

Yajña and its Philosophy in Vedic Literature

A Synopsis Submitted to

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SYNOPSIS OF THE THESIS

STATEMENT – 1

THE RELEVANCE OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH WORK AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO SANSKRIT LITERATURE

Ancient civilizations had great respect for Fire-worshipping. But, Indus civilization was highly popular for its Fire-worshipping. This Fire-worship is known as *Yajña*. The word *Yajña* itself is a vast term. It covers many factors of human life starting from birth to death. Not only Fire-worship but the fire itself plays very essential role in human life. One cannot imagine even a single day without fire. But the question is ‘what do we understand from this word fire or what is the significance of fire in our life?’ This was the initial question of my research work. This problem led me to do thorough research on the topic of *Yajña*. Apart from this curiosity, another thing which inspired me to do research on *Yajña*, was my profession. I am an active worshipper of fire by interest and by profession too. I have been practicing this since last fifteen years. I was in the search of the answer of my question that how even today (i.e. in era of technology) also this trend of *Yajña* is equally popular as it was in the vedic era. It is evident that people of almost all caste and grade have profound respect for *Yajña*. In India, it is *Yajña*, but in places other than India it is mostly taken as worshipping of a natural phenomenon. Though the topic of *Yajña* or Fire-worshipping is popular both in literature and in practice, it is highly neglected by the researchers. Hence there is a dire need of research in this area and to relate it with present time.

In my Ph.D. research, I will cover almost all the aspects related to fire-worshipping specially those which are discussed in the vedic and puranic literature. I will give a detailed account of the form of fire-worshipping in other

civilizations apart from Indus. My research work will enrich the treasure of knowledge system by incorporating the views of ancient and modern scholars and by building a bridge between the thoughts of eastern and western thinkers as well as philosophers. I am planning to divide these entire discussions into four chapters. First chapter will be an introductory chapter, second will discuss the place and position of *Yajña* in vedic and post vedic time along with its philosophy. The third chapter will converse the form of fire-worship in present time and the last chapter will be a concluding chapter. It will be a critical study on the concept of *Yajña* and will be entirely based in my observations and findings. I have strictly followed critical and analytical methods and the standard format in preparing the present thesis. The study is an original contribution and quite relevant based on my own understanding, observations and insights.

STATEMENT - 2

METHODOLOGY, SOURCES AND ORIGINALITY

I have divided my study into four chapters with specific headings keeping in mind the systematic presentation of the contents. The analytical and critical methods have been adopted in the preparation of the thesis.

I have fully drawn upon all the relevant published and unpublished literature.

I have collected all the available materials on *Yajña*.

To the best of my knowledge, an attempt is made for the first time to make analytical, critical and comprehensive study on *Yajña*.

The study is presented in the following four chapters.

Chapter I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE *YAJÑA* AND ITS IMPORTANCE

The first chapter will be an introductory chapter which will present general introduction to *Yajña* and its importance. In this chapter, I will mainly discuss Sacrifice (*Yajña*) and its varieties, The purpose of sacrificial worshiping and significance of *Agni*, history of fire and Fire Sacrifice, origin of fire as a natural phenomenon, early vedic fire worship, *Agni* (the fire-god): the chief terrestrial deity of the *Rgveda*, similes used for the God *Agni* in the *Rgveda*, social aspect of fire worship, position of *Agni* in vedic age, *Brāhmaṇas*, connection between *Agni* and sacrifice, classification of sacrifice, development and change in the form of sacrifice. I will also incorporate the views of the scriptures on some rare topics regarding fire-worship like secret of fire worship, significance and form of Fire Worship in the later vedic era and myths related with Fire-God *Agni*.

Chapter II

CONCEPT AND PHILOSOPHY OF YAJÑA IN VEDIC AND POST VEDIC LITERATURE

The second chapter will be on concept and philosophy of the *Yajña*. This chapter will give a thorough discussion on the position and significance of *Yajña* and how its form has been changed from time to time. The form of *Yajña* differs in different era like some sacrifices were popular in vedic era and post vedic era, some other were popular in *Rāmāyaṇa* era and some other in Puranic era, etc. This chapter will also delineate with types of *Yajña* and its practical importance, *Agni-ādihāna* (Establishment of the Fires) and the three Fires, *Dakṣiṇāgni* (The Southern Fire), the *Pavamāna*-offerings at the *Agnyādhāna*, Five Fires - in daily rites, *Yajña* in religious and *sastric* texts, fire worship in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, fire worship in the Epic *Mahābhārata*, Vedic modes of worship in *Kautilya's Arthaśāstra*, fire worship in the *Purāṇas*, four kinds of *Yajña*, altar in the *Brāhmaṇa* period, the concept of the double altar, traditional part of *Yajña* etc.

Chapter III

YAJÑA: THEN AND TODAY

In this chapter I am planning to bring to light the relevance of sacrifices even in modern era. My research and specially my experience of performing and organising sacrifices lead me the conclusion that 'though the form of the sacrifice has been changed but still it is as relevant and popular as it was in the time of Vedas'. The special feature of this chapter will be the details and pictures of the sacrifices which so far I have performed at various occasions. Apart from this, I wish to give a detailed account of society and fire worship,

utility and need of *yajña* in present time, with special reference to the *Cāturmāsya* rites, and the fire – god *AGNI* in relation to other gods.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

This is the concluding chapter. Here I will summarize the discussion of the former three chapters. I shall try to link and examine the views of ancient and modern scholars. It will be an informative one for those who wish to know the long journey of the fire worship in Sanskrit literature and its position in today's times.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The bibliography contains a detailed list of the primary and secondary sources, thesis, web links and research articles that are used in the preparation of my thesis.
