittirīya Saṃhitā 1/8/10(1); Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1/7/4(7), 2/5/3(4), 3/2/3(1)
SAKTU-सक्तु	Saktu denotes a ‘coarsely ground meal,’ ‘groats,’ especially barley-meal with milk.	Taittirīya Saṃhitā 6/4/10(6); Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā 19/21; Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 4/2/1(2)
LĀJA - लाज	Fried or parched rice grains, not pounded previously.	Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā 3/11/2; Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā 19/13/81, 13/42; Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 12/8/2(7 & 10); Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 2/6/4
DHĀNĀ - धाना	Grains of barley, parched and pounded. It is frequently referred to in the Ṛgveda, Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā and Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa. Regularly mixed with Soma, as mentioned in the Ṛgveda, Taittirīya Saṃhitā and Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.	Ṛgveda 1/16/2, 3/35/3, 3/52/5, 6/29/4; Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā 19/21/22; Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 1/5/11(2). Also: Ṛgveda 3/43/4, 3/52/1, 7/91/2; Taittirīya Saṃhitā 3/1/10(2); Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 4/4/3(9)
KARAMBHA - करम्भा	It is a kind of porridge made of grain (Yava or Barley) which was unhusked, parched slightly, and kneaded. Karambha is also made of Upavāka plant, as mentioned in the Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā.	Ṛgveda 1/187/16, 3/52/7, 4/56/1, 4/57/2, 8/102/2; Taittirīya Saṃhitā 3/1/10(2), 6/5/2(4); Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 2/5/2(14), 4/2/4(18). Also: Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā 19/22
YAVĀGŪ-यवागू	Yavāgū means ‘barley-gruel’, but is also used of weak decoctions of other kinds of grain.	Taittirīya Saṃhitā 6/2/5(2); Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 2/8/8; Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa 4/13; Kāthaka Saṃhitā 11/2. Also: Taittirīya Saṃhitā 5/4/3(2)

Table 1: Yajñavēdi for Agnihotra, Darśapūrṇamāsēṣṭi and other Iṣṭis. Dotted lines indicate the saṃcaras of the Brahman and others.

Fruit Oblations to Deities

Among fruit oblations, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa mentioned *udumbara* or sacrificial figs (*Ficus racemosa*), *karīra* (*Capparis decidua*) and jujube (*Ziziphus mauritiana*) berries (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 3/4/1(18)). The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa refer to three kinds of plum or jujube called *kuvala*, *karkaṇḍhu*, and *badara* (Figure 2).

| *kuvalaṃ karkandhu badaramiti samabhavatsa sarveṇaiva vyārdhyata sarvaṃ hi somaḥ* || - Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 5/5/4(10), 12/7/1(2), 12/7/2(9); Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 1/8/5(1)

Karīra, the name of a leafless shrub, is mentioned in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and yields fruits used in *karīrēṣṭi* which induces rains [8].

| *tayorubhayoreva karīrāṇyāvapati* | *kaṃ vai prajāpatiḥ prajābhyaḥ karīrairakuruta kamvevaiṣa etatprajābhyaḥ kurute* || - Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 2/5/2(11)

This *iṣṭi* (series of oblations offered to different deities) is performed when rains fail, the country is hit by drought, and people and crops suffer due to scarcity of water. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa extols

karīra when it states that *Prajāpati* could give happiness to all creatures with the help of *karīra*. Obviously, *karīra* induces rains and ultimately crops grow well [16].

Yajña Homa Smoke - Impact on the Environment

Many oblations are offered in the Homa Agni. Within the tradition, the effect of Agni Śakti and the influence of Veda mantras are believed to create auras that are beneficial, holy and purifying to all who attend the Yajña. A number of preliminary studies have examined the effect of Yajña fume and dust particles from this on the atmosphere and on the people participating in the yajña, when the fume is inhaled [17]. The ghee that is used in the Yajña is made only from cow’s milk. Some scientific research reports suggest that cow-ghee contains many important nutrients, fatty acids, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-oxidants and anti-viral properties [18]. Cow ghee is cool, sweet and full of saturated fatty acids. It has been proposed, though not established in peer-reviewed literature, that when ghee is poured

on Agni, the fat particles rise and bind with dust particles in the atmosphere, settling to the ground along with rain [19]. A scientific report has stated that

the smoke emitted from the house works effectively in reducing fungal spores [20–22].

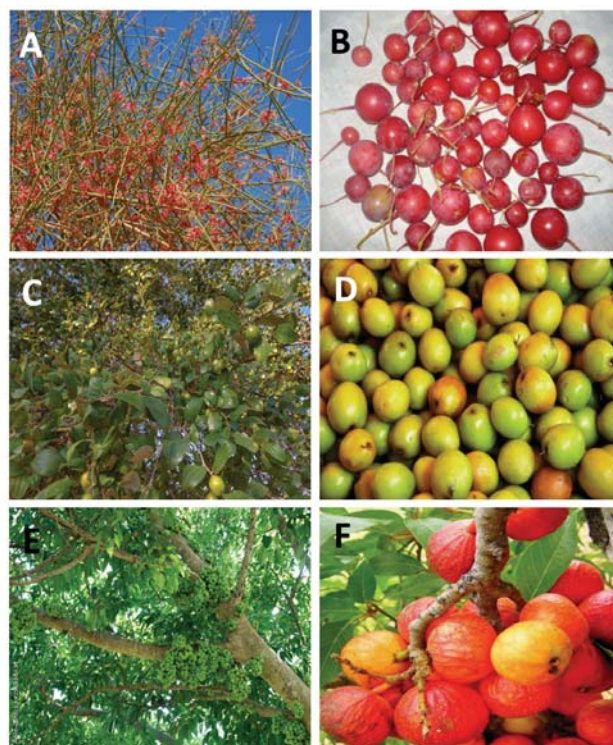


Figure 2: Types of fruit-oblations (havis) offered to Agni in several Yajña rituals. Fruit oblations - A B: Karira, Capparis decidua tree (A) in flowering, (B) ripened fruits; C D: Badari, Ziziphus mauritiana tree (C) in fruiting, (D) fruits; E F: Udumbara, Ficus racemosa (E) in fruiting, (F) ripened fruits.

Soma / Somalata / Somavalli

The juice extracted from the Somalata, *Sarcostemma acidum*, plant is called Soma or Soma Rasa. This Soma rasa is stored in a Yajña vessel called 'Drōṇakalaśa'. Drinking Soma rasa is obligatory almost all the Yajñas. The Soma plant has many medicinal properties.

Yagyāgni

Agni is known as 'Deva Mukha' - | *agnīmu'khā eva devatāḥ*” *prīṇāti* | *agnīm vā anvanyā devatāḥ*” || (Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 3/7/1(8)). Agni is the central deity of the yagya. The oblations offered while reciting a particular mantra and deity, which would reach to that particular deity through Agni - | *Yajñamukhē Yajñamukhē hōtavyāḥ* || (Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa

3/8/8(30)). Agni that is ignited for the purpose of Yagya is called 'Yajñāgni', the sacrificial fire. Agni is kindled through a mechanism called 'Agnimanthana' while chanting specific mantras from Yajurveda. This is a woody instrument consisting of a pair of *arani* used to churn Agni, and are manufactured from the Aśvat'tha (*Ficus religiosa*¹ tree wood, growing out of the womb of a Śamī (*Prosopis cineraria*) tree - | *Śamīgarbhādagñim ma'nthati* || (Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 1/1/9(1)). This is due the Śamī tree wood is serene - | *Śāntayōnigñi śamīgarbham* || (Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 1/2/1). The womb of the Śamī tree has soothing properties [3]. Therefore, the Aśvat'tha tree grown from the womb of Śamī tree, which has the property of pacifying the Agni, should be used in the preparation of 'Arani' (Figure 3).

¹It is revealed in the Yajurveda that *Agni* once disappeared from the gods and took the form of an Asvarupa (horse) and stayed in the Aśvat'tha tree. The tree, in which the Agni is resided in the form of an 'Asva' and hence the tree named as 'Aśvat'tha'. should be grown from the womb of Samivriksha manu. Here, normal ashwathavriksha manu should not be used.

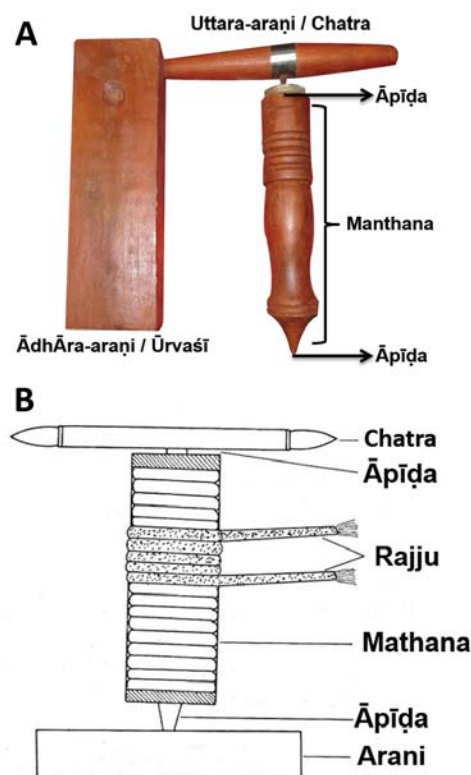


Figure 3: Diagrammatic representation of Agni Manthana Instrument.

Agnimanthana Instrument, its Parts and birth of Yajñāgni

The Agnimanthana instrument, its parts and the procedure for generating the 'Yajñāgni' are mentioned in the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* (Taittirīya Saṃhitā 1/3/7(12)). The mantra is - | *Agnerjani-tra'masi vṛṣa'ṇau stha urvaśya'syāyura'si purūravā' ghṛtenā'kte vṛṣa'ṇam dadhātham gāyatraṃ chando'nu pra jā'yasva traīṣṭu'bham jāga'tam chando'nu pra jā'yasva* || One wood piece is placed in the lower part and another wood piece is placed in the upper part and make a hole in the middle in both the wood pieces. Hold the upper part of the wood firmly and tie a cord from the hole to the middle part of the lower wood piece and twist it to generate fire. The lower wood is called 'Adharāraṇi' and the upper wood is called 'Uttarāraṇi'. The wood in the middle is treated as a fragment to pass the cord. The lower Araṇi is described as 'Ūrvaśī' and the upper or Uttara Araṇi as 'Purūrava'. Due to the relationship of these two, Agni is generated. Therefore, the both the araṇi are termed as mother and father. Agni, which is essential for Yajña, originates from the araṇi couple (see picture above), so the araṇi couple is like the life

position for the Yajña. Adhvaryu should incarnate araṇi couple with the sacrificial grass (*Darbha*) and place Agnimanthana part in that araṇi couple. Oh Agni! Follow the chants of Gayatrī, Triṣṭup and Jagatī metrical arrangement recited by the Hōta Ṛtvik, and arise with great enthusiasm and excessively.

Samidhas / Faggots / Kindling Wood

Dry sticks collected from the same tree are tied into a bundle and are used in Yajña or Homa is called 'Samidha' or Faggots. It is said that the collection of Samidha is a part of Veda study under a Guru. They go to the forest while chant the Veda mantras, gather the Samidhas and reach the Gurukula in the evening. These Samidhas are used by Guru and students in their daily Agni karya homa.

In a mantra mentioned in the Krishna Yajurveda Taittirīya Saṃhitā (Taittirīya Saṃhitā 1/5/3(12), 4/6/5(25)) that there are seven types of Samidhas which are dear to Agni. They are – Aśvat'tha, Udumbara, Palāśa, Śamī, Vaikaṅkata, Aśanihata (a tree affected by thunder) and Puṣkara Parṇa (Figure 4). There are many examples in the Krishna Ya-

jurveda Taittirīya Saṃhitā where specific combinations of plants are mentioned and their uses in various Yajñas [23].

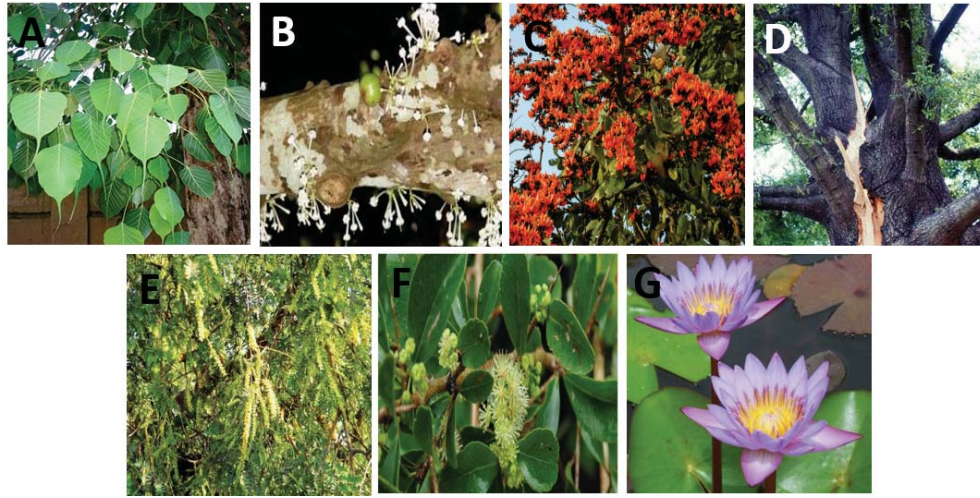


Figure 4: The Seven Samidhas cherished by Agni. Samidhas of several trees are offered to Agni, of which the (A) Aśvat'ha (*Ficus religiosa*), (B) Udumbara (*Ficus racemosa*), (C) Palāśa (*Butea monosperma*), (D) Aśanihata, (E) Śami (*Prosopis cineraria*), (F) Vaikaṅkata (*Flacourtia indica*) and (G) Puṣkara parṇa (*Nymphaea nouchali*) are the seven that are much dear to Agni – Taittirīya Saṃhitā 3/4/8(25).

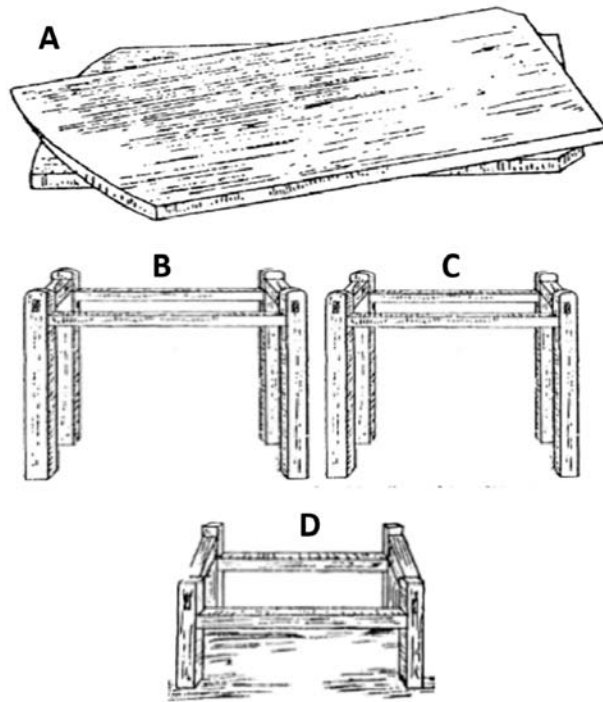


Figure 5: Yajñāyudha / Yajña Implements / Yajña Vessels. (A) Adhiṣavaṇa Phalakas (B) Rājāsandī (seat unstrung) (C) Samrāḍ Āsandi (seat unstrung) (D) Ukhāsandi (seat unstrung).

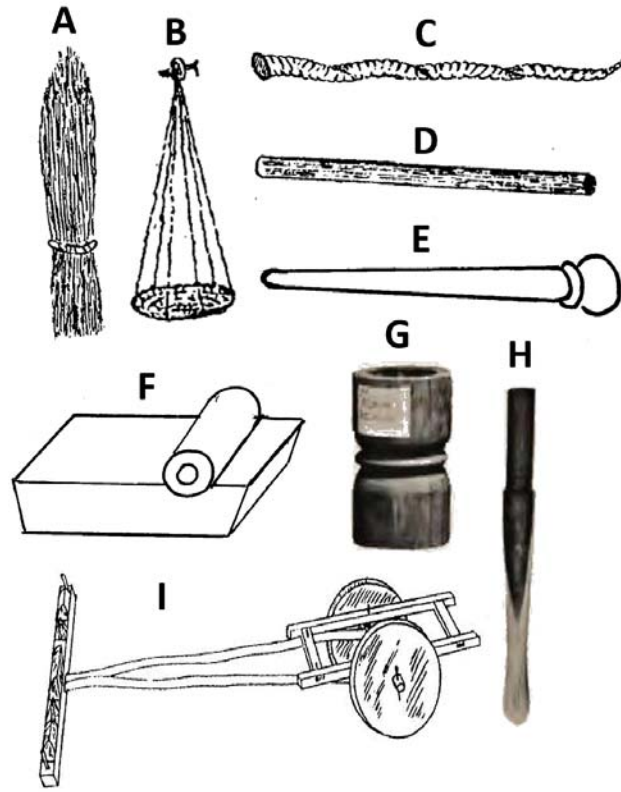


Figure 6: Yajñāyudha / Yajña Implements / Yajña Vessels. (A) Kūrca (B) Śikya (C) Kṛṣṇājina (D) Dhamani (E) Śamyā (F) Dṛṣad and Upalā (G) Ulūkhala (H) Musala (I) Śakaṭa

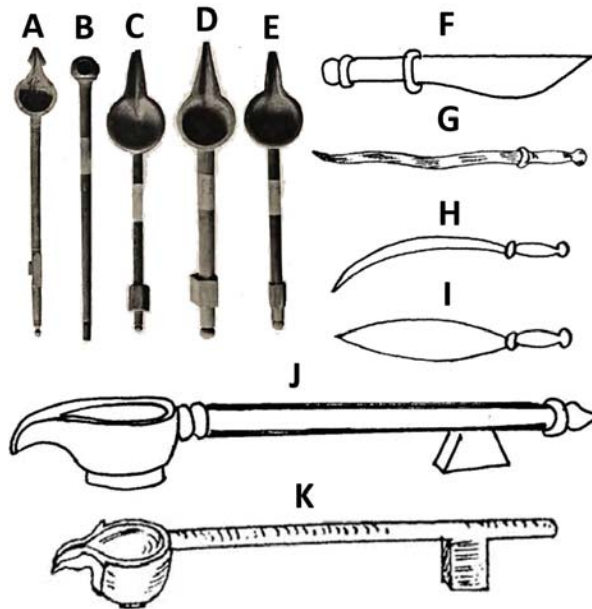


Figure 7: Yajñāyudha / Yajña Implements / Yajña Vessels. (A) Sruk (B) Sruva (C) Juhu (D) Upabhr̥t (E) Dhruva (F) Sphya [G, H I] Different shapes of Sphya (J) Vasōrdhārā (K) Agnihōtra-Havaṇī

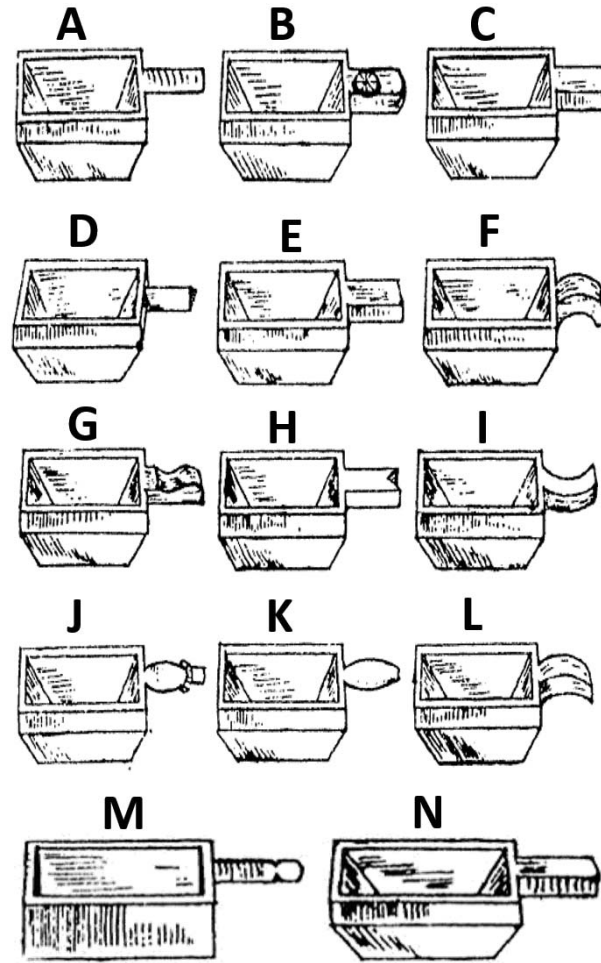


Figure 8: Yajñāyudha / Yajña Implements / Yajña Vessels. Camasa (A) Tānūnaptra (B) Hotṛ (C) Brahma (D) Udgātṛ (E) Yajamāna (F) Praśāstr (G) Brāhmaṇacchaṃsi (H) Pōṭṛ (I) Nēṣṭṛ (J) Acchāvāka (K) Āgnīdhra (L) Sadasya (M) Vājina (N) Udacana

Yajñāyudha / Yajña Implements / Yajña Vessels

The term 'Yajñāyudha' is mentioned in Taittirīya Saṃhitā 1/6/8. Hence, this anuvāka is called 'Yajñāyudha Saṃbhṛti (the act of supporting well)'. In this anuvāka the names of Yajña implements are mentioned. Adhvaryu Ṛtvik should recite this anuvāka, acquire the Yajñāyudhas and arrange on the Yajñavēdi or Yajña altar. Various kinds of Yajña implements are used in Yajña-Yāgas. It is mentioned in Yajurveda that specific Yajña implements should be used to perform flawless Yajña or Yāga. There are more than 60 Yajña implements described in the Yajurveda and Śrauta sutras. These implements are of different types, with different measurements and are revealed in the Krishna Yajurveda Taittirīya Saṃhitā

(Taittirīya Saṃhitā 3/5/7). It is also mentioned the names of the trees from which these implements should be prepared. Some of these trees are specially used for the sole purpose of manufacturing Yajña implements and vessels [23].

More than sixty Yajña implements are used in various Yajñas. The names of the important Yajña implements, the tree from which they are made and the botanical names of the tree are mentioned in the Table 2 [3, 23]. Raghu Vira [24] drew line diagrams of Yajña implements that were exhibited in the Vaidika Samsodhana Mandala, Poona (Figures 5-12).

Conclusions

Every country has its own beliefs. These beliefs have sustained it over the centuries. Sanatana Dharma exclusively believed, and still believes and

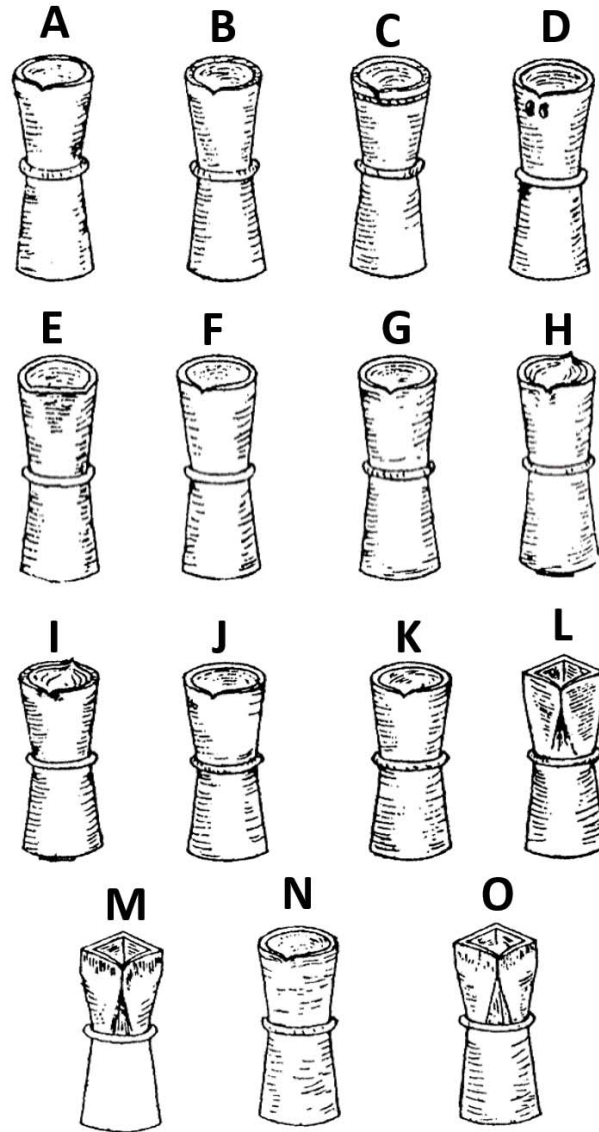


Figure 9: Yajñāyudha / Yajña Implements / Yajña Vessels. Graha (A) Upāṃsu (B) Antaryāma (C) Aindra-vāyava (D) Maitrāvaruṇa (E) Aśvina (F) Śukra (G) Manthi (H) Ṛtupātra (I) Pratiprasthātūr Ṛtupātra (J) Ukthya (K) Atigrāhya (L) Dadhi (M) Aṃśvadābhya (N) Āditya (O) Śōḍaśi

follows the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Purāṇas. It is considered a natural spiritual experience and these scriptures are the memoirs of the experiences of many highly respected *Rṣis* or sages.

These scriptures declare the divine origin of Yajñas. So, it is our responsibility to conduct them often and continue that tradition. However, these are

rarely performed today. But fervent prayer and appeal to God is being done intensely. Today there are temple rituals, pujas and Hōmas (both private and public), in the form of japa (repetition of mantras and divine names) and devotional singing. It is the spirit of Yajña worship and the offering of oblations to various deities that sustains us now.



Figure 10: Yajñāyudha / Yajña Implements / Yajña Vessels. (A) Prāśitraharaṇa (B) Praṇīta (C) Praṇītāpraṇayana (D) Idāpātra (E) Anvāhārayasthālī (F) Śūrpa (G) Ājyasthālī (H) Kapāla (I) Mekṣaṇa

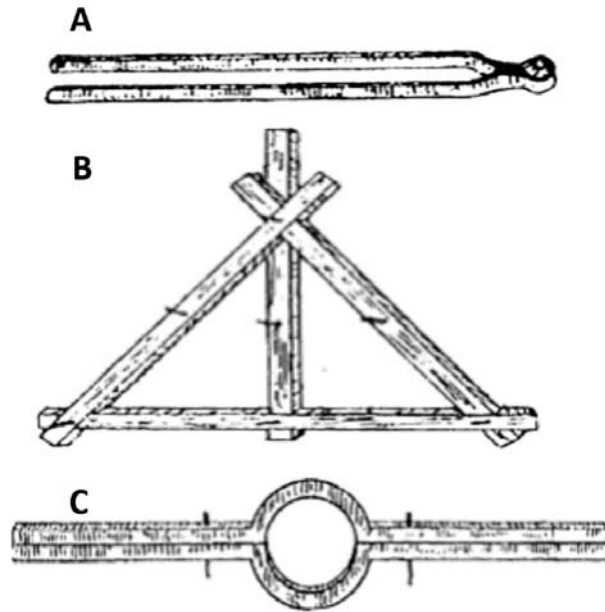


Figure 11: Yajñāyudha / Yajña Implements / Yajña Vessels. (A) Saṃdamśa (B) Vapā-śrapaṇī (C) Śapha

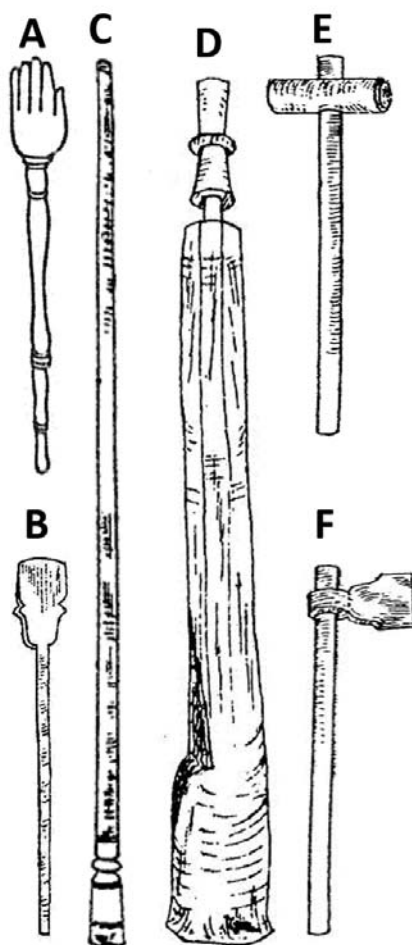


Figure 12: Yajñāyudha / Yajña Implements / Yajña Vessels. (A) Upaveśa (B) Dhṛṣṭi (C) Daṇḍa (D) Yūpa (E) Vighana (F) Paraśu

Some have expressed that the culture of Yajña is violence (animal sacrifice). It should be clearly noted that animal sacrifice exists only in a specific Yāga. We do not need to perform such a sacrifice. But we must perform many other Yajñas, which are useful to man and obtain good results from them. As per Yuga Dharma, in the Kali Yuga, there is no need to perform *Aśvamēdha Yajña*. But it is believed that reciting these *Aśvamēdha* mantras while following Dharma will yield good results. Chanting of Veda mantras bring purity to both the chanter and the hearer. Mental development leads to mental happiness. Due to this mental development, many diseases and other health issues can be avoided. Universal peace is created when this mental happiness is shared to many relatives, friends and people. Thus, Śrī Rudra, Aruṇa Praśna, *Aśvamēdha* Yajña mantras recitations are being performed by many people in

congregational places, temple premises and many institutions.

Studies suggest that burning various compounds used in Yajña may have beneficial effects on human immunity and on reducing airborne micro-organisms and pollutants [9, 10, 17, 21, 25–27]. Traditionally it is well known that Yajña also increases Sāttvika qualities.

Indians are the world's benefactors and hence the '*Sarvejanah sukhino bhavantu*' is their motto. Vedic texts revealed that every human should be healthy and the universe should be green. Hindus who consider the Vedas as the supreme standard have been performing Yajñas for the welfare of the people since ancient times. Even though the eras and societies change, the Indians maintain their unity and coalescence. The main reason for this is faith and belief in the Vedas. Since ancient times, emperors, kings and

Sr. No	Tree / Wood	Yajña Implement/s
1	Khādira (Acacia catechu)	Sruva, Sphya, Musala, Prāśitraharaṇa, Abhri, Āsandī, Śamyā, Yūpa
2	Parṇa or Palasa (Butea monosperma)	Sruk, Juhu, Ulūkhala, Upaveśa, Pracharaṇī, Ratha, Yūpa
3	Aśvat'tha (Ficus religiosa)	Arani, Upabhrt, Mekṣaṇa, Praṇīta, Śakaṭa, Yūpa
4	Vikaṅkata (Flacourtia indica)	Dhruva, Droṇa-Kalaśa, Abhri, Agnihōtra-Havaṇī, Praṇīta, Prōkṣaṇī
5	Udumbara or Adumbara (Ficus racemosa)	Vasordhārā, Ulūkhala, Āsandī, Rājāsandī, Talpa, Ratha, Vaṇa, Camasa, Mahāvīrā, Śāpha, Dhāvitra, Yūpa
6	Varaṇa (Crateva magna)	Droṇa-Kalaśa, Piṣṭa-pātri or Piṣṭōdvapanī, Śamyā, Praṇīta, Prōkṣaṇī, Camasa
7	Vēṇu (Bambusa arundinacea)	Sūrpa, Abhri, Dhāvitra
8	Nyagrōdha (Ficus benghalensis)	Praṇīta, Camasa
9	Rohitaka (Aphanamixis polystachya)	Praṇīta, Camasa
10	Bilva (Aegle marmelos)	Yūpa
11	Rājjudāla (Cordia dichotoma)	Yūpa
12	Pūtu-dru (Cedrus deodara)	Yūpa
13	Vetasa (Calamus rotang)	Kata
14	Śalmali (Bombax ceiba)	Ratha
15	Darbha (Desmostachya bipinnata)	Raśanā, Kūrca
16	Muñja (Saccharum benghalense)	Raśanā, Vaṇa

Table 2: Tree-wood used to manufacture Yajña Implements.

sages used to perform Yajña to bring good fortune to all in the society.

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COMPLIANCE Not required.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST None.

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