



बालबोध सङ्ग्रहः - ३

BALABODHA SANGRAHA - 3

EFFICACIES OF AGNI UPASANA

Compiled with blessings and under instructions and guidance of
Paramahansa Parivrajakacharya Jagadguru

Sri Sri Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Sri Sankaracharya Swamiji

69th Peethadhipathi and

Paramahansa Parivrajakacharya Jagadguru

Sri Sri Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Sri Sankaracharya

Swamiji 70th Peethadhipathi of

Moolamnaya Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this book 'AGNI UPASANA' with devotion, faith and humility at the divine lotus feet of All Acharya Swamijis decorating the Moolamnaya Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham continuously from

Sri Adi Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya

who pours the divine shower of compassion on all of us

even today in form unseen and particularly

Paramahansa Parivrajakacharya Jagadguru

Sri Sri Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Swamigal

68th Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham

the Great Gnani who penanced for 100 years and

showed the path of virtue to all people.

Further we dedicate this book in the

Sathabhisheka Varshika Mahotsavam of

Sri Sri Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swamigal

69th Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham

who incarnated solely to remove our darkness.

The book has been prepared under instructions of

Sri Sri Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Swamigal

70th Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.

SRI AGNI BHAGAVAN

I worship Hari, of the form of Yagna, who is in the middle of Fire, who shines brilliantly like molten gold and who is accompanied by Svaha and Svadha (Consorts of Agni Bhagavan).

Once there was a large Vidvat Sadas (seminar of Vedic scholars) under the presidentship of Sri Kanchi Mahaswamigal. Hundres of Sastra scholars with Mahamahopadhyaya title and other masters in Vedas and Sastras, who were all Grihasthas, had assembled. All lectured wonderfully on the import of Sastras. All were eagerly expecting Sri Mahaswamigal to bless them with nectarine words of Sastra and Advaita. Sri Swamigal briefly said: "All should perform Aupasanam at least every day; you can obtain all benefits." Is it not clear as to how much importance was given by Sri Mahaswamigal to Agni Upasana (Worship of Holy Fire), Nishkamy Karma Yoga (performance of karmas with no desire for fruit and dedication to Iswara) and performance of Vedic rituals.

या ब्रह्मणो निश्चसितं यदुक्तिः सत्या अनिशं यज्जपतोविमुक्तिः ।

सैव प्रमाणं ननु मादृशानां श्रुते नमस्ते भवती गतिर्नः ॥

"That Veda, which is the very life-breath of Brahman, whose utterances are Truth, and by whose continuous chanting Liberation is attained- that Veda alone is proof for people like us. Hence O Sruti! Prostrations to you; you alone are our refuge." (Padavakya Pramana, Paravara, Sarvatantra Svatantra, Aptavajapeyayaji, Advaita Vidyacharya Srimad Appaiya Dikshitar)

॥ वेदाः वयं वः शरणं प्रपन्नाः ॥

दिक्कालाद्य-अनवच्छिन्नानन्त चिन्मात्रमूर्तये ।

स्वानुभूत्येकमानाय नमः शान्ताय तेजसे ॥

"I prostrate to that brilliant Light of Peace, which is not limited by directions and time, which is of the form of Consciousness alone, and which can only be perceived through direct experience." (Raja Bhartruhari)

सर्वत्र हि शास्त्रप्रापिता एव धर्मा उपास्या न विद्यमाना अप्यशास्त्रीयाः ।

"Dharmas should be observed only as directed in Sastras. Even if Dharmas are seen being followed in the world in practice, they should never be observed, if not in accordance with Sastras." (Sri Adisankara Bhagavatpada's commentary on Chandogya Upanishad, 2:2:1)

INTRODUCTION

जगत्कामकलाकारं नाभिस्थानं भुवः परम् ।

पदपद्मस्य कामाक्ष्याः महापीठमुपास्महे ॥

सदाशिवसमारम्भां शंकराचार्यमध्यमाम् ।

अस्मदाचार्यपर्यन्तां वन्दे गुरुपरम्पराम् ॥

“We worship the Mahapitha of Devi Kamakshi’s lotus feet, the originator of ‘Kamakala’ in the world, the supreme navel-spot of the earth.

We worship the Guru tradition, starting from Sadasiva, having Sankaracharya in the middle and coming down upto our present Acharya.”

सन्ध्यास्नानं जपोहोमः देवतानां च पूजनम् ।

आतिथ्यं वैश्वदेवं च षट्कर्माणि दिने दिने ॥

These six karmas – Sandhya after Snana (ritual bath), Japa, Homa, worship of Devatas, hospitality (offering of food etc. to guests) and Vaisvadeva – should be performed every day.”

Through the untiring efforts taken by Jagadguru Sri Acharyas of Moolamnaya Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, today we have in our midst masters of Vedas with Shadangas (Rig, Krishna Yajus, Sukla Yajus, Jaiminiya Sama, Kouthuma Sama and Atharva and other branches with six parts of Veda) in thousands. Veda and Sastra Pathasalas are functioning in the entire country as per the ancient traditions. Similarly there are hundreds of scholars in Sastras like Vyakarana, Tarka, Mimamsa and Vedanta and in Bhashyas (commentaries) of all four Vedas. Students of Samskrit are to be found in lakhs all over the country.

Sri Kanchi Acharyas have been travelling all over Bharata desa, protecting our ancient traditional branches of knowledge, encouraging their study and establishing Pathasalas. Thousands of students are studying their Veda Sakhas (branches). Many are the efforts made by Srimatham for protecting Vedas even in remote areas like Kashmir, Nepal etc. Similarly Sri Kanchi Acharyas are according due importance to observance of traditional Vedic rites; they are instrumental in producing hundreds of Nityagnihotris and encouraging them. Many persons all over the country, who could not observe daily Vedic rituals in toto during the period of their service in offices, but nonetheless performed the rites to the extent possible, have been keenly and properly observing them after retirement.

Agni Upasana is common to all people. However it is the instruction of Veda Matha that brahmanas should compulsorily observe this with no desire for fruit. The only Vedic property of brahmana women is Aupasanam and Agnihotram alone. Our Maharishis have given importance to women alone in protecting Vedic dharmas. Women only should persuade the men to perform Aupasanam, Vaisvadevam etc. They should make their male children perform Samidadhanam. Our ancestors have shown by practice that if we keep performing Agni Upasana every day in the morning and evening without fail, our minds will be purified and we can experience Bhagavat Sakshatkara (direct vision of the Lord) in this life itself. This is known as 'Single file path'.

In response to the request of thousands of people to enable them to get the knowledge of the benefits accruing by praying to Agni Bhagavan and the greatness of Agni Upasana, and noting their interest in performing the upasana, **Sri Kanchi Acharyas instructed that this book on Agni Upasana be compiled and presented. Accordingly, Sri Atma Bodha Tirtha Swamigal (Sri Kumbakonam Swamigal), disciple of Pujyasri Kuvalayananda Tirtha Swamigal (Sri Tambudu Swamigal), has written this book and dedicated it with devotion and humility at the divine lotus feet of Sri Kanchi Acharyas.**

Reading this book will inspire many people to perform the daily Agni Upasana rites with no desire for fruit and in a spirit of dedication to Bhagavan. In fact our ancestor Maharishis have laid down procedures for daily rituals to be performed with the attitude of dedication to Bhagavan only.

By wiping a mirror with a soft cloth, the dirt will go away and the reflection in the mirror will be clear. Similarly the impurities in the mirror of mind are many like desire, anger, greed, delusion, conceit, jealousy etc., accumulated over many lives. By performing the daily Karmas as laid down by Bhagavan and followed by our ancestors with dedication to Iswara, the impurities in the mind will go away and Bhagavat Sakshatkara will result and we can attain the high state of no rebirth. This has been pledged by our ancients by way of तप्तपरशुग्रहणम् - "holding axe heated red hot". Sri Suta Samhita says: "विशुद्धं ब्रह्मविज्ञानं विशुद्धस्यैव सिद्ध्यति"- "Pure experience of Brahman will be attained only by one whose mind is extremely pure."

Hence we pray to Sri Tripurasundari sametha Sri Chandramouliswara to bless that all should perform as far as possible Agni Upasana by way of daily observances like Samidadhanam, Aupasanam, Vaisvadevam, Agnihotram etc. and attain benefits here and hereafter.

Moolamnaya Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham
Kanchipuram

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गोविन्ददेशिकमुपास्य चिराय भक्त्या
तस्मिन्स्थिते निजमहिम्नि विदेहमुक्त्या ।
अद्वैतभाष्यमुपकल्प्य दिशो विजित्य
काञ्चीपुरे स्थितिमवाप स शङ्करार्यः ॥

Adoring Guru Sri Govinda Bhagavatpada for long and after he attained Videhamukti through his own power, Sri Sankaracharya wrote commentaries to establish Advaita philosophy, won over opponents in all directions and finally rested in Kanchipuram, where his Avatara period concluded.
(From 'Patanjali Charitram' of Sri Ramabhadr Dikshitar)

अपारकरुणामूर्तिं ज्ञानदं शान्तरूपिणम् ।
श्रीचन्द्रशेखरगुरुं प्रणतोऽस्मि मुदान्वहम् ॥

I pay obeisance every day with great happiness to Sri Chandrasekhara Guru, who is the embodiment of unlimited compassion, the bestower of Gnana, the very form of peace.
(From 'Guru Stuti' of Jagadguru Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swamigal)

Period of Sri Adi Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya
Kaliyuga 2593 – 2625 (B.C.509 – 477)

स्वस्तिवाचनम् - गुरुवन्दनम्

श्रीकाञ्चीकामकोटि पीठाधिपति
जगद्गुरु श्री शङ्कराचार्य श्रीचरणयोः प्रणामाः ।

श्री गुरुभ्यो नमः ।
श्री महात्रिपुरसुन्दरीसमेत श्री चन्द्रमौलीश्वराय नमः ।

स्वस्ति श्रीमद्-अखिल-भूमण्डलालङ्कार- त्रयस्त्रिंशत्कोटि-देवतासेवित- श्रीकामाक्षीदेवीसनाथ- श्रीमद्-
एकाम्रनाथ- श्रीमहादेवीसनाथ- श्रीहस्तिगिरिनाथ- साक्षात्कार- परमाधिष्ठान- सत्यव्रतनामाङ्कित-
काञ्चीदिव्यक्षेत्रे शारदामठ-सुस्थितानां अतुलित सुधारस-माधुर्य- कमलासन कामिनी- धम्मिल्ल संफुल्ल-
मल्लिका मालिका निष्यन्द मकरन्दझरी- सौवस्तिक- वाङ् निगुंफ विजृम्भणानन्द- तुन्दिलित मनीषि-
मण्डलानां अनवरताद्वैत- विद्या-विनोद-रसिकानां निरन्तरालङ्कृतीकृत शान्ति-दान्ति-भूम्नां सकल
भुवनचक्र प्रतिष्ठापक श्रीचक्रप्रतिष्ठा विख्यात यशोऽलङ्कृतानां निखिल पाषण्ड षण्ड कण्टकोद्धटनेन
विशदीकृत वेद वेदान्तमार्ग षण्मत प्रतिष्ठापकाचार्याणां श्रीमत्-परमहंस-परिव्राजकाचार्यवर्य श्रीजगद्गुरु
श्रीमत्-शङ्कर भगवत्-पादाचार्याणां अधिष्ठाने सिंहासनाभिषिक्त श्रीमत्-चन्द्रशेखरेन्द्रसरस्वती
संयमीन्द्राणां अन्तेवासिवर्य श्रीमत्-जयेन्द्रसरस्वती श्रीपादानां तदन्तेवासिवर्य श्रीमत्-
शङ्करविजयेन्द्रसरस्वती श्रीपादानांच चरणनलिनयोः सप्रश्रयं साञ्जलिबद्धं च नमस्कुर्मः ।

Swasti Vachanam – Guru Vandanam

Obeisance at the holy feet of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peethadhipati

Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya

Obeisance to Gurus

Obeisance to Sri Chandramouliswara and Sri Maha Tripurasundari

The divine town of Kanchipuram is an ornament to all the auspicious worlds; it is adored by the thirtythree crores of Devatas; the visible abode of Sri Kamakshi Devi and Sri Ekamranatha, also of Sri Mahadevi and Sri Hastigirinatha; and named as Satyavrata. Here in Sarada Matham are seated Srimad Paramahansa Parivrajakacharyavarya Sri Jagadguru Srimad Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya, who is surrounded by wise persons immersed in the bliss of garlands of words like streams of nectar, of unparalleled sweetness, dripping from garland of blooming jasmine at the crown of Devi seated in Kamalāsana; who is ever in the bliss of the realisation of Advaita; who is ever high, with the ornaments of the virtues of self-control of body and mind; who is decorated with the fame from installation of Srichakra, which bestows stability to all the chakras of worlds; who established Shanmatha (six philosophies of six Devatas for worship) on the path laid down by Veda and Vedanta, thus clearing the path free of the thorns of non-believers of Vedas; coronated in his throne are Jagadguru Srimad Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Sripada; his disciple Srimad Jayendra Saraswathi Sripada; his successive disciple Srimad Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Sripada. At the lotus feet of these Gurus we prostrate with all humility, with folded hands.

1. Teachings of Sri Kanchi Mahaswamigal

From 'Voice of God' (Deivattin Kural) - Part 6:

"वेदो नित्यमधीयतां तदुदितं कर्मस्वनुष्ठीयताम्"

The first priority is 'Karmanushthanam', performance of Karmas without violating instructions of Sastras. Nowadays 'Advaita' is interpreted as abdication of Karmanushthanam and of rules of achara (conduct). They interpret 'Advaita' as free licence to escape the rules of achara (conduct) and to advise 'conservatives' like me on 'What is there in all this ritual and conduct'! **It is found in practice that without even a little bit of Advaita experience, Jiva-Brahma Abhedha (non-difference) experience, and without making any effort in that direction, people argue vainly and say "Where is Karma for Atma? Where is Achara (conduct) restriction? Is observance of Varnasrama difference not opposed to Advaita?"** This is nothing but invoking Advaita in a wrong way to justify abandoning Sastras and acting as you like. In order to avoid becoming party to this sin, I refrained from lecturing about Advaita. Let nobody take Advaita Sadhana (effort) as something to be seriously taken up immediately. In the depth of your mind, keep the principle that Jiva and Brahman are one and the same; it will work. What you should practise now is performance of Karmas laid down in Sastras. In the Advaita sastra experienced and taught by masters, you are advised to take up Vedic karmas first and after attaining perfection there, to move on to Advaita Sadhana. In Vivekachudamani Adi Sankara teaches that the bondage of samsara will be got rid of only through this method.

श्रुतिप्रमाणैकमतेः स्वधर्मनिष्ठा तयैवात्मविशुद्धिरस्य ।

विशुद्धबुद्धेः परमात्मवेदनं तेनैव संसारमूलनाशः ॥ (150)

"If one, who is convinced of Vedas being the sole authority, is engaged in performance of duties assigned to him therein, his mind will become purified. For him, whose intellect is thus purified, the experience of Paramatma will occur; thereby the roots of samsara will be destroyed."

Let us follow this good path shown by our ancestors and attain the fruit of our birth. This path can be termed as 'Single file path'. Sri Bhagavatpada calls this path राजमार्गः 'Rajamarga' (the royal way) and teaches this firmly.

From 'Voice of God' (Deivattin Kural) - Part 2:

Grihashasrama (householdership) is called 'Illaram' in Tamil; Griham is 'il' (home). Tamil scholars have also glorified Grihasthasrama as in Dharma Sastras, saying 'Illaramalladu Nallaramalla' (position other than householder is not good dharma). The housewife is called 'Grihini'. This means she administers the home. She is called in Tamil 'Illattarasi', 'Manaivi and 'Manaiyal'.

Agni karma is the most important for Vedic religion. Aupasanam means related to Upasana (worship). Aupasanam is the Agni karma prescribed for all Hindus in Veda; it is for all castes. I criticise brahmana for having fallen. I pull him to the Vedic path.

Aupasanam is the karma common to both husband and wife. When the husband is out of station, it is the wife who has to offer the Akshata for Homam in the Aupasanagni. Veda has given her this right. Can women give up their right?

There is a lot of Agni at home – for food preparation, for hot water for bath! Should we allow the Agni, which was the witness for the marriage, to be put off without Aupasanam? If Aupasanagni is kept up, problems from goblins, ghosts etc. and diseases will not come near us. It is only due to the absence of Aupasanagni that even in brahmanas' homes, tapping with neem leaves, tapping with stick, blowing in mosque, praying to me etc. (to ward off difficulties) are common. If Agni shines in every brahmana's house and the fragrance of ghee, milk and Havis added in the Agni as per Sastras wafts in the air, good health and high thoughts will be attained by people of all castes. Aupasana Agni should be kept up throughout one's life without getting extinguished.

One should not look for differences between Grihya karmas and Sroutha karmas. As per Sanatana Dharma, now known as Hinduism, both these should be protected as two eyes.

The daily routine prescribed by Sastra for brahmana should be followed. The schedule is tight; there is no respite even for a second. Though it was brahmanas who wrote the Sastras and protected them, they have not prescribed a lazy routine for themselves. They have laid down rules of heavy physical work as well as mental involvement such that there is no chance for the mind to waver on extraneous matters. Where there is a will, there is a way. On return from office in the evening, karmas can be done as per Sastras. On holidays, all karmas can be completed comfortably. During periods of shift duty, rituals should be done as far as possible. **There should be regret at not being able to perform karmas. There should be eagerness to do karmas. Even that has some value. The compassionate Lord will not ignore that.** Instead of regretting

retirement from job, one should welcome retirement so that rituals can be performed properly. One in a lakh of people can still be found, who, after retirement, studies Veda and performs karmas properly. All efforts should be made to avoid discontinuance of our karmas, which have come down to us from times more ancient than any religion in the world. It will generate benefits for us as well as for the entire world.

The very root of our Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism is the Achara (conduct) and daily observance of karmas of the individual. It is not an exaggeration to say that the reason for the unity of Hindus without any special propagation is the individual's daily observance of karmas. This is the truth. The purpose of emphasising the need for everyone to perform his daily karmas is that the human birth should not go waste.

Note: Sri Kanchi Acharya Sri Mahaswamigal's teachings in Tamil were compiled by Brahmasri Ra.Ganapathi in 'Deivattin Kural – 7 volumes. These volumes are available also in English and various other Indian languages. Brahmanas should read at least the second part definitely. They will then understand the greatness of performing Svadharma; they will be driven to perform the same.

2. Description of Bharata Desa in Agni Puranam

Description of Bharatavarsha in Agni Purana, chapter 118 (Karma, Gnana Bhumi – Land of Karma and Gnana):

अग्निरुवाच

उत्तरं यत्समुद्रस्य हिमाद्रेश्चैव दक्षिणम् ।
वर्षं तत् भारतं नाम नवसाहस्रविस्तृतम् ॥
कर्मभूमिरियं स्वर्गमपवर्गं च गच्छताम् ।
महेन्द्रो मलयः सह्यः शुक्तिमान् हेमपर्वतः ॥
विन्ध्यश्च पारिपात्रश्च सप्तात्रकुलपर्वताः ।
इन्द्रद्वीपः कसेरुश्च ताम्रवर्णो गभस्तिमान् ॥
नागद्वीपस्तथा सौम्यो गान्धर्वास्थिवारुणः ।
अयं तु नवमस्तेषां द्वीपः सागरसंवृतः ॥
योजनानां सहस्राणि द्वीपोऽयं दक्षिणोत्तरात् ।
नवभेदा भारतस्य मध्यभेदेऽथपूर्वतः ॥
किराता यवनाश्चापि ब्राह्मणाश्च मध्यतः ।
वेदस्मृतिमुखनद्यः पारिपात्रोद्भवास्तथा ॥
विन्ध्याश्च नर्मदाद्याः स्युः सस्यास्तापी पयोष्णिका ।
गोदावरी भीमरथी कृष्णवेणादिकास्तथा ॥
मलयात् कृतमालाद्यास्त्रिसामाद्या महेन्द्रजाः ।
कुमाराद्याः शुक्तिमतो हिमाद्रेश्चन्द्रभागका ॥
पश्चिमे कुरुपाञ्चालमध्यदेशादयः स्थिताः ।
इत्यादि ॥
महापुराणे आग्नेये भारतवर्षं नाम अष्टादशाधिक शततमोऽध्यायः ॥

In Atmapurana by Srimad Sankarananda Saraswathi Swamigal:

आः! पाप भवता कस्माल्लब्धा सुदुर्लभम् ।

मानुषं भारते वर्षे स्वर्गमोक्षप्रदं सुखात् ॥

धिकं! त्वां यो भारते जातो नरके पुनरागतः ॥

“After being born in Bharatadesa as a human being, the rare birth bestowing comfortably Svarga and Moksha, it is condemnable that you have come back to Naraka.”

The greatness of Bharatadesa has been described in many Puranas.

3. Greatness of Bharata Desa – Foreign Scholars

From Collected Works of Rt.Hon.F.Maxmuller

India – What it can teach us

I should point to India

1) If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow in some parts, the very paradise on earth, I SHOULD POINT TO INDIA.

2) If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most freely developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life and has found solutions of some of them, which will deserve the attention even of those who have asked Plato and Kant, I SHOULD POINT TO INDIA.

3) And if I were to ask myself from what literature we here in **Europe**, we, who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans and of one Semitic race the Jewish, may draw that corrective, which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact, more lively, human - a life not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life - again I SHOULD POINT TO INDIA.

4) That very **Sanskrit**, the study of which may at first seem so tedious to you, and so useless, if only you will carry it on, as you may carry it on here at CAMBRIDGE better than anywhere else, open before you large layers of literature, as yet almost unknown and unexplored, and allow you an insight into strata of thought deeper than any you have known before and rich in lessons that appeal to the deepest sympathies of the human heart. India occupies a place second to no other country.

5) Whatever sphere of the human mind you may select for your special study, whether it be Language or Religion or Mythology or Philosophy, whether it be Laws or Customs, Primitive Art or Primitive Science, everywhere **You have to go to INDIA**, whether you like it or not, because some of the most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are **TREASURED UP IN INDIA and “IN INDIA ONLY”**.

6) In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and elevating as that of upanishads. It has been the solace of my life. It will be solace of my death also. A true paradise on earth, I would designate India under which sky the human mind has been developed. I would designate India,

from which literature we need most to render our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal.

Dr. Annie Besant's Sayings:

Make no mistake, without Hinduism India has no future. Hinduism is the soil into which India's roots are struck, and, torn out of that, she will inevitably wither, as a tree torn out from its place. And if Hindus do not maintain Hinduism, who shall save it? If India's own children do not cling to her faith, who shall guard it? INDIA ALONE CAN SAVE INDIA, AND INDIA AND HINDUISM ARE ONE.

Warren Hastings (Ex Governor General of India) thus speaks of the Hindus in general.

(Introduction to the Jaiminiya Nyayamala Visthara – Edited by Theoder Goid Stucker. London Edition 1878).

They (Hindus) are gentle and benevolent, more susceptible of gratitude for kindness shown to them, and less prompted to vengeance for wrongs inflicted than any people on the face of the earth, faithful, affectionate, submissive to legal authority.

Europe has also profited by this revival of the study of Sanskrit.

4. The emotional connect between Agnihotri and Agni Bhagavan – Nerur Vidvan Nityagnihotri Sri Ramana Sarma

1) In many places in the Vedas the emotional connect between Agnihotris and Agni Bhagavan, whom they worship, has been indicated. For instance,

"तस्य त्राता भवसि तस्य सखा यस्त आतिथ्यम् आनुषग् जुजोषत्" (तै.सं.१/२/१४)

It says: 'You are his friend and you protect him, who worships you always.'

2) In Apastamba Sroutha Sutras, while referring to the occasion when Agnihotri leaves Agni (in his wife's care), goes out of station and returns home, the emotional connect between him and Agni is shown. Just as there are emotions when one returns home from an outstation trip and meets a very dear relative, similar emotions are referred here.

"प्रवत्स्यन् सम्प्रेष्यति अग्नीन् समाधेहीति। ज्वलत उपतिष्ठते" (आप.श्रौ.सू.१/२४)

At the time when the Agnihotri is leaving his home, he asks his disciples to keep the Agni burning. He prays to the Agnis.

"पशून् नःशंस्य पाहि, तान् नो गोपाय, आऽस्माकं पुनरागमाद् इत्याहवनीयम्"

He entreats Ahavaniya Agni to protect the cows and animals in his home till he returns. Similarly he implores Garhapatya Agni to take good care of the children and Dakshinagni to protect the food.

"प्रजां नो नर्य पाहि तां नो गोपाय आऽस्माकं पुनरागमाद् इति गार्हपत्यम् । अन्नं नो बुध्य पाहि तन्नो गोपाय आऽस्माकं पुनरागमाद् इत्यन्वाहार्यपचनम् । अन्तराग्नी तिष्ठन् जपति इमान् नो मित्रावरुणा गृहान् गोपायतं युवम् । अविनष्टान् अविहृतान् पूषैतान् अभिरक्षतु आऽस्माकं पुनरागमात्"

He stands between the Agnis and prays to Mitra- Varuna and Poosha to take care of the house. All this is like requesting the elders in the family to take care of the young wife and the children in his absence.

3) Before leaving the home, the Agnihotri chants a mantra, which is like addressing a friend.

"मम नाम प्रथमं जातवेदः" इत्ययं मन्त्रः (तै.सं.१/५/१०)

Just as one would consider his friend as his substitute at home and allow him to use his clothes etc., he talks to Agni:

"मम नाम प्रथमं जातवेदः पिता माता च दधतुर्यदग्रे ।

तत् त्वं बिभृहि पुनर् आ मद्-ऐतोः, तवाहं नाम बिभराण्यग्रे ॥"

"May my name, which my parents gave me at birth, be yours till I return. I shall carry your name. (That is, may visitors, who come looking for me in my absence, pay respects to you; when people refer to me in the new place, they will call me Aahitagni with your name.) When the Agnihotri returns, he says the mantra:

"मम नाम तव च जातवेदो वाससी इव विवसानौ ये चरावः ।

आयुषे त्वं जीवसे वयं यथायथं वि परि दधावहै पुनस्ते"

"We exchanged our names earlier just like clothes. Now that I have returned, let us get back to our normal state."

4) During the period he is away, at all Agnihotram times, the Agnihotri should prostrate in the direction of the Agnis in his home and pray:

" प्रवसन् काले विहाराभिमुखः अग्न्युपस्थानं जपति । इहैव सन् तत्र सतो वा अग्नयः, प्राणेन

वाचा मनसा बिभर्मि । तिरो मा सन्तम् आयुर्मा प्रहासीत्, ज्योतिषा वो वैश्वानरेणोपतिष्ठते" इति ।

'While I am here, I bear you with my life-breath, speech and mind. While I am separated from you, may my life-breath not leave me. I pray to you through the all-pervasive Vaisvanara Jyoti. (Vaisvanara Jyoti is the light present everywhere, or the light present in all human beings, or the Agni in one's belly).' Just as one says he feels like losing his life-breath in separation from his dear one, the Agnihotri feels similar emotion. In Srimad Ramayanam, the high-souled Hanuman says about Sita and Rama:

"अस्या देव्या मनस्तस्मिन् तस्य चास्यां प्रतिष्ठितम् । तेनेयं स च धर्मात्मा मुहूर्तमपि जीवति"

'Because this Devi's mind is with Rama and Rama's mind with her, they both are able to live at least for a short time.' By use of the words, 'with life-breath, speech and mind', this kind of close relationship is referred. Is this not the emotion between the husband and wife?

5) Further the emotion of looking at Agni like a child on the Agnihotri's return is also expressed by Apastamba. He says:

"समिधः कृत्वा प्रत्येति । यथा ह वा इतं पितरं प्रोषिवांसं पुत्राःप्रत्याधावन्त्येवंहवाएतम् अग्नयः

प्रत्याधावन्ति । स शकलान् दारूणि वा आहरन् एति यथैव तत् पुत्रेभ्य आहरन् एति । तादृक् तद् इति विज्ञायते"

“Agnihotri should carry ‘Samit’ (sacrificial faggots). Just as children expect their father to bring some eatables and run up to him, the Agnis expect the Aahitagni to fetch Samit and run up. Hence the Aahitagni should bring wooden blocks or pieces. This is similar.”

6) Respect higher than what is shown to king, father and Acharya is also accorded to Agni. While departing from home, the Aahitagni takes leave of everybody and finally the Agnis in the Agnisala. Till the time the roof of Agnisala is visible during the time he walks away, he should not speak to anyone. Similarly when he returns home, from the time the roof of Agnisala becomes visible, he should refrain from speaking to anyone. At this time even if the king, father or Acharya comes, he should not speak to them. Only after worshipping Agni, he should speak to them.

“यदि एनं राजा पिता आचार्यो वा अन्तरेण अग्नीन् स्यात् छदिर्दर्शे नैनम् आद्रियेत” इति ।

7) While praying to Agni on his return, the Agnihotri takes back the responsibility of children etc. from Agni, just as one would resume his duty of looking after wife etc. from elders. He says the mantra:

“प्रजां मे नर्यं अजूगुपः, तां मे पुनर्देहि इति गार्हपत्यम्, अन्नं मे बुध्याजूगुपः तन्मे पुनर्देहिइत्यन्वाहार्यपचनम्, पशून् मे शंस्याजूगुपः तान् मे पुनर्देहीत्याहवनीयम्” ॥

The ninefold bhakti, which is famous in the world between the devotee and the Lord, is there hidden in Veda. That bhakti is mentioned between the Aahitagni and the Agni he worships.

Sri Ramana Sarma

Agniswara kshetram, Nerur

Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra Sannidhi

5. Verses of Meditation and Prayer to Agni

The following verses of meditation and prayer to Agni are found in the book of Mantra Sastra titled 'Sri Sarada Tilakam' written by Sri Lakshmana Desikendra.

इष्टं शक्तिं स्वस्तिकाभीतिमुच्चैः दीर्घैर्दोर्भि धारयन्तं जवाभम् ।
हेमाकल्पं पद्मसंस्थं त्रिनेत्रं ध्यायेद्वह्निं बद्धमौलिं जटाभिः ॥ १

1. Agni Bhagavan should be meditated upon as: holding in his four long hands the signs of boon, Sakti, Swastika and freedom from fear (abhaya); with splendour of java flower (China rose); with ornaments of gold; seated on lotus flower; having three eyes; with tresses tied on the head.

अंसासक्त-सुवर्णमाल्य-मरुण-स्त्रक्चन्दनालङ्कृतम्
ज्वालापुञ्ज-जटाकलाप-विलसन्मौलिं सुशुक्लांशुकम् ।

शक्तिस्वस्तिक दर्भमुष्टिक जपस्त्रक् स्रुक स्रुवाभीवरान्
दोर्भिर्बिभ्रत-मञ्चित-त्रिनयनं रक्ताभमग्निं भजे ॥ २

2. I pray to Agni Bhagavan who: has golden garlands on shoulders; is decorated with red coloured garlands and sandal paste; is with brilliant tresses on head; is dressed in white; has in his hands Sakti, Swastika, handful of darbha grass, rosary of beads, ladles 'sruk' and 'sruvam' used in oblations, and signs of abhaya and boon; is with three adorable eyes; is brilliant in red.

नवकुङ्कुमसंमितं त्रिनेत्रम् रुचिराकल्पशतं भजामि वह्निम् ।
स्रुवशक्तिवराभयानि दोर्भिः दधतं रक्तसरोरुहे निषण्णम् ॥ ३

नमो द्विशीर्ष्णे त्रिपदे चतुःऋङ्गाय तन्तवे ।
सप्तहस्ताय यज्ञाय त्रयी विद्यात्मने नमः ॥ ४

भो भो महाशक्ते सर्वकर्मप्रसाधक ।
कर्मान्तरेऽपि सम्प्राप्ते सान्निध्यं कुरु सादरम् ॥ ५ (Sri Ganeswara Vimarsini)

चतुर्भिश्च चतुर्भिश्च द्वाभ्यां पञ्चभिरेव च ।
ह्यते च पुनर्द्वाभ्यां स नो विष्णुः प्रसीदतु ॥ ६

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्महविः ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् ।
ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्म समाधिना ॥ ७ (Srimad Bhagavad Gita 4:24)

नमस्ते गार्हपत्याय नमस्ते दक्षिणाग्रये ।
नम आहवनीयाय महावेद्यै नमो नमः ॥ ८

काण्डद्वयोपपाद्याय कर्मब्रह्मस्वरूपिणे ।
स्वर्गापवर्गरूपाय यज्ञेशाय नमो नमः ॥ ९

ब्रह्मणे गार्हपत्याय विष्णवे दक्षिणाग्रये ।

शिवायाहवनीयाय शक्त्यै वैद्यै नमो नमः ॥	१०
यज्ञेशाच्युत गोविन्द माधवाऽनन्त केशव ।	
कृष्ण विष्णो हृषीकेश वासुदेव नमोऽस्तु ते ॥	११
अग्ने मां नय मार्गेण दुःखहीनेन सर्वदा ।	
उज्ज्वलेन सदा सर्वचित्तज्ञस्त्वमसीह भो ॥	१२ (Atma Puranam: 589)
वह्निमण्डलसध्यस्थं तप्तजाम्बूनदप्रभम् ।	
स्वाहा स्वधा समायुक्तं वन्दे यज्ञतनुं हरिम् ॥	१३
यत् सर्वत्र क्रतुफलदं यदखिलयज्ञादिना महितम् ।	
यत् सकलदेवरूपं ज्योतिस्तदुपास्महे सोमम् ॥	१४ (Sri Sivamahimakalika Stotra by Sri Appayya Dikshitar)
ऋग्यजुस्सामधामानं दशार्धहविरात्मकम् ।	
यं सप्ततन्तुं तन्वन्ति तस्मै यज्ञात्मने नमः ॥	१५
चतुर्भिश्च चतुर्भिश्च द्वाभ्यां पञ्चभिरेव च ।	
हूयते च पुनर्द्वाभ्यां तस्मै होमात्मने नमः ॥	१६ (Sri Bhisma Stavarajam: 42,43)
प्राणानां धारणार्थाय योऽन्नं भुङ्क्ते चतुर्विधम् ।	
अन्तर्भूतः पचत्यग्निस्तस्मै पाकात्मने नमः ॥	१७
योगावास नमस्तुभ्यं सर्ववासवरप्रद ।	
यज्ञगर्भं हिरण्याङ्ग पञ्चयज्ञ नमोस्तु ते ॥	१८ (Anusmriti: 30)

6. Some Rigveda Agni Sukta Mantras

Rigveda is divided into eight Ashtakas or ten Mandalas. The following Suktas there have been grouped together as Agni Suktas:

1. Paruchchepa's 127 Suktas in Mandala 1
2. Parasara's Suktas (65-73) in Mandala 1
3. Bharavaja's 16 Suktas in Mandala 6
4. Gritsamada's 10 Suktas in Mandala 2

A few of the Agni Suktas are given below for contemplation. By knowing the meaning of the Veda mantras, there will be eagerness to learn the Veda from a Guru.

Paruchchepa's Agni Suktas

1. अग्निं होतारं.....शोचिषाऽऽजुह्वानस्य सर्पिषः । (2.1.12.1)

I meditate on Agni Bhagavan, who is called by Dikshitas (who perform yagnas), who gives things away liberally, who is capable of destroying everything created and who knows all. Agni Bhagavan shines with brilliant flame.

2. स नो नेदिष्टं ददृशानन शवसा । (2.1.13.1)

O Agni Bhagavan, you are visible to our eyes. Please bless us by bringing the wealth of Devas and giving us. O Agni Deva, glorious one, in response to our hymns of praise, please grow strong and bring all strength and valour and bless us.

Gritsamada's गृत्समदः Agni Suktas

3. त्वमग्ने राजा वरुणो.....देवभाजयुः ॥ (2.5.17.4)

O Agni Deva, you are also Varuna, who possesses the processes for doing all acts. You are also Mitra, who has great power and is loved by all. You are also Aryama. You are the owner of all things. All the pleasure in the world is with you. O Lord, you are also Amsa, who give us our share of Gnana.

4. त्वमग्ने पितरंसुशेवः पास्याधृषः ॥ (2.5.18.9)

People worship you with yagas like they would their father. You complete their acts well. You shine brilliantly with your own light. People worship you and pray to you to be their brother. You are also son for one who worships you. Being his friend, you protect him from his enemy's cruelty.

It is to be noted that in this mantra, Agni Bhagavan acts as a father, son and friend to one who worships him and blesses him at various times accordingly.

5. त्वमग्ने सुभृत उत्तमं.....विश्वतस्पृथुः ॥ (2.5.19.12)

O Agni Deva, while we worship you well during yagas and every day Homas, you represent the high growth of our life. In your wholesome sight, all beauties and glories are there. In your attractive colour also, your beauty and glory are seen. O immeasurably great one, you are the whole, who guides and takes us to the last destination of our path. You are also the accumulated wealth spread in all directions.

6. यज्ञेन वर्धत जातवेदसमग्निंवृजनेषु धूर्षदम् ॥ (2.5.20.1)

Agni Bhagavan knows everything that takes birth. May we grow him by performing yagas. Worship him by offering Havis etc. in yagas and chanting Veda mantras loudly. Agni Bhagavan is a very happy Deva. He is the male in Suryaloka; he is the priest Hota, who calls all Devas to yagas. Worship Agni Bhagavan, who drives the chariot and protects the Devas. Obtain his blessing easily.

7. होताजनिष्ट चेतनः.....वाजिनो यमम् ॥ (2.5.26.1)

Agni Bhagavan is born for our sake as a good natured priest who calls Devas to yagas. He is born as the father of our fathers in order to protect them. May we perform yagas through his grace and succeed in getting the power to obtain wealth and subdue the mind, which runs fast.

Bharadwaja's Agni Suktas

8. पदं देवस्य नमसा.....ते रणयन्त संदृष्टौ ॥ (4.4.35.4)

O Agni Bhagavan, those, who take refuge in you and proceed to divine realms, seek out and obtain the Gnana which gets your grace to them. They obtained the divine Gnana with no blemish. They had your divine yaga names in mind and were happy to see your auspicious form.

9. पुरुष्यग्ने पुरुधा.....राजनि त्वे ॥ (4.4.36.13)

O king, Agnideva, May I enjoy in many ways the manifold wealth through you and your privilege as the king of wealth. O Agni Bhagavan, who is extolled in many ways; o king, there is a lot of wealth with you for your worshipper, who adores you.

10. समिधा यस्त.....शतायुषम् ॥ (4.5.1.5)

O Agnideva, the dying person attains the way of giving Samit and the sharpness of your strength. He then grows his house (body), which grows in many branches and is a hundred years old.

11. विद्वेषांसीनुहि वर्धयेळं मदेम शतहिमाःसुवीराः ॥ (4.5.12.7)

Destroy our enemy and make him run away broken. Grow the mantras which make you visible. May we attain the strength of the valorous and live a hundred years happily.

12. अग्रा यो मर्त्योवुरितावसे ॥ (4.5.16.1)

The dying person thinks deeply and happily about service to Agni and meditating on him and shines brightly and attains greatness. He gets the motivation to remain secure.

13. अग्निर्हि विद्मनारयिर्वाजेष्ववृतः ॥ (4.5.16.5)

Agni Bhagavan is the Lord, who rescues the dying person from his shackles by his intellect. The wealth of Agni Bhagavan is powerful. His wealth has not been surrounded and attacked by enemies.

14. वयमुत्वा गृहपतेतेजसा सं शिशाधि (4.5.20.19)

O Agnideva, the lord of householders! We grew your form by giving oblations with Samit. Bless such that the Grihastha's acts are performed continuously without break. Make us completely wise with your sharp brilliance.

15. अग्न आ याहि वीतये गृणानो हव्यदातये ।

नि होता सत्सि बर्हिषि ॥ (Sama Samhita 1.1)

O Agni Bhagavan, come for a new beginning. Being worshipped through the Veda mantras we chant, accept our oblations. Come for receiving the oblations. Fulfiller of our prayers! Sit down on the sacred seat of darbha grass on the altar of yaga and bless us.

16. त्वं नः पाह्यंकसः..... ब्रह्मणस्कवे । (4.5.26.30)

O Bhagavan who knows all births, save us from evil deeds and the acts of those who cause danger. Perceiver of the import of mantras! Save us and bless us.

17. यो नो अग्ने दुरेव आ मर्तो वधाय दाशति तस्मान्नः पाह्यंहसः ॥ (4.5.27.31)

O Agnideva, save us from evils of evil-mongers, which will make us suffer.

7. Greatness of Human birth and Brahmanas' importance and duty – Ancient Tamil and Samskrit Works

In 'Sivapuranam dedicated by Sri Manikkavachka Swamigal to Sri Atmanatha of Tirupperundurair (Avudaiyarkoil), he says: "I have taken crores of births – grass, worm, tree, many classes of animals, birds, snakes, stone, human being, ghost, goblin, asura, ascetic, Deva – in this world of moving and non-moving objects. O Siva, I have taken all births and I am tired."

In 'Tiruvammanai' sung by him in Tiruvannamalai, in the 14th song, he says that Siva blessed him with thirst for God's grace in this human birth, obtained after crores of births. He repeats that human birth is a very high birth.

Sri Thayumanava Swamigal has sung in 'Siddhar Ganam': "Of innumerable births, human birth is the rarest indeed. If this birth is missed, what will be the next, I do not know."

All great sages speak of the greatness of human birth.

Avvaiyar, the great Tamil woman saint, says by way of reply to the question put by Sri Muruga (Subrahmanya): "In response to your question as to which is rare, O Subrahmanya, I say human birth is rare. Even as human, it is rare to be born without disabilities like blindness, deafness, hunchback etc. Rarer is to receive knowledge and education. Still rarer is to give charity and engage in penance. If we do charity and engage in penance, the realm of Devas will open."

Prahlada speaks to Asura children in Srimad Bhagavatham, Skandha 7, chapter 6:

कौमार आचरेत्प्राज्ञो धर्मान् भागवतानिह ।

दुर्लभं मानुषं जन्म तदप्यध्रुवमर्थदम् ॥

"Human birth is rare indeed. It is unstable, but purposeful. Hence in young age itself a wise person should practise dharmas leading to attainment of Bhagavan."

Sri Jagadguru Adisankara Bhagavatpadacharya, incarnation of Parameswara, says in his book 'Viveka Chudamani':

जन्तूनां नरजन्म दुर्लभमतः पुंस्त्वं ततो विप्रता ।

तस्माद्-वैदिकधर्ममार्गपरता विद्वत्त्व-मस्मात्परम् ॥

आत्मानामात्म-विवेचनं स्वनुभवो ब्रह्मात्मना संस्थितिः ।

मुक्तिर्नो शतकोटिजन्मसु कृतैः पुण्यैर्विना लभ्यते ॥

“Of all births, human birth is difficult to get; rarer is birth as male and that too as brahmana, well versed in Vedas. Hence it is essential to practise the path of dharma (Pravritti and Nivritti) as laid down in Vedas and to attain mastery in that field. Then one should practise discrimination between Atma and non-Atma, leading finally to establishment in the state of Brahman; this is not attainable without the merit acquired in hundreds of crores of births.”

दुर्लभं त्रयमेवैतत् दैवानुग्रहहेतुकम् ।

मनुष्यत्वं मुमुक्षुत्वं महापुरुषसंश्रयः ॥

“The quality of a good human being, insatiable desire for Liberation and refuge in great masters – these three are difficult of attainment; they are attainable only with Bhagavan’s grace.”

लब्ध्वा कथंचित् नरजन्म दुर्लभं

तत्रापि पुंस्त्वं श्रुतिपारदर्शनम् ।

यः स्वात्ममुक्त्यै न यतेत मूढधीः

स आत्महा स्वं विनिहन्त्यसद्गहात् ॥

“Having attained human birth somehow, and that too birth as male and mastery of Vedas, if one, being of foolish intellect, does not strive for his own Mukti, he verily kills himself, clinging to unreal things.”

इतः कोन्वस्ति मूढात्मा यस्तु स्वार्थे प्रमाद्यति ।

दुर्लभं मानुषं देहं प्राप्य तत्रापि पौरुषम् ॥

“Having got human birth and that too as male, if a foolish person is negligent in attaining the final purpose, who is more foolish than him?

Saint Tirumular in his ‘Tirumandiram’ says on the greatness of brahmanas:

“There is no dharma greater than Veda. Wise men learnt and chanted Vedas, performed all dharmas laid down in Vedas, and attained Mukti. (51)

Through the Ahutis (oblations) of brahmanas in Agni, the upper worlds, the earth, quarters and Devas of quarters – all of them get energised. (214)

Brahmanas, who perform the prescribed six duties, worship Agni and perform rites during the three specified times every day. They stick to their routine and chant the six Angas of Veda.

(The six duties of brahmana are: study and teaching of Veda, performing and guiding performance of yagas, and giving and receiving Danam. The six Vedangas are: Siksha, Chandas, Nirukta, Vyakarana, Kalpa and Jyotisha). (224)

Brahmanas chant Gayatri mantra out of love of the world and go beyond Maya. (227)

Our ancestors have thus emphasised in their works the greatness of birth as human being and there too the rarity of birth as brahmana. Masters have shown the way for brahmana to attain in this birth itself the state of no rebirth.

In Srimad Bhagavatham, Skandha 7, chapter 14, Dharmaputra asks Narada: “O Maharshi! Please teach me the dharma which should be followed by a Grihastha like me for attaining Moksham.” Narada taught him the dharmas:

गृहेष्ववस्थितो राजन्क्रियाः कुर्वन्गृहोचिताः ।
वासुदेवार्पणं साक्षादुपासीत महामुनीन् ॥
देवानृषीन् नृभूतानि पितृनात्मान-मन्वहम् ।
स्ववृत्यागत-वित्तेन यजेत पुरुषं पृथक् ॥
यह्यात्मनोऽधिकाराद्याः सर्वाः स्युर्यज्ञसम्पदः ।
वैतानिकेन विधिना अग्निहोत्रादिना यजेत् ॥
पुरुषेष्वपि राजेन्द्र सुपात्रं ब्राह्मणं विदुः ।
तपसा विद्यया तुष्ट्या धत्ते वेदं हरेस्तनुम् ॥

“O king, Grihastha should perform duties of his Asrama, dedicate all his acts to Bhagavan Sri Vasudeva and worship great Munis. With the wealth he earns through his proper occupations, he should perform yagnas of Devas, Rishis, humans, other beings and Pitrus, and Atma (Iswara in oneself) every day separately and worship the Lord. In case he has the necessary riches, age etc. for performing yagas, he should perform yagas, Agnihotram etc. O best among kings! Brahmana is the best among humans, as he has austerity, knowledge and contentment and thus holds Veda, the very body of Hari.”

In Sri Vishnu Puranam written by Sri Parasara Maharishi, Yamagita contains the teaching of Yama Dharmaraja to Yamadutas. He says:

न चलति निजवर्णधर्मतो यः ।

“The true devotee of Vishnu will not swerve from his asrama dharmas. He will perform them for the pleasure of Bhagavan” (Amsam 3, chapter 7, verse 20).

वर्णाश्रमाचारवता पुरुषेण परः पुमान् ।
विष्णुराराध्यते पन्था नान्यस्ततोषकारकः ॥
यजन्यज्ञान्यजत्येनं जपत्येनं जपन्नृप ।
निध्नन्यान्हिनस्त्येनं सर्वभूतो यतो हरिः ॥
तस्मात्सदाचारवाता पुरुषेण जनर्दनः ।

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आराध्यते स्ववर्णोक्तधर्मानुष्ठानकारिणा ॥	११
(ब्राह्मणः) स्वधर्मात्पररो विष्णुमाराध्यति नान्यथा ॥	१२
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दानं दद्या-द्यजे-द्वेवान्-यज्ञैस्स्वाध्याय-तत्परः ।	
नित्योदकी भवेद्विप्रः कुर्याच्चाग्निपरिग्रहम् ॥	२२
निवापेन पितृनर्चन्-यज्ञैर्देवांस्तथातिथीन् ।	
अन्नैर्मुनीश्च स्वाध्यायै-रपत्येन प्रजापतिम् ॥	९-९
भूतानि-बलिभिश्चैव वात्सल्येनाखिलं जगत् ।	
प्राप्नोति लोकान्पुरुषो निजकर्म समार्जितान् ॥	९-१०
देवाभ्यर्चनं ह्योमस्सर्वाभ्यागतपूजनम् ।	
भिक्षा बलिप्रदानं च शस्तमस्य नरेश्वर ॥	९-२१

One, who performs duties of his varna and asrama, and none else, pleases Vishnu. Every day brahmana should do Agni Upasana, yagas, Pitru yagnam, Vedic study, Danam, hospitality to guests, Vaisvadevam etc.; he attains to meritorious worlds.”

Varnasrama dharmas have thus been emphasised in many ways; Agni Upasana has been mentioned as important. The impurities in mind should be removed by doing karmas laid down in Vedas for the pleasure of Bhagavan. Hence in the sankalpa said at the beginning of karmas every day, the masters have laid down:

मम उपात्त समस्त दुरित क्षयद्वारा श्रीपरमेश्वर प्रीत्यर्थं ।

“for the pleasure of Sri Parameswara through the removal of all the sins earned by me”. Similarly at the close of the karma we say:

कायेन वाचा मनसेन्द्रियैर्वा बुद्ध्यात्मना वा प्रकृतेःस्वभावात् ।

करोमि यद्यत्सकलं परस्मै नारायणायैति समर्पयामि ॥

“I dedicate to Narayana all the karmas performed by me through the body, speech, mind, sense organs, intellect, ego or natural inclination.” There is also a prayer for forgiveness of all defects committed during performance of karma:

विसर्गबिन्दुमात्राणि पदपादाक्षराणि च ।

न्यूनानि चातिरिक्तानि क्षमस्व परमेश्वर ॥

When we look at various Puranas, it is clear that 18 Puranas, 18 Upapuranas, many kshetra stories etc. have come down to us by way of narration by Suta Pouranika to Rishis like Sounaka

during yagas performed over many, many years in Naimisaranyam. Thus karmas do not exist without invoking Bhagavan. Our Kanchi Mahaswamigal calls our Sanatana Dharma as 'Single file path'. The following Rigveda mantra was cited for this purpose:

सह स्तोमाः सह छन्दसः आवृतः सह प्रमा ऋषयः सप्त दैव्याः ।
पूर्वेषां पन्थामनुदृश्य धीरा अन्वालेभिरे रथ्यो ३ न रश्मीन् ॥

Here the phrase 'Purvesham pantham' (on the way shown by our ancestors) should be noted. If we perform the Asrama karmas laid down in Vedas as an effective instrument for attaining Gnana, following the path of our ancestors and with due dedication to Iswara, the mind will be rid of impurities; and Bhagavan will shine in the cleansed mind like the reflection in a clean mirror.

In Vivekachudamani Sri Adisankara Bhagavatpadacharya says: चित्तस्य शुद्धये कर्म - "Karma is performed for purifying the mind." This is elaborated in Upadesa Panchakam (or Sopana Panchakam):

वेदो नित्यमधीयतां तदुदितं कर्मस्वनुष्ठीयताम्
तेनेशस्य विधीयता-मपचित्तिः काम्ये मतिस्त्यज्यताम् ॥

One should study the Vedic Sakha (branch) of his lineage and perform the karmas laid down therein with no desire for fruit and with dedication to Iswara. That is the Puja for Iswara. Even if we do not expect the fruit, Bhagavan does bless us with the fruit of karmas. Whether we have desire for fruit while performing karma, or not, the effort is the same. But if we perform the karmas with no desire for fruit and with the attitude 'this is the order of Vedamatha; I do this as dedication to Iswara', and if we say so, Bhagavan grants us in addition the great fruit of purity of mind. This is the royal Vedic path shown by our ancestors.

In Tatvopadesa, a Prakarana grantha, Sri Adisankara Bhagavatpadacharya says:

वर्णाश्रमाचार-परो-ऽवाप्तपुण्य-महोदयः ।

ईश्वरा-नुग्रहाल्लब्ध-ब्रह्मविद् गुरुसत्तमः ॥

"One, who conducts himself according to the rules of varna and asrama, gathers great merit; he knows Brahman by Iswara's grace; he is the greatest Guru." In Svarupanusandhanam, Sri Acharya begins by saying: तपोयज्ञदनादिभिः शुद्धबुद्धिः - "One whose intellect is purified by penance, yagna, Danam etc. In Aparokshanubhuti, he says:

स्ववर्णाश्रमधर्मेण तपसा हरितोषणात् ।

साधनं प्रभवेत् पुंसां वैराग्यादि चतुष्टयम् ॥

“By performing the penance of one’s own varna and asrama dharma and by meditating on Hari, man gets the four main instruments of Gnana, viz. dispassion etc.” In Sarvavedantasiddhanta Sarasangraham, Sri Acharya says:

कर्तव्यं स्वोचितं कर्म योगं आरोहुं इच्छता ।

“One should do karma suited to his varna and asrama, if he wishes to ascend yoga.”

शिष्टान्न-मीशार्चन-मार्यसेवां तीर्थाटनं स्वाश्रमधर्मनिष्ठाम् ।

यमानुषक्तिं नियमानुवृत्तिं चित्तप्रसादाय वदन्ति तज्ज्ञाः ॥

“The wise say that the food of those of good conduct, worship of Iswara, pilgrimage to holy places, commitment to control of sense organs, and following the rules of control of mind help in happiness and clarity of mind.”

In Brahmasutra Bhashyam, Sri Acharya says in परामर्शाधिकरणम्, in the commentary for the Sutra विधिर्वाधारणवत् (3.4.2.20), “स्वाश्रम-विहित-कर्मानुष्ठाने प्रत्यवायश्रवणात्”

“Srutis say that if people do not follow their karmas of varna and asrama, sin will result.”

In आश्रमकर्माधिकरणम्, in the commentary for the Sutras विहितत्वाच्चाश्रमकर्मापि (32), सहकारित्वेन च (33), सर्वथापि त एवोभयलिङ्गात् (34), अनभिभवं च दर्शयति (35), he says:

“यस्यैतेषां चत्वारिंशत्संस्कारा” इत्याद्या च संस्कारत्वप्रसिद्धिः वैदिकेषु कर्मसु तत्संस्कृतस्य विद्योत्पत्तिमभिप्रेत्य स्मृतौ भवति । तस्मात् यज्ञादीनि, आश्रमकर्माणि च भवन्ति । विद्यासहकारिणी चेति निश्चितम् ॥

“Hence the 48 Vedic samskaras (purificatory rituals) and karmas are instrumental in empowering the person of mind purified thus, in obtaining Brahmavidya. It is certain that yagnas and other karmas of asrama are indeed helpful in obtaining Brahmavidya.” He further says:

सर्वथात्याश्रमकर्मत्वपक्षे विद्यासहकारित्वपक्षे च ।

त एवाग्निहोत्रादयो धर्मा अनुष्ठेयाः ॥

अतः अग्निहोत्रादेः नित्यात्कर्मणः

यत् नित्यं कर्म वैदिकं अग्निहोत्रादि तत् कार्यायैव भवति ।

ज्ञानस्य यत्कार्यं तदेव अस्यापि कार्यमित्यर्थः ।

“The daily Vedic karmas like Agnihotram etc. should all be performed as prescribed asrama dharmas; they also lead the performer to Gnana.” He says that this is indeed the purport of Sruti. In Brahma Sutra Bhashya, in the third chapter, Sadhanadhyaya, he has theorised many such principles.

Karmayoga established by Sri Krishna Paramatma (Srimad Bhagavadgita)

While teaching Srimad Bhagavadgita to Arjuna, Sri Krishna Paramatma lets him into the secrets of Brahma vidya and Jiva - Brahma unity. He then stresses that for the jiva to attain the state of Brahman, he has to obtain the true knowledge of his self from Guru; prior to that, he has to perform dharmas of his varna and asrama with the spirit of dedication to Iswara. While commenting on the verse

यावानर्थं उदपाने सर्वतः संप्लुतोदके ।
तावान् सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः ॥ (2-46)

Sri Sankaracharya writes: तस्मात् प्राक् ज्ञाननिष्ठाधिकारप्राप्तेः कर्मण्यधिकृतेन कूपतडागाद्यर्थ-स्थानीयमपि कर्म कर्तव्यम् ॥

Before attaining Gnana, everyone should definitely perform his assigned karmas. Doing these karmas and enjoying their fruit is like bathing in well, tank etc. Brahmagnana is like bathing in the sea. Though Brahmagnana no doubt is the ultimate truth, purity of mind is a must in order to experience it. That purity of mind will only come by karmayoga practised with dedication to Bhagavan.

Bhagavan taught Brahmagnana in many ways to Arjuna; he said to him: “You are now not fit for Gnanam; Do karmayoga; thereby your mind will get purified and you will become eligible for Gnanayoga. You will then attain Gnana and supreme peace. If you resort to ego and decide not to fight, it will be a wrong decision, as your kshatriya nature will goad you to karma. Kshatriya svadharma involves fighting, isn't it?

यद्यहंकारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे ।
मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ॥ (18-59)

प्रकृतिः क्षत्रियस्वभावः त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ॥

In chapter 3, sloka 18, Gnani's characteristics are brought out; there Bhagavan tells Arjuna that he is fit for karma alone and not Gnana as yet. While commenting on this, Sri Acharya says this clearly in his commentary:

न त्वं एतस्मिन् सर्वतः संप्लुतोदकस्थानीये सम्यग्दर्शने वर्तसे ॥
“You are not in that position where water is abundant everywhere.”

न हि कच्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥ (3-5)

“None can remain without karma or thoughts even for a second, because one's innate nature will keep prodding him every second.”

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।

शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः ॥ (3-8)

Sri Acharya's commentary says that one who does karmas as taught by Sastras is superior to one who does not do.

नियतं नित्यं शास्त्रोपदिष्टम्

यो यस्मिन् कर्मणि अधिकृतः फलाय च

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः। (3.20)

"Kings like Janaka and Asvapathi attained Liberation by doing karmas." They are known as karmayogis.

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।

स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥ (18-47) (3.35)

कर्मसन्त्यासात्कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते ।

(5.2)

आरुरुक्षोर्मुनेर्योगं कर्मकारणमुच्यते ॥

(6.3)

"Svadharm, even if not well done, is more meritorious than another's dharma, well done. To die doing one's svadharm is better; another's dharma is fraught with fear."

"Doing one's karma as karmayoga is better than abandoning karma."

"For one, intent on Liberation, karma is said to be the cause for going higher."

सिद्धिं प्राप्तो यथा ब्रह्म तथाप्नोति निबोध मे ।

Sri Acharya in his commentary says about 'Siddhim praaptah'

सिद्धिं प्राप्तः स्वकर्मणा ईश्वरं समभ्यर्च्य तत्प्रसादजां कायेन्द्रियाणां ज्ञाननिष्ठायोग्यता लक्षणां सिद्धिं प्राप्तः ॥

"One who performs his varnasrama dharma karmas and dedicates them to Iswara, thus gets His grace and becomes eligible for steadiness in Gnana."

अफलाकांक्षिभिः यज्ञो विधिदृष्टो य इज्यते ।

यष्टव्यमेवेति मनः समाधाय स सात्विकः ॥ (17-11)

"That yagna is Satvika, which is done as per Sastras and with the attitude that it must certainly be done and without expectation of fruit." Here by saying यष्टव्यमेवेति, Bhagavan shows that yagna has to be compulsorily performed.

Further Bhagavan says that his final teaching is as follows:

निश्चयं शृणु मे

यज्ञ दान तपः कर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।

"Karmas like yagna, danam and penance (tapas) are never to be discarded, but should certainly be performed." न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव. The reason is:

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चेति पावनानि मनीषणाम् ।

एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि संगं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च ।

कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चितं मतमुत्तमम् ॥

(18-6)

“Yagna, danam and tapas are purifying for those, who do them as svadharma without expectation of fruit and only for the pleasure of Iswara.”

“It is my conclusive and best opinion that these karmas like yagna etc. should certainly be performed, but with no regard for fruit and with no attachment.” The use of words ‘Nischitam’ and ‘Uttamam’ by Bhagavan here is to be noted. Brahmanas should perform yagnas and other svadharma acts as karmayoga with the sole thought that these acts are laid down in Veda. These are all Agni Upasana. That Agni Bhagavan gets pleased with these acts and grants all benefits is our ancestors’ experience. Bhagavan further warns emphatically:

यः शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य वर्तते कामकारतः ।

न स सिद्धिमवाप्नोति न सुखं न परां गतिम् ॥

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ ।

ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि ॥

“One, who acts in violation of rules of Sastra and as per his own volition, will not attain either fulfilment of desire, or happiness, or higher state. Therefore Sastra is your authority in deciding whether an act is fit to be done or not done. Knowing the rules of Sastra, you should perform karma in this world.” Here karmas for brahmanas as laid down in Sastra, which is Veda, are all Agni Upasana.

It is the order of Veda that starting with Samidadhanam twice a day in Brahmacharya asrama and continuing with Aupasanam (Agni Sandhanam as required), Vaisvadevam (twice a day) etc. in Grihasthasrama, brahmana should go on with Nityagnihotram twice a day after performing Agni Aadhanam, and perform Somayaga etc. as per one’s capacity.

Sri Sankaracharya says in his commentary on **Taittiriya Upanishad**, Sikshavalli, Anuvaka 4, while writing on यच्छन्दसा विश्वरूपः -

श्रीकामोऽस्मिन्विद्याप्रकरणेऽभिधीयमानो धनार्थः धनं च कर्मार्थं कर्म च उपात्तदुरितक्षयाय, तत्क्षये हि विद्या प्रकाशते ॥ तथा च स्मृतिः-

ज्ञानमुत्पद्यते पुंसां क्षयात्पापस्य कर्मणः ।

यथाऽऽदर्शितलप्रख्ये पश्यत्यात्मानमात्मनि ॥ (Mahabharata) (12-196-8)

“One should be Srikama, i.e. desirous of wealth; wealth for what purpose? For performing karmas laid down in Veda with no desire for fruit. Doing such karmas will in due course result in sins being driven away, vidya and Gnana increasing. This is like the reflected image in a mirror being clear, once the dirt is removed.

Sri Sureswaracharya also says in his Vartikam of Taittiriya Upanishad:

मुमुक्षोः तत्परस्यैवं श्रौतस्मार्तेषु कर्मसु

आर्षं च प्रातिभं ज्ञानमाविर्भवति मोक्षदम् । (तै.उ.वार्तिकं . शी.१०-१६०)

नित्यकर्माद्यनुष्ठानाच्छ्रुद्धान्तःकरणःपुमान् ॥ (तै.उ.वार्तिकं ब्रह्म-१-९)

“For one, who is intensely keen on attainment of Moksha and who earnestly performs karmas specified in Sruti and Smriti, the ancient Gnana of Rishis shines in him by itself and leads him to Moksha. By performing the daily karmas, one’s mind gets purified.”

Sri Adisankara Bhagavatpadacharya thus in his Bhashyas and Prakarana Granthas has clearly laid down that Yagna, Agnihotram etc. and other Asrama dharmas should be compulsorily performed. The ordinary Grihastha should perform them as mandatory Asrama dharmas. The grihastha, intent on Moksha, should perform them as instruments for Vidya. This he has established with the authority of Sruti, leaving no doubt.

In Srimad Bhagavatham Sri Nrisimha Bhagavan teaches Prahlada:

कथा मदीया जुषमाणः प्रियाः त्वमावेश्य मामात्मनिसन्तमैकम् ।

सर्वेषु भूतेष्वधियज्ञमीशं यजस्व योगेन च कर्म हिन्वन् ॥ (7-10-12)

“Listening lovingly to my stories and perceiving me in your Atma, perform yagnas with the spirit of yoga, thus weakening your Prarabdha karma, and worship Iswara who resides in all beings as the lord of yagnas.”

In Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavan teaches Karmayoga to Arjuna:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ (2:47)

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।

सिद्ध्यसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ (2:48)

कायेन मनसा बुद्ध्या केवलैरिन्द्रियैरपि ।

योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यक्त्वात्मशुद्धये ॥ (5:11)

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।

मामेवैष्यसि युक्त्वैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ॥ (9:34)

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।

मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥ (18:65)

“You are duty bound to do karmas; do not claim right to fruit of karmas. Do not become a cause for getting the fruit of karma; nor become attached to abandonment of karma.”

“Dhananjaya! Do karmas, established in yoga, without any attachment and retaining equanimity in success and failure. Yoga is indeed equanimity.”

“Yogis do karma with their body, mind and intellect and sense organs, without any attachment and only for cleansing the mind.”

“Set your mind on me; be my devotee; do yagas for me; worship me. With me as refuge, devoting yourself to me, you will attain me.”

“Set your mind on me; be my devotee; do yagas for me; worship me. You will definitely attain me; I promise you; you are dear to me.”

Sri Krishna Bhagavan thus teaches all of us through the medium of Arjuna that karmas should be done with the spirit of dedication to Iswara.

8. Poems in Sangakala Literature on Veda, Brahmanas and 'Three Agnis'

Tamil Sangakalam (Sanga period) is said to be about 2300 years earlier from now. The Tamil poets of Sangakalam have assembled poems composed by different poets in different places into eight books, called “**Ettutthohai**” and ten books of poems called “**Pattuppattu**”.

The eight books of ‘**Ettutthohai**’ are:

- 1.Natrinalai
- 2.Kurunthohai
- 3.Ainkurunooru
- 4.Paditruppattu
- 5.Paripadal
- 6.Kalittohai
- 7.Ahananooru
- 8.Purananooru.

The ten books of ‘**Pattuppattu**’ are:

- 1.Tirumurugatrappadai
- 2.Porunar Atrappadai
- 3.Sirupanatrappadai
- 4.Perum Panatrappadai
- 5.Mullaippattu
- 6.Maduraikkanchi
- 7.Nedunalvadai
- 8.Kurinjippattu
- 9.Pattinappalai
- 10.Malaipadukadam (Koottaratrappadai).

In **Ainkurunooru**, in the first chapter of ten poems, in the 4th poem, the poet Oram Pogyiar complements the Chera king. He says first that the enemies stand defeated. Defeat of enemies strengthens the king; it is good for the country. With brahmanas (the poet uses the term ‘Parppar’, which actually refers to brahmanas, who have vision of Bhagavan in their heart-cave) chanting the Veda, the lifespan of the king grows. Let brahmanas chant Vedas and perform yagas.

In the 6th poem, ‘Thozhi Kootrupattu’, the poet extols a place called Thenur in the Pandya kingdom. He says that with brahmanas performing many yagas, the Agni makes the daytime more brilliant.

‘**Paripadal**’ of **Ettutthohai** had 70 poems originally at the time of compiling it. Those were: in praise of Vishnu- 8, Muruga- 31, Kotravai (Durga) -1, River Vaigai- 26; Madurai- 4. But we have only 22 poems available now. In the 2nd poem on Vishnu, the poet Keerandaiyar says:

“O Lord whose high flag has the red-mouthed Garuda! you are the substratum in the shining gem and other materials. Your form and your food consist of the words of the lord of yaga uttered in the Veda; the sacrificial animal tied to the sacrificial post (yupasthambha) in yagas, each higher than the other; the brilliant flame from the Agni in the yaga, intensified by pouring ghee and other Havis. Parimelazhagar’s commentary explains that Bhagavan appears in the form of sculpture to ordinary persons, as the flame in the yaga to brahmanas, in their minds to yogis and at all places to Gnanis.

In the 3rd poem on Vishnu, the poet Kaduvanin Eyinamar praises Vishnu:

“You are the inscrutable import of the Veda; the substratum of the five elements.”

In the 10th poem on River Vaigai, poet Karumpillaippoodanar says:

“Some women rolled on the roller stone red coloured saffron liquid, pasty perfume mixes, camphor etc. such that the desired intensity of the red colour, similar to the flame from the yaga Agni on adding Havis, was achieved.” In another poem (3rd), there is clear reference to brahmanas protecting the sacred Veda.

In the 7th poem Madurai city is extolled by saying: “The people of the city of Madurai get up from bed by hearing the sound of the chant of Vedas and not that of the cock as people in Vanji and Uraiyur do.”

In the beginning of the prayer song in **Kalittohai**, it is said: “The Lord taught the sacred Veda with the six Angas to brahmanas.” The six Angas (Shadangas), as noted earlier, are Nirukta, Jyotisha, Vyakarana, Kalpa, Chandas and Siksha. The Tamil term ‘Andanar’ used for brahmanas means those who have loving compassion. Nachchinarkkiniyar, the scholar, in his commentary, writes that ‘Andanar’ actually means those who have realised ‘Anthar’, i.e. Vedanta, vision of the Lord.

In the 3rd part of Kalittohai, viz. ‘Marudakkali’, it says: “Like the Veda-chanting brahmana, who circumambulates the Agni with his bride with doe-like vision during marriage, the hero also does the same.”

In **Purananooru**, poet Muranjiyur Mudinaganar, while praising the king Cheraman Perunchotru Udiyan Cheraladan, refers (2-22, 23) to ‘Muththi’ (three Agnis) worshipped by brahmanas twice a day. Poet Avur Mulankizhar, in 166th poem in Purananooru, says about king Gowniyin Vinnandayan that he performed many yagas and obtained many victories in wars. He adds that he adopted Diksha during yaga period and his wife acted as yagnapatni and that the king fought against the nihilism of Buddhists and followed Vedic religion keenly. He says: “O king, the ancient Veda of four branches and six Angas talks only about dharma and is ever the speech of Siva. You countered the false propaganda of Buddhists and others, opposed to Veda. You have come in the lineage of kings who performed the 21 yagas grandly. When you sit for yaga wearing deerskin and yagnopavita, your wife performs her role in the yaga. May you, with such a wife, live long like the Himalayas.”

The author of **Tirumurugatruppada**i, one of the 'Pattuppattu' compilation, is Nakkeerar, son of poet Madurai Kanakkayanar. He debated with Siva himself and obtained his grace. Having got the grace of Muruga, he composed this poem for others to similarly attain his grace. He was the first poet in Tamil Sangam. Tirumurugatruppada is included in 11th Tirumurai. While praising Muruga of Swamimalai (Tiruveragam), Nakkeerar sings the greatness of brahmanas. He says: "Brahmanas perform the prescribed six karmas. They come from the lineage of truth and dharma; they live such that their father's and mother's lineages are proud. They perform yagas of the three types. Wearing yagnopavita, they worship Bhagavan at proper times with hands joined over their heads. They pray to Muruga chanting the Shadakshara mantra and offer flowers. Sri Muruga of Tiruveragam is pleased with their prayers with Veda mantras. They perform Agni Upasana every day."

In **Maduraikkanchi**, the 6th in the Pattuppattu compilation, poet Mangudi Marudanar praises king Talaiyalanganathu Cheruvendra Pandian and the city of Madurai. He refers to the transience of the human birth and explains like 'gooseberry in palm' the Advaita principle of how Mukti can be attained in this birth itself. While describing the people of Madurai and their modes of living, he says about brahmanas that they live in 'Andanar palli'; they always chant the three Vedas; with a view to merging with Bhagavan, they practise the principle of dharmic conduct and perform yagas etc. He adds that brahmanas have vision of Bhagavan in their hearts and act accordingly; hence they cross the samsara and attain Mukti in this birth itself. He extols the king and says that he should perform many yagas like the earlier king 'Palyagasalai Mudukudumip Peruvazhudi'. This is seen in 'Nalvelvitturai also. In Paditruppattu, Tirumurugatruppada, Kalittohai, Perumpanatruppada and Ahananooru, we find many references to brahmanas performing yagas and various details relating to yagas.

9. Greatness of Grihasthasrama

Ancient Literature

Maharishi Goutama praises Grihasthasrama thus:

देवैश्च मनुष्यैश्च तिर्यग्भिश्चोपजीव्यते ।

गृहस्थः प्रत्यहं यस्मात् तस्माच्छ्रेयान् गृहाश्रमी ॥

“As Grihastha supports Devas, humans and animals every day, he is the most meritorious.”

Manu says in Manusmriti:

यथा मातरमाश्रित्य सर्वे जीवन्ति जन्तवः ।

तथा गृहस्थमाश्रित्य सर्वे जीवन्ति भिक्षवः ॥ (मनुस्मृतिः)

यथा मूलप्राणो भवेत्स्कन्धः स्कन्धात् शाखाः सपल्लवाः ।

मूलेनैव विनष्टेन सर्वमेतद्विनश्यति ॥

तथा चतुर्णामाश्रमाणां तु गृहस्थो योनिरुच्यते ।

तस्मात्सर्वप्रयत्नेन रक्षणीयो गृहाश्रमी ॥

यथा नदीनदास्सर्वे सागरे यान्ति संस्थितिम् ।

तथैवाश्रमिणस्सर्वे गृहस्थे यान्ति संस्थितिम् ॥

“Just as all living beings depend on their mother for living, all mendicants (brahmachari, vanaprastha and sanyasi) depend on the Grihastha for living.”

“For a tree, the the root-stem at the base is the fundamental vital breath; from it, the branches with blossoms are held. If the base stem is destroyed, the entire tree is destroyed. Similarly, for all the four asramas, Grihastha is the basic support. Hence Grihastha should be protected at all costs.”

“Just as all rivers (flowing east or west) find their final destination in ocean, people of all asramas find their support in the Grihastha.”

Jagadguru Sri Kanchi Mahaswamigal says in Voice Of God (Deivattin Kural) - Part 2 on the aims of marriage:

“In Brahmacharya asrama one absorbs Vedas theoretically. To gain practical insight, he has to perform the karmas, yagnas as instructed in Vedas. For this purpose he has to take up a companion as an inseparable asset. She is called yagnapatni or dharmapatni. She must be with him and encourage him in performance of dharma including yagna. She thus acts as the backbone of karmas, which make divine powers favourable to the world. Even when she is his cook and she provides physical comfort to him, she does well for the world. This is because the

food cooked in his home is not just for him; but he has to feed guests, poor persons and even other living beings through Vaisvadevam. So his wife's cooking serves this purpose.

In order for Vedic dharma to remain perpetually in this world, she has to procreate children for performing Vedic rituals. It cannot be seen in any other religion that even procreation is made into a samskara for future dharmic life. If the present day people understand the Sastric aims of marriage as explained by me, it will pave the way for improvement. May Sri Chandramouliswara bless people to understand the right way.”

Importance of Grihasthasrama in Tirukkural

Tirukkural has been praised by many scholars like Avvaiyar, Idaikkadar and Velliveediyar. They have compared it to Veda and admired its brevity and comprehensiveness in explaining dharma, saying that the seven seas have been, as it were, compressed in a mustard seed. Tiruvalluvar has spoken about Grihasthasrama in 'Illaraviyal' in ten stanzas. He says:

1. Grihastha (Ilvaazhvan in Tamil) is one who supports his parents, relatives and others.
2. Grihastha is the support for those abandoned by relatives, the poor and those who die as orphans.
3. It is Grihastha's bounden duty to protect as per dharma the five entities – his dead ancestors, Bhagavan, guests, relatives and himself.
4. If Grihastha gathers wealth with fear of blame for evil sources, and enjoys the same after distributing it among others, his lineage will never be destroyed.
5. The characteristic of Grihasthasrama is love; the benefit is to follow the dharma of helping others.
6. If one conducts Grihasthasrama as per dharma, there is nothing he would gain by taking recourse to Sanyasa.
7. One, who lives as Grihastha with its characteristics intact, is the best among all those who strive to succeed.
8. Grihasthasrama, conducted through enabling others to live life as per dharma and himself living without violation of dharma, is more powerful than austerity conducted with discipline.
9. Dharma is Grihasthasrama; it is best if it is lived without attracting blame from others.
10. One, who lives on earth as per the principles of life, will be treated as a Deva of heaven even while on earth.

Deepa worship is also Agni Upasana

Traditionally women used to sing in praise of Devi enshrined in Deepa (lighted lamp) while lighting and placing lamps of different kinds – earthen, brass with Devi design etc., in homes at various locations – both sides of entrance, Bhagavan’s sannidhi, Tulasi plant platform etc. both in morning and evening. Those songs praise the flame in the deepa and convey prayers for longevity, prosperity, progeny, fame, Gnana etc. While elderly women lighted the lamps and worshipped, they used to train the girl children. Their minds and the homes were bright and blissful. Agni Bhagavan himself shines in the flame of the Deepa and blesses. With the lighting and worship of the external lamp, the inner light will brighten up. Worship of Deepa has been the life-breath of our nation. It has been common in all parts of our country to worship Deepa in different festivals on different days in different months. Deepa going off has been considered as a bad omen.

Tiruvannamalai has been called Agni kshetra. The Karthikai Deepa festival there is world famous. Sri Parameswara shines as flaming Agni in the form of Light there. Kanchipuram is known as Prithvi kshetra. People worship Mahavishnu here as ‘Deepaparakasa’. Connoting this, this sthala is known as Tiruttanga and Tooppul. Tirumangaiyazhvar sings of Mahavishnu shining as ‘Deepaparakasa’ in his poem Tiruneduntandagam.

An old Tamil song avers that all gods are present in Deepa Jyoti: The flame is Siva; the heat is Ambika; the red colour is Ganesh; the light is Muruga; Jyoti is Vishnu and Surya. The light that is Muruga actually came out of the sparks of Agni of the eye in the forehead of Sri Parameswara. There is no poet or scholar, who has not eulogised the greatness of Deepa.

Kalidasa, who wrote Raghuvamsa, was known as ‘Deepasikha Kalidasan’. He generally uses Deepa as illustration. In Raghuvamsa, while describing Indumathi’s svayamvara, the poet says (6:67):

सञ्चारिणी दीपशिखेव रात्रौ यं यं व्यतीयाय पतिंवरा सा ।
नरेन्द्रमार्गाट्ट इव प्रपेदे विवर्णभावं स स भूमिपालः ॥

When Indumathi walked with the garland in hand near the kings, their faces would brighten with her radiance like the Deepa flame. When she goes past the kings, their faces would darken, like the houses in the street in the night. In Meghadootam, the yaksha describes the lamps in the bedroom as ‘star lamps’.

Sri Vidyananya Swamigal names chapters 6 to 10 in his monumental work 'Panchadasa' as Deepas – Chitradeepa, Kootasthadeepa, Dhyanadeepa and Natakadeepa. It is to be noted that at the present time in the whole world there is Deepayuga because of use of electricity.

Among the 63 Nayanmars, Kaliyanayanar, performed Deepa seva to Sri Parameswara in Tiruvotriyur and merged with the Lord. Another Nayanar, Kanampullar, similarly did Deepa seva in Chidambaram and merged with the Lord. Kings in ancient times created endowments for Deepa seva in temples. All books of Veda and Vedanta, and Tamil hymns say that Bhagavan shines as the light of Deepa in every jiva's heart.

Tirumular in his Tirumandiram says:

Siva is the inscrutable light of virtue in the human body. It is only Bhagavan who can unveil the light in the heart and kindle it to brighten. That is indeed the light which brings the outside world to light. If we worship Bhagavan, he will kindle the light. By following the steps of Charya, kriya, yoga and gnana, one can attain the ultimate fruit of this birth, viz. the state of no rebirth.

Tirunavukkarasu Swamigal and Poygai Alwar also describe Bhagavan as the light which brings all objects to light. Bhutattalwar describes Gnana as the light, in which love is the lamp, zeal is the ghee and meditation is the wick.

10. Agni Upasana in Festivals

Though many are the materials created by Bhagavan in the world, there are a few chosen ones in which Bhagavan's presence is perceived intensely, as also accepted in Sastras. If we invoke the respective gods in these materials through appropriate mantra Japa, the gods appear and bless us. This is stated in 'Smritimuktaphalam' (Vaidyanatha Dikshitiyam), the celebrated book of Dharma Sastra, in Aahnika Kanda:

अप्स्वग्रौ हृदये सूर्ये स्थण्डिले प्रतिमासु च ।

षट्स्वेतेषु हरेस्सम्यगर्चनं मुनिभिः स्मृतम् ॥

"Munis recommend invoking and worshipping Bhagavan in the following six articles:

1. Pure water from rivers like Ganga, Kaveri, Yamuna, Krishna, Godavari, Narmada etc.
2. Agni established through due Vedic process.
3. The hearts of yogis, who constantly meditate on Bhagavan.
4. Surya, the visible God.
5. Altar like yantra etc.
6. Images of gold, silver, brass, bronze, Panchaloha etc."

That Agni is included in the articles of worship here should be noted.

Agni Upasana, commenced as Samidadhanam in Brahmacharyasrama, grows into Aupasanam, Vaisvadevam, Nityagnihotram and many Sroutha and Smartha karmas in Grihasthasrama; it becomes an important part of our life and leads us higher.

Women clean the entrance to the home with cowdung, put 'kolam' (flour design) and light the lamp; they also light the lamp in the Pooja room in morning and evening. Traditionally this Agni Upasana has been observed in every household with no barriers of caste, lineage etc. In every month there are important occasions when we light the lamp and worship.

Yamadeepa

आश्विनस्याऽसिते पक्षे त्रयोदश्यां निशामुखे ।

यमदीपं बहिर्दद्यात् अपमृत्युर्विनश्यति ॥

"Yamadeepa is lighted in Asvin month, Krishna paksha, in the night on Trayodashi, the night before Deepavali; this wards off untimely death."

Skanda Puranam extols Yamadeepa in glowing terms:

मृत्युना पाशदण्डाभ्यां कालेन श्यामया सह ।

त्रयोदश्यां दीपदानात् सूर्यजः प्रीयतां मम ॥

“May Yama Dharmaraja, the son of Surya, who holds rope and staff in his hands and shines with Mrityu, Kala and Syamaladevi, be pleased with me through this Deepadana on this Trayodashi day.” So praying, women should light earthen lamps with til oil in every home and worship. This will destroy sins committed by us unknowingly and fear of untimely death, and grant us long healthy life; there is no doubt.

Deepavali

This festival, where Deepas are lighted and kept in a row (Avali), is celebrated merrily throughout Bharatadesa. In ‘Nirnayasindhu’, a book of Dharmasastra, we are asked to light lamp with four wicks on the evening of Deepavali day and keep in Pooja room and entrance of homes and in Siva and Vishnu temples. The prayer is:

दत्तो दीपश्चतुर्दश्यां नरकप्रीतये मया ।

चतुर्वर्ति समायुक्तः सर्वपापाऽपनुत्तये ॥

“On Chaturdashi day, this Deepa with four wicks is offered for destruction of all sins and removal of fear of Naraka.” This will grant us good health, long life, happiness etc.

Karthigai Deepa

Deepa offered during the entire Karthik month is called ‘Akasadeepa’. The special Deepa on the days of Bharani and Karthik stars in Karthik month is known as Bharani deepa and Karthigai deepa. This Deepa festival is observed in all homes and Siva temples. In Tiruvannamalai, the Agni kshetra, Karthigai Deepa has been celebrated as a grand festival for many centuries. The Tiruvannamalai hill itself is worshipped as the form of Agni and Sri Parameswara.

दर्शनात् अभ्रसदसि जननात् कमलालये ।

काश्यां तु मरणान्मुक्तिः स्मरणात् अरुणाचलम् ॥

Our ancestors have said that by having darshan at Chidambaram, by taking birth in Kamalalaya (Tiruvavur), by dying in Kashi and by thinking of Arunachala, Mukti is attained.

Arunagiri shines indeed as the form of Jyoti.

Akasa Deepa

Every year in Kartikai month, for 30 days from Sukla paksha Prathama tithi to Amavasya day, every day in the evening, Deepa should be lighted in earthen lamp with 8 wicks and with til oil at

home on top level or in temples on a high staff. This is called akasadeepa. Nirnayasindhu says that one who does this will obtain good wealth, handsomeness and good luck.

कार्तिके तिलतैलेन सायङ्काले समागते ।
आकाशदीपं यो दद्यात् मासमेकं हरिं प्रति ॥
महतीं श्रियमाप्नोति रूपसौभाग्यसंपदम् ॥
The prayer to be said is:

दामोदराय नभसि तुलायां लोलया सह ।
प्रदीपं ते प्रयच्छामि नमोऽनन्ताय वेधसे ॥

On Karthik Pournima day, it has been the practice to burn 'Chokkappanai' in front of Siva temple and in a common remote place. A tall staff or tree is covered with straw, and palm leaves are tied at top and that is put to fire. The term 'Chokkappanai' is perhaps derived from 'Chokkan', meaning Siva and 'Appan' meaning father. Mahakavi Kalidasa calls Siva and Parvathi as the father and mother of the world – जगतः पितरौ वन्दे पार्वती परमेश्वरौ ।

One should think of the burning 'Chokkappanai' as Parameswara shining in the form of Jyoti and pray to him. When it burns, one should throw Guggula (fragrant gum resin) in it thinking of Mahabali the king. The prayer to be said is:

उज्वलज्योतिराकाशे दीप्यमाने विभावसौ ।
गुग्गुलं प्रक्षिपाम्यत्र प्रीतो भव महाबले ॥

We pray to Agni Bhagavan for cleansing of the mind, saying:

कीटाः पतङ्गाः मशकाश्च वृक्षाः जले स्थले ये विचरन्ति जीवाः ।
दृष्ट्वा प्रदीपं न च जन्मभागिनः भवन्ति नित्यं श्वपचाः हि विप्राः ॥

“Worms, birds, insects, trees etc. existing in water and on land, on seeing the lamp, get released from the cycle of births; so do humans from brahmanas down to the eaters of dog's flesh.”

Deepa Worship in Holi Festival

Holi festival is widely celebrated in north India by all people on Magha month's Pournima day. The story behind this festival is told in Bhavishyottara Puranam. In order to protect children from a Rakshasi named Dundika who troubles children in secret, it is the practice to create an image of a sleeping Rakshasi with firewood, cowdung cakes etc and put it to fire. This is done on Magha Pournima evening at home or in a common place. People circumambulate the raging fire, while saying the verse and praying to Holika, the demoness for prosperity:

अस्माभिर्भय-सन्त्रस्तैः कृतात्वं होलिके यतः ।
अतस्त्वां पूजयिष्यामो भूते भूतिप्रदा भव ॥

The book Smriti Koustubha further says that people should make noise, clap hands, laugh and sing while going round the fire:

ततः किलकिला शब्दैः लालशब्दैः मनोरमैः ।

तमग्निं त्रिःपरिक्रम्य गायन्तु च हसन्तु च ॥

This is followed that night or the next day by saying this prayer to the ash:

वन्दिताऽसि सुरेन्द्रेण ब्रह्मणा शङ्करेण च ।

अतस्त्वं पाहि नो देवि भूते भूतिप्रदा भव ॥

This will lead to removal of all diseases, dullness of intellect, fear of untimely death etc. and grant long life, good health, sharp intellect etc.

Smriti Koustubham also says that on Magha Sukla Dvadashi day, Sri Mahavishnu created black til from his own body after performing severe tapas as per a Puranic account. Hence lighting lamp with til oil and offering til rice to Bhagavan will destroy all sins and bestow benefits. The verse is:

माघे तु शुक्लद्वादश्यां यतो हि भगवान् पुरा ।

तिलान् उत्पादयामास तपःकृत्वा सुदारुणम् ॥

तिलतैलेन दीपाश्च देयाः देवगृहेषु च ॥

11. Greatness of Agni Upasana in Upanishads

Kathopanishad

Kathopanishad belongs to Katha Sakha (branch) of Krishna Yajur Veda. There are two chapters, each having three sections, called Vallis (creepers). In the first Valli, the story of Nachiketas and the dialogue between him and Yama Dharmaraja find a place. Nachiketopakhyanam is also found in Taittiriya Brahmanam. Yama is one of the Brahmavidyacharyas; Kathopanishad is an important Upanishad stressing Agni Upasana. Sri Adisankara Bhagavatpadacharya has written a commentary based on a sage's experience. With the very first mantra of the first Valli, the story of Nachiketas starts.

उशन् ह वै वाजश्रवसः सर्ववेदसं ददौ ।

तस्य ह नचिकेता नाम पुत्र आस ॥

'Vaja' means food. Vajasravas perhaps got his name because he might have given danam of food in plenty. His son was Vajasravasa. He was giving away all his wealth as dakshina in a huge yaga called Visvajit. He had a son named Nachiketas.

When he saw his father giving away cows, which were old and incapable of consuming grass, drinking water and giving birth to calves, he was worried that this might lead to his father being deprived of the good benefits from the yaga and attaining to miserable realms.

पीतोदकाः जग्धतृणा दुग्धदोहा निरीन्द्रियाः ।

अनन्दा नाम ते लोकास्तान्स गच्छति ता ददत् ॥

Out of compassion he asked his father three times: 'To which Ritvik are you going to give me instead of dakshina'. The father was furious at the boy not behaving his age and said, 'I am going to give you to Yama Dharmaraja, son of Surya.'

स होवाच पितरं तत कस्मै मां दास्यसीति ।

द्वितीयं तृतीयं तंहोवाच मृत्यवे त्वा ददामीति ॥

In order to make his father's statement true, Nachiketas set out happily to Yamaloka and waited at Yama's abode for three days as Yama had gone out. (Nachiketas, the brahmachari, could go to Yama's abode by the power of his Agni Upasana, viz. Samidadhanam.)

वैश्वानरः प्रविशत्यतिथि-ब्राह्मणो गृहान् ।

तस्यैतान् शान्तिं कुर्वन्ति हर वैवस्वतोदकम् ॥

The brahmana, who comes as guest, is Agni himself. Virtuous people offer him Argyam, Padyam, Asana etc. (water for washing hands and feet, and seat) and make him comfortable, as if they try to put off the heat of Agni. Hence Yama's wife or minister advised Yama to offer him these hospitalities. Srimad Bhagavatham also says अग्नेरभ्यागतो मूर्तिः - 'Agni, who came as guest in the form of human being'.

Yama said to Nachiketas: "Brahman! You, who ought to have been worshipped as guest, spent three nights in my home without even food. Hence I seek your forgiveness and plead that all may be well with me. Please ask me for three boons, one for each of the three nights you spent here."

तिस्रो रात्रीर्-यदवात्सीर्-गृहे मेऽनश्नन् ब्रह्मन्नतिथिर्-नमस्यः ।

नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन् स्वस्ति मेऽस्तु तस्मात्प्रतित्रीन्वरान्वृणीष्व ॥

Nachiketas agreed and asked for the following three boons:

1. My father's anger towards me should subside. He should feel at home when he sees me again. Yama granted this first boon.

2. There is no fear of disease etc. in Svarga. You, Yama, also do not go there normally. People there do not fear you. Please teach me that Agni Vignana, which is the means of attaining to Svarga. Yama agreed and taught him Agni Chayanam, the method of preparing Srouthagni.

स चापि तत्प्रत्यवदद्यथोक्तम्

Nachiketas learnt it and repeated it correctly to Yama.

मृत्युः पुनरेवाह तुष्टः

Yama was pleased and said: "I offered you three boons. Impressed by your sharp intellect, I am now offering you a fourth boon too. Let this Vidya of 'Agni Chayanam' be known hereafter as 'Naachiketa Chayanam'. If a Nityagnihotri performs this Naachiketa Chayanam three times, he becomes 'Trinaachiketa'. This is the 17th mantra in Kathopanishad.

त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रिभिरेत्य सन्धिं त्रिकर्मकृत्तरतिजन्ममृत्यू ।

ब्रह्मजज्ञं देवमीड्यं विदित्वा निचाय्येमां शान्तिमत्यन्तमेति ॥

If Trinaachiketa, guided by three entities (mother, father, teacher; or, Sruti, Smruti, virtuous ritualists; or, three authorities- Pratyaksham, Anumanam and Agamam – direct perception, inference and scripture), performs the three karmas, viz. Yaga, Vedic study and Danam, he crosses the cycle of births and deaths. He comes to know through Sastra, the self-luminous Virat Purusha (Cosmic Person), who emerges out of Brahman, is omniscient and adorable in the form of Naachiketagni Chayanam. He experiences that Brahman as his own Self and attains the highest peace. Sri Sankaracharya further says in his commentary:

इदानीमग्निविज्ञानचयनफलमुपसंहरति प्रकरणं च

“Now the Upanishad concludes the subject of Agni Upasana, Agni Chayana yaga and its fruit.”

त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रयमेतद्विदित्वा य एवं विद्वांश्चिनुते नाचिकेतम् ।

स मृत्युपाशान्पुरतः प्रणोद्य शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥

A Trinaachiketa, who learns the three aspects, viz. the classes of bricks, the number of bricks and the method of placing them for construction of altar, and worships Naachiketagni as his own Self, gets rid of Adharma, ignorance, desire and hatred etc., rides over mental grief and enjoys bliss in the world of Virat Purusha.

ततो मया नाचिकेतश्चितोऽग्निः ।

अनित्यैर्द्रव्यैः प्राप्तवानस्मि नित्यम् ॥

Yama further said: “Naachiketagni Chayanam was performed by me. I thus attained the eternal state through use of ephemeral materials.” After Yama completed his discourse on the greatness of Naachiketagni thus, Nachiketas asked Yama for the third boon as granting knowledge of Brahmanvidya. Though Yama initially tested Nachiketas’s sincerity and qualification, he taught him Brahmanvidya after convincing himself of Nachiketas’s ability and sincerity.

While commencing the commentary of Kathopanishad, Sri Sankaracharya pays obeisance to Bhagavan Yama, the son of Surya, the Brahmanvidyacharya as well as Nachiketas.

ओं नमो भगवते वैवस्वताय मृत्यवे ।

ब्रह्मविद्याचार्याय नाचिकेतसे च ॥

Agni Upasana, if done without looking for fruit and by way of fulfilling Sruti’s instructions, will lead one to supreme state.

Chandogya Upanishad

Chapter 4, Khanda 4 to 15

Satyakama Jabala asked his mother Jabala: ‘I wish to study at Gurukulam; which is my Gotram?’

सत्यकामो ह जाबालो जबालां मातरं आमंत्रयांचक्रे ।

ब्रह्मचर्यं भवति विवत्स्यामि किं गोत्रोऽहमस्मीति ॥ (4-4-1)

Sri Sankaracharya’s commentary on Jabala’s reply:

एवं पृष्टा जाबाल सा हैनं पुत्रमुवाच । नाहमेतत्तव गोत्रं वेद, हे तात, यद्गोत्रस्त्वमसि । कस्मान्न वेत्सीत्युक्ताऽऽह ॥ बहु भर्तृ गृहे परिचर्याजातं अतिथ्यभ्यागतादि चरन्त्यहं परिचारिणी परिचरन्तीति परिचरणशीलैवाहं परिचरणचित्ततया गोत्रादिस्मरणे मममनो नाभूत् । यौवने च तत्काले त्वामलभे लब्धवत्यस्मि । तदैव ते पितोपरतः ॥ अतोऽनाथाऽहं साऽहमेतन्न वेद यद्गोत्रस्त्वमसि जाबाला तु

नामाहमस्मि । सत्यकामो नाम त्वमसि स त्वं सत्यकाम एवाहं जाबालोऽस्मीत्याचार्याय ब्रुवीथाः
यद्याचार्येण पृष्ट इत्यभिप्रायः ॥

Jabala said: “O child, I do not know your Gotram. As I was busy with many household activities, with many guests coming in, I had no opportunity to find out your Gotram. You were born in my youth; your father also expired at that time. With none to take care of us, I was very busy. My name is Jabala. Your name is Satyakama. Hence you tell your Acharya that your name is Satyakama Jabala.” This shows that women in ancient India gave importance to dedicated service to the husband and the household, and had no inclination to get to know many other extraneous matters.

Satyakama went to the Goutama Acharya named Haridrumata and told him the truth. The teacher appreciated his truthfulness and accepted him as his disciple. He got upanayana samskaras done for Satyakama and gave him 400 cows and asked him to look after them. Satyakama took to serving the cows with one-pointed attention. He performed Agni Upasana regularly; he did Samidadhanam in morning and evening. When the cows grew to 1000 in number, Satyakama started on his return to Gurukulam. On the way a bull among the herd of cows taught him that the four directions are four arts, forming a fourth part of Brahman; it is called प्रकाशवान् ‘Prakasavan’ and that Agni Deva would teach him further. The next day in the evening Satyakama was meditating on the bull’s teaching during Agni Upasana. Agni then taught him that earth, intermediate zone, the heaven (Dyourloka) and the ocean are four arts, forming a fourth part of Brahman; it is called अनन्तवान् ‘Ananthavan’ and that Hamsa (swan) would teach him further. The next day during Samidadhanam, a Hamsa appeared and taught that Agni, Surya, Chandra and lightning are four arts, forming a fourth part of Brahman; it is called ज्योतिष्मान् ‘Jyotishman’ and that Madgu (diver-bird) would teach him further. The Madgu taught Satyakama that Prana, eye, mind and ear are four arts, forming a fourth part of Brahman; it is called आयतनवान् ‘Ayatanavan’.

When Satyakama finally reached the Gurukulam with 1000 cows, Guru Haridrumata said: “O child, you appear to have received teaching on Brahman. Your face is bright. Who taught you?” Satyakama explained what had happened and asked the Guru to teach him saying
आचार्याद्येव विद्या विदिता साधिष्ठं प्रापत् ।

“I have heard from venerable persons like you that knowledge acquired from the teacher alone surely becomes the best. The Guru then taught him the very knowledge imparted by the Devatas and blessed that it might be complete.

This shows that in case of Satyakama, who performed Agni Upasana conscientiously, Agni Bhagavan himself blessed him with Brahmavidya.

Later Upakosala, the son of Kamalayana, came to Satyakama’s Gurukulam for study. He served the Agnis of Satyakama in the Agnisala and the Guru for 12 years with great concentration. Guru Satyakama taught Vidya to other students, had Samavartanam (ceremonial completion) performed and sent them home; but he did not teach any Vidya to Upakosala. Satyakama’s wife pleaded with him: “Please teach Vidya to Upakosala also. He has been performing regular Poojas to Agnis. If you do not teach him, Agnis would get angry.” Still Satyakama did not listen and went out. Upakosala, who was mentally very agitated, did not eat properly and was stricken with anxiety. Guru’s wife consoled and fed him. Sastras do bring out the greatness of Gurus’ wives. They treat the disciples in the Gurukulam as their children.

The three Agnis were very happy and taught Upakosala the Vidya of Brahman. They said:

ते होचुरुपकोसलैषा सौम्य तेऽस्मद्विद्या ।

आत्मविद्या च “आचार्यस्तु ते गतिं वक्ता” इति ॥

“Upakosala, we have taught you Agni Vidya and Atma Vidya; Acharya will show you the way.”

When Acharya Satyakama returned and said:

ब्रह्मविद इव सौम्य ते मुखं भाति कोनु त्वा अनुशशास इति ॥ (4.14.2)

“Your face shines like a Brahmagani’s; who taught you?”

Upakosala pointed to the Agnis that the Guru worshipped and said that they only had taught him. Satyakama was happy and taught him the full knowledge of Brahman leading to Moksha. Satyakama had indeed blessed that the Agnis he served should teach Upakosala the Vidya. If the Guru’s full blessing is there, Devatas will teach. It is the principle of Sruti that Jiva can attain fulfilment only with Guru’s blessing. Agni Upasana brought fruition of his penance to Upakosala through his Guru.

इमं मानवमावर्तं नाऽऽवर्तन्ते नाऽऽवर्तन्ते ॥

One who takes this route does not come back to this cycle of births created by Manu.

Panchagni Vidya

Raja Pravahana, the son of Jivala, taught Panchagni Vidya to Aruna, the grandfather of Svetaketu. Pravahana says that this was the first time that the Vidya, preserved in the royal lineage, was being taught to a brahmana, Aruna.

1. When Jiva returns after moving about in higher realms, he is offered as Ahuti first in the Agni of Akasa.
2. Secondly he dissolves in the Agni of rain.
3. Thirdly, at the time rain water gathers on earth, he is offered as Ahuti in it and mixes with plants, creepers, trees and fruits.
4. Fourthly, depending on his karmaphala (destiny – fruits of accumulated karma), he is offered as Ahuti in the Jaatharagni (Agni in stomach) of a human male or other animals and is converted in course of time to the virya (semen) of that person/ animal, i.e. he mixes as essence with the virya.
5. Fifthly, through union with woman, he is offered as Ahuti in the Agni of her uterus and then obtains his body.

Thus the travel of the jiva is picturised as Agni and is presented as Panchagni Vidya. The point is that there is nothing unrelated to Agni.

अथ ह य एतानेवं पञ्चाग्नीन्वेद न सह तैरप्याचरन्पाप्मना लिप्यते शुद्धः पूतः पुण्यलोको भवति य एवं वेद य एवं वेद ॥

One, who studies Panchagni Vidya and worships Agni, becomes pure and free of association with sins, and attains to meritorious world. Chandogya Upanishad declares this as the Phalasaruti of Panchagni Vidya. This is also taught in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (chapter 6).

Pranagnihotram

Five great Grihasthas, adept in Vedic rituals, called 'Mahasalas' once debated on Atma (Chandogya Upanishad 5.11). They were Prachinasala (son of Upamanyu), Satyayagna (son of Pulusha), Indradyumna (son of Bhaallavi), Jana (son of Saarkaraakshya) and Budila (son of Aasvataraasva). They approached Uddalaka Aruni and pleaded with him to teach Vaisvanara Atmavidya. Aruni said he was not aware of that vidya and suggested to go to Asvapathi, king of Kekaya, who was worshipper of that vidya. All six of them went with samith in hand to Asvapathi. Asvapathi then related the greatness of his country to them.

न मे स्तेनो जनपदे न कदर्यो न मद्यपो

नानाहिताग्निर्नाविद्वान्न स्वैरी स्वैरिणी.....

“In my kingdom there is no thief, greedy person, drunkard, person not performing Agni Upasana, uneducated person, adulterer, adultress etc.” By using the term नानाहिताग्नि, the king conveys proudly that all persons performed Agni upasana. It is seen that everybody has been Agni Upasaka in our Bharatadesa. Asvapati then taught that if we perform the Ahutis before eating food, viz. ‘Pranaya Svaha’, ‘Vyanaya Svaha’, ‘Apanaya Svaha’, ‘Samanaya Svaha’, ‘Udanaya svaha’ and ‘Brahmane Svaha’, with proper understanding, they will then become **‘Pranagnihotram’**.

स य इदमविद्वानग्निहोत्रं जुहोति ।
यथाऽङ्गारानपोह्य भस्मनि जुहुयात् तादृक् तत्स्यात् ॥
अथ य एतदेवं विद्वानग्निहोत्रं जुहोति ।
तस्य सर्वेषु लोकेषु सर्वेषु भूतेषु सर्वेष्व्वात्मसु हुतं भवति ॥
तद्यथेषीकातूलमग्नौ प्रोतं प्रदूयेतैवं हास्य सर्वे पाप्मानः ।
प्रदूयन्ते च एतदेवं विद्वानग्निहोत्रं जुहोति ॥
यथेह सुधिता बालामातरं पर्युपासत
एवं सर्वाणि भूतान्यग्निहोत्रमुपासत इत्यग्निहोत्रमुपासत इति ॥

“The action of one, who performs this Agnihotram without knowing this principle, is like his offering oblation on ashes unfit for receiving oblations. If Pranagnihotram is performed with knowledge of the far-reaching principle, the oblation becomes offered in all the worlds, in all the creatures and in all constituents of a person (body, mind, organs, and intellect).

As the fibre at the tip of a blade of reed becomes completely burnt when thrown into fire, so all sins of him, who, having knowledge of the principle, performs this Pranagnihotram, become completely burnt. Just as hungry children wait on their mother in this world, all creatures wait on the Agnihotram, i.e. Agni Upasakas.”

An illustration of the universal effect of Pranagnihotram is found in Mahabharatam. The moment Sri Krishna partook of a piece of greens from the food vessel of Draupadi, Sri Durvasa and his disciples, who had gone for bath and rituals, felt satiated with food. Sri Krishna thus showed how Pranagnihotram is done with the attitude of satisfying all creatures.

Out of 108 Upanishads, there is one called **‘Pranagnihotra Upanishad’**. It is taught therein that yagna should be deemed to be performed in our body.

स्वे शरीरे यज्ञं परिवर्तयामीति ।

चत्वारोऽग्नयस्ते किं नामधेयाः ॥
 तत्र सूर्योऽग्निर्नाम सूर्यमण्डलाकृतिः ।
 सहस्ररश्मि परिवृत एकर्षिभूत्वा मूर्ध्नि तिष्ठति यस्मादुक्तः ॥
 दर्शनाग्निर्नाम चतुराकृतिराहवनीयो भूत्वा मुखे तिष्ठति ।
 अर्धचन्द्राकृतिर्दक्षिणाग्निर्भूत्वा हृदये तिष्ठति ॥
 तत्र कोष्ठाग्निर्नामाशित पीत-लीढ-खादितानि सम्यग्
 व्यष्ट्यां श्रपयित्वा गार्हपत्यो भूत्वा नाभ्यां तिष्ठति ।

“Yagna should be deemed to be performed and Ahutis given in four Agnis in the body. Which are those Agnis and where are they in the body?”

At the crest of the head, Agni called Surya is present. It is also called ‘**Ekarshi**’; it is of the form of Suryamandala; it has a thousand rays (sahasradalam). In the face, Darsanagni is present in four-sided form with the name of **Ahavaniam**. In the heart, **Dakshinagni** shines in the form of semi-circle (Ardhachandra). In the navel is present Koshtagni, which digests food that is eaten, chewed, masticated and drunk, and spreads it in the entire body; it has the name of **Garhapatyagni**. This is also mentioned in Garbhopenishad.

The Upanishad also teaches us to deem all Karmendriyas and Gnanendriyas and limbs as parts of a Yagnapurusha. All components participating in a yagna are present in the body.

अस्य शरीरयज्ञस्य आत्मा यजमानः बुद्धिःपत्नी । वेदा महर्त्विजः ।
 अहंकारोऽध्वर्युः । चित्तं होता । प्राणो ब्राह्मणाच्छंसी । अपानः
 प्रतिप्रस्थाता व्यानः प्रस्तोता । समानो मैत्रावरुणः उदान उद्गाता ।शरीरं वेदिः ॥
 For this yagna performed in the body, the yajamana (sacrifice) is Atma; the intellect is his wife (yagnapatni); Vedas are the superior Ritviks; Ahamkara (sense of I) is Adhvaryu; Chitta (mind storing impressions) is Hota; Prana is Brahmanachchamsi; Apana is Pratiprastata; Vyana is Prastota; Samana is Maitravaruna; Udana is Udgata; body is the altar (yagavedi).

नासिकोत्तरवेदिः । मूर्धा द्रोणकलशः । पादो रथः । दक्षिणहस्तः स्रुवः । सव्यहस्त
 आज्यस्थाली । श्रोत्रे आधारौ । चक्षुषी आज्यभागौ ।
 The nose is Uttaravedi; head is Dronakalasam; leg is chariot; right hand is Sruva (ladle); left hand is the ghee vessel; ears are Samit called Adhara; eyes are Ajyabhagas (two portions of ghee).

ग्रीवा धारापेता । तन्मन्त्राणि सद्स्याः । महाभूतानि प्रयाजाः । भूतानि अनुयाजाःजिह्वेडा ।
 दन्तोष्ठो सूक्तवाकः । तालुः शंयुवाकः । स्मृतिर्दया, क्षान्तिरहिंसा, पत्नी संयाजाः । ओंकारो यूपः ।
 आशारशना । मनोरथः । कामःपशुः । केशा दर्भाः । बुद्धि इन्द्रियाणि यज्ञ पात्राणि । कर्मेन्द्रियाणि हवींषि ।
 अहिंसा इष्टयः । त्यागो दक्षिणा । अवभृत् मरणात् । सर्वाह्यस्मिन् देवताः

शरीरेऽधिसमाहिताः ।

The neck is Dharapatra (vessel from which ghee flows); Tanmatras are those present; Mahabhutas in causal state prior to Panchikaranam are Prayajakas; Bhutas after Panchikaranam are Anuyajas; tongue is Ida; teeth and lips are Suktavakas; Palate is Samyuvaka; memory power is compassion; forbearance and non-violence are the assistants to the wife; Omkara is the yupasthambha (sacrificial post); desire is rope; mind is chariot; desire is the sacrificial animal; hair is darbha grass; Gnanendriyas are the vessels used in yagna; Karmendriyas are the Havis; Ahimsa is Ishti (yagna); sacrifice is dakshina; death is Avabhruta snana. All Devatas are enshrined in this body.

Agni Upasana performed as yagna gets one Moksha in this birth itself with no rebirth, says the Upanishad.

12. Greatness of Agnihotram

Verses of Prayer to Agni in Agnihotram

नमस्ते गार्हपत्याय नमस्ते दक्षिणाग्रये ।
नम आहवनीयाय महावेद्यै नमो नमः ॥
काण्डद्वयोपपाद्याय कर्मब्रह्मस्वरूपिणे ।
स्वर्गापवर्गरूपाय यज्ञेशाय नमो नमः ॥
यज्ञेशाच्युत गोविन्द माधवानन्त केशव ।
कृष्ण विष्णो हृषीकेश वासुदेव नमोऽस्तु ते ॥
ब्रह्मणे गार्हपत्याय विष्णवे दक्षिणाग्रये ।
शिवाय आहवनीयाय शक्त्यै वेद्यै नमो नमः ॥

Agnisuktam अग्निसूक्तम्

Prayers to Agni Bhagavan

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान् विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।
युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो भूयिष्ठां ते नम उक्तिं विधेम ॥

“O Agni Deva, you, who are aware of all paths, please lead us on the path of virtuous karmas resulting in wealth. Keep us away from hordes of sins. We pay obeisance with many prostrations.”

प्रवश्शुक्राय भानवे भरद्धवँ हव्यं मतिं चाग्रये सुपूतम् ।
यो दैव्यानि मानुषा जनुँ ष्यन्तर्विश्वानि विज्ञना जिगाति ॥

“O Ritviks, please prepare pure Havis for offering to the sacred Agni, who knows everything related to Vedas and humans, who is the progenitor of Devas and humans, who accesses all of them, and who is very pure and shines with bright rays.”

अच्छा गिरा मतयो देवयन्तीरग्निं यन्ति द्रविणं भिक्षमाणाः ।

सुसन्दृशं सुप्रतीकं स्वञ्च हव्यवादमरतिं मानुषाणाम् ॥

“Our words of prayer and thoughts of meditation are directed to Agni Bhagavan and show our desire for wealth from Devas. Agni looks at us with eyes of blessing, is handsome and has a nice gait; he carries Havis offered by those, who perform yagas, to Devas.”

अग्ने त्वमस्मदूयुयोध्यमीवा अनग्नित्रा अभ्यमन्तकृष्टीः ।

पुनरस्मभ्यँ सुविताय देव क्षां विश्वेभिरजरेभिर्यजत्र ॥

“O Agni Deva, rid us of diseases like sluggishness of Agni (in the body) and those which largely affect humans. O Agni worshipped by yagnas, render us free from all diseases. Through herbs curing us of old age, rid us of diseases like tuberculosis etc.”

अग्ने त्वं पारया नव्यो अस्मान् स्वस्तिभिरति दुर्गाणि विश्वा ।

पृथ्वी बहुला न उर्वी भवा तोकाय तनयाय शंयोः ॥

“O Agni Deva, make our homas fulfilling and grant us lofty fruits by removing all obstacles. May this earth be spacious for our living. Please make our children and grandchildren comfortable and remove their suffering and grief.”

नमस्ते अस्तु भगवः । सकृत्ते अग्ने नमः ।

द्विस्ते नमः । त्रिस्ते नमः । चतुस्ते नमः ।

पञ्चकृत्वस्ते नमः । दशकृत्वस्ते नमः । शतकृत्वस्ते नमः ।

आसहस्रकृत्वस्ते नमः । अपरिमितकृत्वस्ते नमः ।

नमस्ते अस्तु मा मा हिँ सीः ॥

“O Splendid Agni Deva, Prostrations to you. I prostrate once, twice, three times, four times, five times, ten times, thousand times, countless number of times. Please protect me; let me not suffer.”

After marriage, every brahmana should do Aadhanam in spring season (vasantha ritu) and commence Agnihotram yagna.

अग्निहोत्राहुति परिणामरूपत्वात्कृत्स्नस्य प्रपञ्चस्य

As per this authority, whoever does Agnihotram karma, it is for universal wellbeing. The entire world shines as a result of Agnihotram yagna.

ते वा एते आहुति दिवमाविशतः

Ahutis (oblations) offered in Agnihotram reach the world of Devas and come back to us in the form of rains, doing the world well. As cited earlier, just as hungry children wait on their mother for removal of hunger, all creatures wait on Agnihotram (Ch.Up. 2.5.24.5).

यथेह क्षुधिता बालाः मातरं पर्युपासते ।

एवं सर्वाणि भूतानि अग्निहोत्रमुपासते ॥

Agnihotram is performed using Yajurvedam. Agnihotra prayers etc. are covered in Krishna Yajurveda Samhita, 1st Kandam, 5th Prasnam, 5th Anuvakam from उपप्रयन्तो to अग्निहोत्रं जुहोति. Agnihotram is explained with small stories in 2nd Ashtakam, 1st Prasnam.

यावज्जीवं अग्निहोत्रं जुहोति सायं प्रातरग्निहोत्रं जुहोति ।

Veda stipulates that Agnihotram should be performed throughout one's life. Agnihotram should be performed in the morning and evening without fail. One, who performs Agnihotram throughout his life, becomes of the form of Brahman himself. Prostrating to the Agnihotri after he completes Agnihotram bestows all benefits.

अग्निहोत्रं परमं वदन्ति ।

Veda extols Agnihotram in very high terms. (Arunam, 10th Prasnam, Anuvakam 79). The main benefit of study of Vedas is Agnihotram.

In Haaritha Smriti, Haaritha Maharishi also says:

नाग्निहोत्रात्परो धर्मः नाग्निहोत्रात्परं तपः ।

नाग्निहोत्रात्परो सिद्धिः नाग्निहोत्रात्परं व्रतम् ॥

“There is no dharma, no tapas (austerity), no attainment, no vrata (discipline) greater than Agnihotram.” Other Smritis also say: अग्निहोत्रसमो धर्मो न भूतो न भविष्यति ॥ “There was no dharma equal to Agnihotram in the past, nor will there be in the future.” Smritichandrika says:

सुहुतानि अग्निहोत्राणि नयन्ति परमां गतिम् ।

अत्र स्वर्गश्च मोक्षश्च यो यथा गन्तुमिच्छति ॥

“Agnihotram, well performed, leads one to the supreme state. He attains Svarga or Moksha, as he chooses.”

Bhagavan Vyasa says in Mahabharatam, Anusasanika Parva:

यच्चैतस्यां पृथिव्यां हि किञ्चिदस्ति चराचरम् ।

तत्सर्वं अग्निहोत्रस्य कृते सृष्टं स्वयंभुवा ॥

एवमेतत् जगत्सर्वं अग्निहोत्रकृते कृतम् ।

“Brahma created all materials on earth, moving and non-moving, for Agnihotram alone. This entire world has been created for Agnihotram alone.”

Mahabharata, Aasvamedhika Parva, third chapter says:

यजनार्थं द्विजाः सृष्टाः तारका दिवि देवताः ।

गावो यज्ञार्थमुत्पन्नाः दक्षिणार्थं तथैव च ॥

सुवर्णं रजतंश्चैव पात्री कुम्भार्थमेव च ।

इध्मार्थं अथ यूपार्थं ब्रह्मा चक्रे वनस्पतिम् ॥

ग्राम्यारण्याश्च पशवः जायन्ते यज्ञकारणात् ॥

“For performing yagna, brahmanas were created; stars and Devatas in heaven; cows were created for yagna and dakshina (being given in danam); gold and silver were created for making vessels, pots etc. for yagna; Vanaspati (woods) was created by Brahma for Samith and yupasthambha; thus whole villages, forests and animals were created for the sake of yagna.” This is also stated in Parasara Madhaviyam in the chapter on the greatness of yagna.

Bhagavan says: तेनैव ध्रियते जगत् ।

“The world is sustained by yagnas like Agnihotram.”

While creating people, Brahma created yagnas also along with them for their wellbeing - सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा. Bhagavan says in Gita: एषवोऽस्तु इष्टकामधुक् ॥ “Yagnas are the Kamadhenu granting all the wishes of people.”

Manusmriti says: यज्ञोऽस्य भूत्यै सर्वस्य ।

“Yagna is the benefactor of the entire world.”

Mahabharata, Aasvamedhika Parva says:

देवास्तु तर्पिताः यज्ञैः लोकान् संवर्धयन्ति उत ।

उभयोर्लोकयोश्चैव भूतिः यज्ञैः प्रदृश्यते ॥

“Devas, satisfied with yagna offerings, help in developing the worlds. Both the worlds - earth and heaven, are wealthy through yagnas.”

It is said that in Yajurveda, five mantras with a total of 17 letters - आश्रवय, अस्तु श्रौषट्, यज, येयजामहे, वौषट् - are of the form of Brahman and are very powerful and capable of producing rain.

It is further said:

आश्रवयेति पुरोवातमजनयत् ।

अस्तु श्रौषेडत्यभ्रंसमप्लावयन् ॥

यजेति विद्युतमजयन् ।

येयजामह इति प्रावर्षयन् ।

अभ्यस्तनयन् वषट्कारेण ।

“Devatas generated forewind from the first mantra ‘Aasravaya’; they brought together clouds from the second mantra ‘Astu Sroushat’; they generated lightning from the third mantra ‘Yaja’; they poured rains from the fourth mantra ‘Yeyajamahe’; they spread the rain waters everywhere from the fifth mantra ‘Voushat’.” Bhagavan Sri Krishna also says the same in Gita:

अन्नात् भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यात् अन्नसम्भवः ।

यज्ञात् भवति पर्जन्यः ॥ (3-14)

“Rains are caused by yagna; food is generated by rains; beings are created through food.”

Manusmriti also reiterates this:

अग्नौ प्रास्ताहुतिः सम्यक् आदित्यं उपतिष्ठते ।

आदित्यात् जायते वृष्टिः वृष्टेरन्नं ततःप्रजाः ॥ (3:76)

Veda also contains many statements forming the basis of the above assertions.

सौम्या खलु वा आहुतिः दिवो वृष्टिं च्यावयति ।

“Homa, well done in Agni, generates rain from the heavens.”

दिवो वृष्टिमेरय - Prayer for pouring rains from heaven.

कृषिर्वृष्टिर्यजमानाय कल्पताम् । - Prayer for rains and development of agriculture for yajamana (sacrificer).

Mahakavi Kalidasa says in Raghuvamsam that the kings of the Raghu lineage were all committed to yagas and they protected the country by continuous performance of yagas – यथाविधिहुताग्नीनाम्.

King Raghu says to Indra that his father Emperor Dilipa remained always pure with Yaga diksha.

अमोच्यमश्रुं यदि मन्यसे प्रभो ततःसमाप्ते विधिनैव कर्मणि ।

अजस्रदीक्षाप्रयतःस मद्गुरुः क्रतोरशेषेण फलेन युज्यताम् ॥ (3.65)

“O Lord Indra, if you consider that the horse (which has been captured by Indra) should not be let off by you, please grant my father Emperor Dilipa, ever pure with yaga diksha, the fruit of this Asvamedha yaga, though not completed as per rules.” He also says that as his father has been with yaga diksha, he has Siva’s presence in himself- त्रिलोचनैकांशतया. Kalidasa says further:

दुदोह गां स यज्ञाय सस्याय मघवा दिवम् ।

संपद्विनिमयेनोभौ दधतुर्भुवनद्वयम् ॥

“Dilipa obtained materials for yaga from the earth and made Devas happy. Indra poured good rains in Dilipa’s kingdom as a fruit of his yaga. Indra and Dilipa thus helped each other and protected Svarga and the earth.” Kalidasa describes the scene witnessed by Dilipa and his wife Sudakshina on their way to Kulaguru Vasishtha’s asrama:

ग्रामेष्वात्मविसृष्टेषु यूपचिह्नेषु यज्जनाम् ।

अमोघाः प्रतिगृह्णन्तौ अर्घ्यानुपदमाशिषः ॥

“There were many villages given in charity by Dilipa. The brahmanas there performed yagas as laid down. Many yupasthambhas were seen in the villages as a sign of these yagas. The brahmanas offered Argya and blessed the king on arrival. The king and his wife received these unending blessings.”

At the time Dilipa and Sudakshina came to sage Vasishtha’s asrama, the ascetics there were returning from nearby forests, having collected Samith etc. required for yagas. The asrama was getting filled with such ascetics. Agni Deva welcomed them unseen.

वनान्तरादुपावृत्तैः समित्कुशफलाहरैः ।

पूर्यमाणमदृश्याग्निं प्रत्युद्यातैस्तपस्विभिः ॥ (1-49)

Veda states that just as children welcome their father returning from abroad, the unseen Agni welcomes performers of yaga on their return from outside places.

Kalidasa further says:

अभ्युत्थिताग्निपिशुनैः अतिथीनाश्रमोन्मुखान् ।
पुनानं पवनोद्धूतैः धूमैराहुतिगन्धिभिः ॥ (1-53)

“Homa was in progress in the asrama when Dilipa reached there. In the smoke emanating from the Homagni, the scent of ghee etc. used in Ahuti was felt. The scent wafting in the surrounding air purified the guests coming to the asrama.”

विधेःसायन्तनस्यान्ते स ददर्श तपोनिधिम् ।
अन्वासितमरुन्धत्या स्वाहयेव हविर्भुजम् ॥

“Dilipa saw Muni Vasishtha, the seat of austerities, along with Arundhati at the close of the evening rituals, just as he would see Agni Deva accompanied by Svaha Devi.” (सायं संयमिनस्तस्य महर्षेर्महिषीसखःप्रापत् ॥)

Dilipa praised Maharishi Vasishtha saying:

हविरावर्जितं होतः त्वया विधिवदग्निषु ।
वृष्टिर्भवति सस्यानां अवग्रहविशोषिणाम् ॥ (1-62)

“Devas are pleased with the Havis offered by you in Homa as per Sastras and they pour rain. If you do not perform Homa, there will be no rain; crops will wither away.”

It is clear from the above cited various references that the Vedic principle that yagna generates rain was founded deeply in the psyche of our people, strengthened by faith and experience. Rain and food are essential requirements of men. As Vedic scholars of virtuous conduct and discipline performed yagas as laid down in Sastras, people led long and healthy lives with no complaint.

Agni Upasana has been the backbone of our Bharatadesa from times immemorial. People have been performing Agni Upasana all over the world as per their local practices.

Yaga, Homa etc. are essentially Agni Upasana only.

कल्पते हवै तत्र प्रजाभ्यो योगक्षेमः यत्रैतेन यज्ञेन यजन्ते ॥

At the place where yagas are performed, the ‘yogakshema’ of people is fulfilled. ‘Yohakshema’ has been interpreted by Sri Sankaracharya in his commentary on Gita (9.22):

योगक्षेमं, “योगः अप्राप्तस्य प्रापणं, क्षेमः तद्रक्षणम्”

‘Yoga is getting something not already with us; kshema is safely preserving the newly acquired thing’. There are prayers in Veda for yogakshema of even four-legged animals like cow, goat, horse etc. - शन्नो अस्तु द्विपदे शञ्चतुष्पदे ॥

For Surya’s rays to be strong, yagnas like Agnihotram performed in this world are the means. This is stated in Mahabharata:

यावत् कालं हि तिष्ठन्ति लोके चापि अग्निहोत्रिणः ।

तावदेव हि पुण्येन दीप्यते रविरम्बरे ॥

'To the extent Surya's rays are strong, rains will be correspondingly high.' This is conveyed in Sruti. याभिरादित्यस्तपति रश्मिभिः पर्जन्यो वर्षति ॥

Yagna is indeed a form of Bhagavan. Sruti says: यज्ञो वै विष्णुः ॥

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita: अहं क्रतुः अहं यज्ञः ॥ - 'I am Kratu; I am yagna.'

Statements like अग्नौ तिष्ठति विप्राणाम् ॥ confirm that Bhagavan is of the form of yagna and is present in Agni.

In Srimad Bhagavatham, Sri Yagnavaraha avatara is described. Brahma and others praise Sri Yagnavarahamurthy as the form of yagna.

तमालनीलं सितदन्तकोट्या क्षमामुत्क्षिपन्तं गजलीलयाङ्ग ।

प्रज्ञाय बद्धाञ्जलयोऽनुवाकैः विरिञ्चिमुख्या उपतस्थुरीशम् ॥

"Bhagavan was blue-coloured like Tamala tree and lifted the earth sportingly with the tip of his teeth like elephant's. Brahma and others praised Bhagavan with folded hands with hymns of deep import."

Rishis said: ऋषय ऊचुः

जितं जितं तेऽजित यज्ञभावन त्रयीं तनुं त्वां परिधुन्वते नमः ।

यद्रोमगर्तेषु निलिल्युरध्वराः तस्मै नमः कारणसूकराय ते ॥

रूपं तवैतन्ननु दृष्कृतात्मनां दुर्दशनं देव यद्ध्वरात्मकम् ।

छन्दांसि यस्य त्वचि बर्हिरोमसु आज्यं दृशी त्वङ्घ्रिषु चातुहोत्रम् ॥

स्रक्तुण्ड आसीत्सुव ईश नासयोरिडोदरे चमसाः कर्णरन्ध्रे ।

प्राशित्रमास्ये ग्रसने ग्रहास्तु ते यच्चर्वणं ते भगवन्नग्निहोत्रम् ॥

दीक्षानुजन्मोपसदः शिरोधरं त्वं प्रत्यणीयोदयनीयदंष्ट्रः ।

जिह्वा प्रवर्ग्यस्तव शीर्षकं क्रतोः सभ्यावसथ्यं चितयोऽसवो हि ते ॥

सोमस्तु रेतः सवनान्यवस्थितिः संस्थाविभेदास्तव देव धातवः ।

सत्राणि सर्वाणि शरीर सन्धिस्त्वं सर्वयज्ञक्रतुरिष्टिबन्धनः ॥

"O Lord, known by yagnas and conquered by none! Obeisance to you, who are shaking your body made of the Vedas. Prostrations to you, in whose hair pores are yagnas hidden and who have taken the form of boar in order to retrieve the earth. Deva, it is impossible for sinners to have a vision of this form of yours, it being formed of yagnas. In your skin are the chandas like Gayatri; in your hair are darbhas; in eyes, ghee; in your four feet, the karmas of the four Ritviks of yagna, viz. Hota, Adhvaryu, Udgatha and Brahma. Lord, in the front part of your face is the ladle Sruk; in your nose is the ladle Sruva; in your belly is Ida, the vessel; in your ears is Chamas, the Soma

vessel; in your mouth is Praasitra, the vessel of Brahmabhaga; in your throat are Grahas, the Soma vessels. Bhagavan, the food you chew is Agnihotram; your frequent manifestation is Dikshaniya Ishti; your neck is the three Ishtis called Upasad; your large teeth are the Ishtis called Praayaniya and Udayaniya; your tongue is Pravargya karma; your head is the two Agnis called Sabhya and Aavasathya; your five Pranas are Chayanas of five layers of Ishtakas (bricks); your Retas is Somarasa; your three stages of life like childhood etc. are the three Savanas. Bhagavan, your seven dhatus (elements) are Agnishtomam, Atyagnishtomam, Uktyam, Shodasi, Vajapeyam, Atiratram and Aptoryamam; Satrayagas are your joints in body. You are of the form of all Yagnas and Kratus. (Yagna is without Somarasa; Kratu is with Somarasa); Ishtis like Darsa Poornamasam are the ligaments in the joints in your body.”

नमो नमस्तेऽखिलमन्त्रदेवता द्रव्याय सर्वक्रतवे क्रियात्मने ।

वैराग्यभक्त्यात्मजयानुभावित ज्ञानाय विद्यागुरवे नमो नमः ॥

“Prostrations again and again to you, who are of the form of all mantras, Devatas and materials, and all Kratus, and all activities. Prostrations again and again to you, who are of the form of Gnana, experienced through conquest of mind, which is attained through bhakti, resulting from purification of mind through observance of Vedic acts; and you are the Guru preaching that Gnana.” Thus goes the prayer to Sri Yaganvaraha form of Mahavishnu in Srimad Bhagavatha.

Sri Vishnu Sahasranamam also mentions many names of the Lord connected with yagna:

यज्ञभृद् यज्ञकृद् यज्ञी यज्ञभुग् यज्ञसाधनः ।

यज्ञान्तकृद् यज्ञगुह्यमन्नमन्नाद एव च ॥

महाक्रतुर्महायज्वा महायज्ञो महाहविः ॥

सोमपोऽमृतपः सोमः

Sri Sankaracharya interprets ‘Somapa’ in sloka 67 as सोमपः - सोमं पिबति सर्वयज्ञेषु यष्टव्य देवतारूपेण इति सोमपः - “As Bhagavan drinks Somarasa in all yagnas in the form of the Devatas invoked, he is Somapa.” He interprets ‘Havirhari:’ in sloka 52 as हविर्हरिः - यज्ञेषु हविर्भागं हरतीति हविर्हरिः - “Bhagavan takes the oblations in yagnas.”

In Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavan conveys the same:

अहं हि सर्वयज्ञानां भोक्ता च प्रभुरेव च ॥ यज्ञ इज्यो महेज्यश्च

Thus Yagnas, which are of the form of Bhagavan himself, have been performed carefully with great devotion by our ancestors as Agni Upasana only.

Agni used for Aupasanam during marriage should be used for Aadhanam and divided into two parts: Grihyagni or Aupasanagni; and, Srouthagni. Grihyagni is used for performing Grihya karmas and also called '**Ekagni**'; details of this are found in 'Ekagni Kandam' or 'Mantra Prasnam' in Krishna Yajurveda; it contains Veda mantras for Grihya karmas. Srouthagni is used for Sroutha karmas; as it is used in three kundas or altars, it is called '**Tretagni**'. The three Agnis are Garhapatyam, Dakshinagni and Ahavaniyam. One who worships Ekagni as well as Tretagni is known as '**Aahitagni**'. From Garhapatya Agni, Agni has to be taken chanting mantras and placed in Dakshinagni and Ahavaniyam. After the karmas of the day are over, these two Agnis will become Loukikagni.

ऋषीणां अग्निकल्पानां अग्निहोत्रं समुत्थितः ।

आदत्ते रक्षसां तेजो धूमो व्याप्य दिशो दश ॥

Agnihotra Mahatmyam states that the smoke emanating from Agnihotra Agni of Rishis spreads in ten directions and robs Rakshasas of their power and brightens Brahmaloaka etc.

Let us now look at some of the prayers said at the close of Agnihotram (Upasthanam). When Agni Bhagavan is in a happy mood after the Homa is over in the morning and evening, prayers to him are very fruitful. Taittiriya Samhita, 1st Kandam, 1st Prasnam, 6th Anuvakam says:

संपश्यामि प्रजा अहमिडप्रजसो मानवीः । सर्वा भवन्तु नो गुहे ॥

This means: 'Just as children approach their father rightfully and pray for whatever they wish, we, who are like sons to you, are approaching you, O Agni Deva, and praying to you. We should attain all wellbeing; you should always stay at our home with us and grant us all wealth. When prayer is offered with the अग्निमूर्धा । mantra, the devotee is blessed to become the head among his equals

and he becomes very famous in this world of humans. When prayer is offered with the 8th Anuvaka mantra संपश्यामि प्रजा अहम्, it means: 'May the humans, cows and calves in my home be comfortable'. Through Ahavaniya Upasthanam (prayer), one attains to Svargaloka, and through Garhapatya Upasthanam (prayer), he gets stable Brahmic brilliance.

In the 9th Anuvaka, Veda says अग्निहोत्रं जुहोति । and makes Agnihotram mandatory. It is as if the Havis offered in Agni becomes the property of the worshipper. Just as plants burnt in fire grow ten times during rainy season, the worshipper attains wealth many times his offering and also good

children. He should offer prayers every day to Agni. Agni liberally confers good benefits on his worshipper. The compassionate Veda teaches us the prayers. अग्नय इदं न मम.

13. Greatness of Agni in Itihasas and Puranas

Srimad Ramayanam

In Srimad Ramayanam in Sundara Kandam, reference is made to Sri Hanuman's darshan of Sri Sita Devi. Later Ravana set fire to his tail. Devi prayed to Agni Bhagavan to become cool to Hanuman and ensure that no suffering is caused to him.

श्रुत्वा तद्वचनं क्रूरमात्मापहरणोपमम् ।

वैदेही शोकसन्तप्ता हुताशनमुपागमत् ॥

On hearing those cruel words (of news of fire in Hanuman's tail), Vaidehi, overcome by sorrow, as if she had been harmed, prayed to Agni Deva.

मङ्गलाभिमुखी तस्य सा तदासीन्महाकपेः ।

उपतस्थे विशालाक्षी प्रयता हव्यवाहनम् ॥

The wide-eyed Sri Sita, became favourable to that great monkey. She devotedly prayed to Agni Deva.

Sri Sita Devi's Prayers:

यद्यस्ति पतिशुश्रूषा यद्यस्ति चरितं तपः ।

यदि चास्त्येकपत्नीत्वं शीतो भव हनूमतः ॥

यदि किञ्चिदनुक्रोशस्तस्य मय्यस्ति धीमतः ।

यदि वा भाग्यशेषो मे शीतो भव हनूमतः ॥

यदि मां तारयेदार्यः सुग्रीवः सत्यसंगरः ।

अस्माद्दुःखान्महाबाहुः शीतो भव हनूमतः ॥

यदि मां वृत्तसम्पन्नां तत्समागमलालसाम् ।

स विजानाति धर्मात्मा शीतो भव हनूमतः ॥

O Agni, if my service to my husband has been true, if my austerity has been true and if I have been single-mindedly sincere to my husband, you please become cool to Hanuman.

If my wise husband has any tenderness for me and if there is any good luck left in me, you please become cool to Hanuman.

If the noble and mighty-armed Sugriva, who is wedded to truth, will rescue me from this misery, you please become cool to Hanuman.

If that virtuous husband of mine is aware of my good conduct and my eagerness to join him, you please become cool to Hanuman.

Agni Bhagavan blessed.

ततस्तीक्ष्णार्चिरव्यग्रः प्रदक्षिणशिखोऽनलः ।

जज्वाल मृगशाबाक्ष्याः शंसन्निव शिवं कपेः ॥

Agni Bhagavan, who had intense flames of circular movement, shone without any inconvenience to Hanuman and, as if conveying this to the dow-eyed Sita Devi, he was burning peacefully.

हनुमज्जनकश्चापि पुच्छानलयुतोऽनलः।

ववौ स्वास्थ्यकरो देव्याः प्रालेयानिलशीतलः ॥

Vayu, the father of Hanuman, in conjunction with the fire in Hanuman's tail, blew cool snowy air, thus bringing tranquillity to Sita Devi.

Yuddhakandam

On Sri Rama asking Sri Sita Devi to enter fire, she prayed to Agni Bhagavan (Yuddhakandam, 119th Sargam):

अधोमुखं तदा रामं शनैः कृत्वा प्रदक्षिणम् ।

उपासर्पत वैदेही दीप्यमानं हुताशनम् ॥

Vaidehi went round Sri Rama, whose head was bent down, and approached the blazing Agni.

प्रणम्य देवताभ्यश्च ब्राह्मणेभ्यश्च मैथिली ।

बद्धाञ्जलिपुटा चेदमुवाचाग्निसमीपतः ॥

She paid obeisance to Devatas and brahmanas and prayed to Agni with folded hands:

यथा मे हृदयं नित्यं नापसर्पति राघवात् ।

तथा लोकस्य साक्षी मां सर्वतः पातु पावकः ॥

यथा मां शुद्धचारित्रां दुष्टां जानाति राघवः ।

तथा लोकस्य साक्षी मां सर्वतः पातु पावकः ॥

कर्मणा मनसा वाचा यथा नातिचराम्यहम् ।

राघवं सर्वधर्मज्ञं तथा मां पातु पावकः ॥

आदित्यो भगवान् वायुर्दिशश्चन्द्रस्तथैव च ।

अहश्चापि तथा सन्ध्ये रात्रिश्च पृथिवी तथा ॥

यथाऽन्येऽपि विजानन्ति तथा चारित्रसंयुताम् ॥

As my heart never swerves from Sri Rama, may Agni Bhagavan, the witness of the world, protect me in all ways.

As my character is pure, though Sri Rama thinks otherwise, may Agni Bhagavan, the witness of the world, protect me in all ways.

As I have never been insincere in thought, word and deed to Sri Rama, who knows all dharmas, and as Surya Bhagavan, Vayu, the quarters, Chandra, day time, the Sandhyas, night time, earth and all others know that my character is pure, may Agni Bhagavan protect me in all ways.

एवमुक्त्वा तु वैदेही परिक्रम्य हुताशनम् ।
विवेश ज्वलनं दीप्तं निःसङ्गेनान्तरात्मना ॥

Saying thus, Vaidehi went round Agni and entered the blazing Agni with mind free from any attachment.

तस्यामग्निं विशन्त्यां तु हाहेति विपुलः स्वनः ।

रक्षसां वानराणां च संबभूवाद्भुतोपमः ॥

As Sita Devi entered Agni, loud and unparalleled cry of shock emanated from the Rakshasas and monkeys.

Brahma then appeared in person and praised Sri Rama.

Listening to the auspicious words spoken by Brahma, Agni Bhagavan came out, with Vaidehi on his lap.

एतच्छ्रुत्वा शुभं वाक्यं पितामहसमीरितम् ।
अङ्केनादाय वैदेहीमुत्पपात विभावसुः ॥

Agni, the witness of everything in the world, said to Sri Rama:

अब्रवीच्च तदा रामं साक्षी लोकस्य पावकः ।
एषा ते राम वैदेही पापमस्यां न विद्यते ।
नैव वाचा न मनसा नानुध्यानान्न चक्षुषा ।
सुवृत्ता वृतशौण्डीट न त्वामतिचचार ह ।
रावणेनापनीतैषा वीर्येत्सिक्तेन रक्षसा ।
त्वया विरहिता दीना विवशा निर्जिता वनात् ॥
विशुद्धभावां निष्पापां प्रतिगृह्णीष्व राघव ।
न किञ्चिदभिधातव्य-महमाज्ञापयामि ते ॥

Sri Rama, here is your Vaidehi; there is no sin in her.

Sri Rama, established in virtue! Sita of virtuous conduct has not been insincere to you in word, thought, desire and eyes.

She was abducted and taken prisoner by the conceited Ravana from the forest, when she was alone and helpless and in a pitiable condition.

Raghava, please accept her; she is sinless and very pure in heart. There is nothing adverse; I assure you.

In Yuddhakandam, 35th Sarga, Malyavan advises Ravana to return Sita Devi to Sri Rama and speaks about the omens at that time.

विषयेषु प्रसक्तेन यत्किञ्चित्कारिणा त्वया ।
ऋषीणा-मग्निकल्पाना-मुद्वेगो जनितो महान् ॥
तेषां प्रभावो दुर्धर्षः प्रदीप्त इव पावकः ।
तपसा भावितात्मानो धर्मस्यानुग्रहे रताः ॥
मुख्यैर्यज्ञैर्यजन्त्येते नित्यं तैस्तैद्विजातयः ।
जुह्वत्यग्नींश्च विधिव-द्वेदांश्चोच्चैरधीयते ॥
ऋषीणा-मग्निकल्पाना-मग्निहोत्रसमुत्थितः ।
आदत्ते रक्षसां तेजो धूमो व्याप्य दिशो दश ॥
सकृदेव समिद्धस्य विधूमस्य महार्चिषः ।
बभूवुस्तानि लिङ्गानि विजयं यान्यदर्शयन् ॥

Your wanton action, prompted by lowly desire, has generated much intolerable restlessness in Munis, who are like Agni.

Their power is like blazing Agni's and unconquerable. Having experienced the Self through austerity, they are keen on growth of dharma.

These brahmanas always worship Devas through various yagnas and offer Ahutis in Agni and also chant Vedas in a loud tone.

The smoke emanating from the Agnihotram performed by Rishis, shining like Agni, diffuses in all the ten directions and robs the Rakshasas of their power.

The signs, appearing when Agni shines with no smoke after Homa is done once, indicate victory.

Sri Halasya Mahatmya

There are 16 slokas in which Kulasekara Pandian praises Sri Minakshi Sundareswara. These slokas end with the words:

महादेवं वन्दे मधुर शफराक्षी सहचरम् ।

“I worship Sri Sundareswara, the consort of the sweet Minakshi”. In the 10th sloka, it is said that the Dikshita performing Agni Upasana and Agni itself, both are the forms of Sri Parameswara.

धरा-पाथस्-स्वाहासहचर-जगत्प्राण-शशभृत्

सुराध्वाहर्नाथाध्वरकर-शरीरं शशिधरम् ।

सुराहारास्वादातिशयि-निज-वाचं सुखकरम्

महादेवं वन्दे मधुर शफराक्षी – सहचरम् ॥

“I worship Sri Sundareswara, the consort of the sweet Minakshi, Mahadeva, who is of the eight forms – earth, water, Agni, air, Chandra, space, Surya and the Dikshita performing yaga, whose speech is more delicious than Amrita, the food of Devas, and who bestows happiness.”

Sri Madhaviya Sankara Vijayam

In this book in the 2nd Sarga titled ‘Acharya Janmadikathanam’, while describing Sri Aryamba, who carried in her womb Sri Adisankara Bhagavatpadacharya, the Avatara of Sri Parameswara, it is said that Sri Parameswara, who takes the form of Ashtamoorthy, shone in the womb of Sri Aryamba.

गर्भालसा भगवती गतिमान्द्यमीषद्
आपेति नाद्भुतमिदं धरते शिवं या ।
यो विष्टपानि बिभृते हि चतुर्दशापि
यस्यापि मूर्तय इमा वसुधाजलाद्याः ॥

“The gait of that pregnant woman became slow. What is surprising about it? She is the refuge of Sri Parameswara, who sustains the fourteen worlds and who takes the eight forms – earth, water, Agni, air, space, Surya, Chandra and the Dikshita performing yagna.” It is mentioned clearly in this context that Agni and the Dikshita who worships Agni are the forms of Sri Parameswara.

14. Agni Upasana in Grihya Prayogas

Vivaha (Marriage)

In Vivaha Prayoga (rules for rituals of marriage), the bride and the groom go round Agni and sit for Homa. The bridegroom sits on the north side and the bride sits next to him on the south side. With the bride touching him, the groom performs Homa by offering Ahutis chanting the mantras सोमायजनिविदे स्वाहा. Many mantras are in the form of prayers to Agni. If Homa is done with knowledge of the meaning of the mantras, the fruit is greater. One can feel unspeakable peace also.

In Mantraprasnam called Ekagnikandam, 1st Prasnam, 4th Kandam, 5th mantra:

(1) प्रेतो मुञ्चाति नामुतस्सुबद्धा ममु तस्करत् ।

यथेयमिन्द्र मीढ्वस्सुपुत्रासुभगाऽसति ॥

“O Indra Deva bestowing fulfilment of desires! I perform this Homa with Ahuti of ghee in Agni with the prayer that this bride should drop her attachment to her father’s lineage and develop pride in my family and be blessed with good progeny of male issues, wealth, foodgrains, cows and such other auspicious things.”

(2) अग्निरैतु प्रथमो देवतानाँ सो ऽस्यै प्रजां मुञ्चतु मृत्युपाशात् ।

तदयँ राजा वरुणोऽनुमन्यतां ययेयँस्त्री पौत्रमघन्नरोऽदात् ॥

I perform this Homa with Ahuti of ghee in Agni with prayers to Agni and Varuna that the offspring of this bride shall be free from the misfortune of untimely death and that this bride shall not have to shed tears owing to grief of progeny’s death.

(3) इमामग्निस्त्रायताङ्गार्हपत्यः प्रजामस्यै नयतु दीर्घमायुः ॥

अशून्योपस्था जीवतामस्तु माता पौत्रमानन्दमभि प्रबुद्ध्यतामियम् ॥

This Agni of Vivaha homam shall protect this bride from all kinds of dangers and grant long life to her children. She should beget many children, decorating her lap and become mother of progeny with long life. She should wake up in the morning with the happiness coming from her son; she should fondle her son on her lap in the morning and enjoy that happiness. I perform this Homa with Ahuti of ghee in Agni with this prayer.

(4) माते गृहे निशि घोष उत्थादन्यत्र त्वद्बुदत्यस्संविशन्तु ।

मा त्वं विकेश्युर आवधिष्ठा जीवपत्नी पतिलोके विराज पश्यन्ती प्रजाँ सुमनस्यमानाम् ॥

O bride, separation from husband or children will lead to your shedding of tears. Let this not happen to you. With husband of long life, may you shine in your husband's home looking after favourable children. I perform this Homa with Ahuti of ghee in Agni with this prayer.

(5) द्यौस्ते पृष्ठरक्षतु, वायुरुरु अश्विनौच स्तनं, धयन्तँ सविताऽभिरक्षतु ॥

आवाससः परिधानाद् बृहस्पतिर्विश्वेदेवा अभिरक्षन्तु पश्चात् ॥

May Devata of Svarga (Dyuloka) protect the rear of your body; Vayu Deva, both thighs; Asvini Devas, your bosom; Savita, your son; Brihaspathi, everything else. May all Devas protect you. I perform this Homa with Ahuti of ghee in Agni with this prayer.

(6) तत्त्वा यामि ब्रह्मणा वन्दमानस्तदाशास्ते यजमनोहविर्भिः ।

अहेडमानो वरुणेहबोधयुरुशंस मान आयुः प्रमोषीः ॥

O Varuna Bhagavan, I take refuge in you for my protection, chanting Veda mantras. Dikshitas performing yagas wish for their protection by performing Homa with Charu, Purodasa etc. (ritual offerings of flour). I do the same with stotras. O Varuna, who has been praised by many performers of yaga, please do not become angry with me for faults of omitting mandatory acts and performing prohibited acts. Please grant me long life. I perform this Homa with Ahuti of ghee in Agni with this prayer.

(7) त्वमग्ने अयास्ययासन्मनसा हितः । अयासन् हव्यमूहिषेऽयानोधे हि भेषजम् ॥

Agni Bhagavan, you are attained by devout worshippers, or you reach worshippers yourself. You are attained by their minds. As you are easily accessible for worshippers, I meditate on you. Please convey the Havis we offer to the respective Devatas. Please grant us wellbeing. You, who are easily attainable, should rid us of our sins and bless us.

(8) इयं नार्युपब्रूते कुल्पान्यावपन्तिका । दीर्घायुरस्तु मे पतिर्जीवातु शरदशतम् ॥

The bride prays for her husband's long life through Laaja Homam (offering of parched paddy grain in Agni with mantra).

This bride, performing Laaja Homam, prays to Agni Deva that her husband should live long, for a hundred years.

(9) अर्यमणन्तु देवङ्कन्या अग्निमयक्षत ।

स इमान्देवो अध्वरः प्रेतो मुञ्चति नामुतस्सुबद्धाममुतस्करत् ॥

The girls adored the brilliant Agni Deva, who is quickly attained by worshippers. May that Agni Deva, who deserves not to be troubled by anyone, disengage this bride from her father's lineage. She should not be disengaged from her husband's lineage. She should be made to develop great love for her husband's family.

O Agni Deva, many brides have attained benefits by worshipping you with Laaja Homam earlier. In the same manner this bride also performs Laaja Homam with a view to attaining benefits. We perform this Homa with Ahuti of ghee in Agni with this prayer.

(10) त्वमर्यमा भवसि यत्कनीनां नाम स्वधावत्स्वर्यं बिभर्षि ।

अञ्जन्ति वृक्षसुधितं न गोभिः यद्दंपती समनसा कृणोषि ॥

For performing karmas like yaga and attaining to Swargaloka, the bride – yagnapatni – is important. O Agni, you are empowered in enabling ‘Kanyaka Prapanam’ (attaining bride), which is the means of attaining to Swarga etc, and which enables plenty of foodgrains. We therefore call you ‘Daata’. As you bring about harmony between the bride and the groom, the couple perform Homa for you with cow’s ghee, like watering the roots of tree profusely for the tree’s good growth. Hence, o Agni deva, you should establish complete harmony among the two of us, bride and the groom.

The newly married couple commence Agni Upasana thus as per rules on the day of marriage. Veda tells us by way of instruction with compassion that this Agni should be protected throughout one’s life. If Agni is worshipped in this manner, benefits like good health, unlimited wealth, long life, good progeny etc. will accrue. This Agni Upasana has been practised by successive generations till recently. That is why we live good lives with plenty of wealth. We should also continue with Agni Upasana like Aupasanam, Vaisvadevam etc. Those who have the means can undertake Agnihotram also and continue to perform the same.

Veda teaches us the prayers to be chanted to Agni Deva in the Aupasanagni and makes them fruitful. Let us now look at some of them.

Apastamba Grihya Sutra, 6th Kandam, Sutra 10 says:

उत्तरपूर्वे देशे अगारस्य अग्रेरुपसमधानाद्याज्यभागन्ता

अन्वारब्धायामुत्तरा आहुतीर्हुत्वा जयादिप्रतिपद्यते परिचेनान्तं कृत्वा

Grihastha should establish Agni in the Easana (north east) part of his house and perform 13 Ahutis with the wife touching the husband and then perform Jayadi Homam. He should then do Parishechanam.

(11) आगन्नोष्ठं महिषी गोभिरश्वैरायुष्मत्पत्नी प्रजया स्वर्वित् ।

बह्वीं प्रजां जनयन्ती सुरत्वेममग्निं शतहिमास्सपर्यात् ॥

O Agni, my wife came here with the wealth given her by her father. She should have sustained auspiciousness (long life of husband) and good progeny and wealth and be worshipful of Agni through Aupasanam etc. I perform this Homa with Ahuti of ghee in Agni with this prayer.

(12) प्रजाया आभ्यां प्रजायत इन्द्राग्नी शर्म यच्छतम् ।

यथैनयोर्न प्रमीयाता उभयोर्जीवितोः प्रजा ॥

We should not face a situation of grief owing to death of our progeny while we are alive. O Prajapatis, O Indragnis, I perform this Homa with Ahuti of ghee in Agni with this prayer.

13. O Agni, please accept our Ahuti of ghee and make this woman full of breastmilk and good fortune of house, wealth etc. We should have wealth enough to support many. Please grant us sufficient wealth such that we do not have to seek from others.

14. O Agni, we should live in this house together without separation. We should have long life. Please grant us all wellbeing.

Vedamatha blesses us to live comfortably throughout our lives by praying to Agni Bhagavan in the above manner. Let us live life of ease, health and peace by following the path shown by our ancestors.

Aupasanam

Every couple, married through vivaha of Braahma etc. type, should protect throughout their lives the Agni which was witness to their marriage. Ahutis must be offered to Surya in the morning and Agni in the evening. Svishtakrut is the second Devata. Maharishis state that it is from Aupasanagni that Aadhanam should be performed in order to do Sroutha karmas and start yagas. After performing Homa in Aupasanagni, Agni Gayatri should be chanted. Agni Gayatri:

वैश्वानराय विद्महे लालीलाय धीमहि तन्नो अग्निः प्रचोदयात् ।

Aupasana should be learnt from those who are of good Aachara (Vedic conduct), have studied Vedas properly and who perform all rituals; it should be commenced only in their presence. Aupasana takes a maximum of 15 minutes. Great fruits can be reaped easily here and in the hereafter.

(Veda mantras should be learnt only from a Guru with proper Svara and correct pronunciation.)

Sthalipaka स्थालीपाकः

Maharishi Aapastamba mentions the rules of performing Sthalipaka in his Grihya Sutra, 3rd Patala, 7th khanda. अथैनामाग्नेयेन स्थालीपाकेन याजयति । He calls it Aagneya Sthalipaka, started after marriage and performed with wife for pleasing Agni Devata. There are prayers to Agni in this rite. If one performs with Vedic purity, he can live a healthy life, with plenty of food. After marriage, the wife is taught to cook food with chant of mantra.

With Aupasana being performed continuously, Sthalipaka should be started within six months of marriage in Uttarayana on Krishnapaksha Prathama day. This is called Pournamasa Sthalipaka. Similarly Darsa Sthalipaka is done on Suklapaksha Prathama day.

Aagravana Sthalipaka, which is one of the seven Pakayagnas to be performed, should be done in Sarad ritu (months of Aippasi, Karthik) on Pournami or Amavasya day using paddy freshly harvested.

Vaisvadeva वैश्वदेवः

Violence to living beings happens knowingly or unknowingly in the course of our household work.

Sastra identifies five such sources of violence. पञ्चसूना गृहस्थस्य वर्तन्ते

1. Kandini: The cutter used for cutting vegetables. Vegetables also have life.
2. Peshini: The mill-stone, pestle, the modern day grinder etc. used for grinding various foodgrains.
3. Chulli: Fire, which causes death of small insects etc. When we place fire in any place, it may kill some worms.
4. Jalakumbham: When we place the waterpot anywhere, small beings at the bottom may lose their lives.
5. Upaskaram: The broom, when used on the floor, causes small beings to die in its sweep.

The Prayaschitta, to be done for the sins committed in the above processes even unwittingly, is called Vaisvadevam. Here bali (offering of food) is given with chanting of mantra for the satisfaction of all living beings with the prayer that the beings, which died because of us, should attain to good state and that Bhagavan should forgive us. Bali is offered in Vaisvadevam for all

living beings in the world like dog, crow and even those expelled by society. This is also called Bhutayagna. All Devas are worshipped in this.

In Vaisvadeva, bali is offered to various categories of beings: 14 beings consisting of Devas, humans, Pitrus etc.; 8 Devaganas including Siddhas, Guhyakas, Gandharvas, Yakshas, Rakshasas, Pannagas, Vidyadharas and Pisachas; 5 Tiryakyonis, i.e. animals including crawling ones, four-legged, monkeys, animals and birds; Patangas – small insects; trees. Thus Agni Bhagavan grants us the fruits and merits of feeding all beings. With chant of 72 mantras of Simhanuvaka, we get rid of our sins. The karma gets completed with this prayer to Agni Deva:

आयुरारोग्यमैश्वर्यं धृतिं सत्त्वं बलं यशः ।
तेजोवर्चः पशून्बीजं ब्रह्मब्रह्मण्यमेव च ॥
सौभाग्यं कर्मसिद्धिं व कुलज्यैष्ठ्यं स्वकर्मताम् ।
सर्वमेतत्कर्म साक्षिन् द्रविणोदा विधेहि नः ॥

“O bestower of wealth, please grant me all benefits including long life, good health, plenty of wealth, steadfastness, power, strength, fame, brilliance, good innate nature, cattle wealth, fertility, Vedic knowledge, power to seek Brahman, good fortune, success in efforts, greatness of lineage and performance of svakarma.”

See how our ancestors have shown the way to easily attain all good desirables. The above sloka of prayer is found in the book ‘Karmadipa Prakasam’ in Vaisvadeva Prakaranam. Vaisvadevam is to be performed twice a day – in the morning and evening. Even now many people are performing this rite in our country. There is no doubt that performing Vaisvadevam as learnt from Guru as per one’s family tradition will get all good and virtuous things.

Upanayanam

Brahmacharis should perform Samidadhanam in Agni in morning and evening every day with 13 mantras. The mantras starting with अग्नये समिधमाहार्षं बृहते जातवेदसे । and ending with समिधमाधायान्ने सर्वव्रतो भूयासँस्वाहा are prayers to Agni Bhagavan. The meanings of the mantras are as follows:

1. O Agni Deva, I place this Samit in you, Agni, who are in a lofty position, who know all objects originating in the world and who place all your worshippers in lofty states. I have offered this Samit with chant of 'Svaha'.
2. O Agni Bhagavan, in the way you shine well with the Samit, please bestow on me long life, radiance, attainment of requisite objects, power of retention in memory, progeny, cattle, Brahmic brilliance and power of Jatharagni (Agni in stomach for digestion). I place this samith with this prayer.
3. Prayer to Samith: O Samith, The way Agni grows because of you; I should also grow the same way; I should attain greatness in many ways.
4. O Samith, you give bright shine to Agni; we, who are placing you in Agni, should also attain bright shine. We are therefore uniting this Samith to Agni with 'Svaha'.
5. O Samith, as you are the instrument of brightness in Agni, you are also shining with bright flame. Please bestow brightness on me also. I am offering this Samith in Homam for this purpose.
6. I am doing the karma of Samidadhanam properly now. This should engender faith and attitude in me for Vedic karmas. Agni Bhagavan, I should perform Homam every day with Havis of ghee, milk etc. and worship you. I should get Brahmic brilliance. The obstacles in my path should vanish.
7. O Agni Deva, I am performing Homa with this Samith with prayer that you should grant me Brahmic brilliance, progeny and limitless wealth.
8. O Agni Bhagavan, Devas like Indra and Brahmarishis like Vasishtha should bear witness to this Samidadhanam I am doing and bless me.
9. Agni Deva, you shine brightly and live in Svargaloka. I offer this Samith in Homa for you.
10. I offer this Samith in Homa for Devas of Dyuloka (Svarga) and Bhuloka (earth).
11. O Agni Deva, Please get happy with the Homam with this Samith and make me free from all wants. I should be complete in all respects.
12. O Agni Deva, if someone tries to take away and enjoy something which is due to me, please bless me to get that object and deprive the other person of it.
13. O Agni Deva, please bless me to complete my brahmacharya vrata. Even if some deficiency occurs in it, please remove it and grant me fulfilment.

Then Parishechanam is done without mantra; a Samith is placed in Agni; after chanting अग्रेरुपस्थानं करिष्ये he should get up and pray with the mantra यत्ते अग्ने.

"I should become full of brilliance from your brilliance; I should get vigour from your vigour; from your power of removing sin, I should get that power. May Agni Bhagavan grant me knowledge,

progeny and powerful sense organs. May Surya grant me knowledge, progeny and glowing vigour.”

In the end the following mantras of obeisance to Agni Bhagavan are chanted:

मन्त्रहीनं क्रियाहीनं भक्तिहीनं हुताशन ।
यद्धुतन्तु मया देव परिपूर्णं तदस्तु ते ॥
प्रायश्चित्तान्-यशेषाणि तपःकर्मात्मकानि वै ।
यानि तेषां-अशेषाणां कृष्णानुस्मरणं परम् ॥

“O Agni Deva, though my observance of mantra, kriya and bhakti might have been deficient, this Homam performed by me may become complete by your grace.”

“Of all Prayaschittas (expiations) of the form of tapas or karma, meditating on Sri Krishna is the best.”

Saying this, if Samith of Peepul or Palasa is offered as Ahuti to Agni Bhagavan in morning and evening, it is great Agni Upasana. Agni Bhagavan gets pleased and grants us all our wishes and wellbeing. Agni Upasana is a simple observance practised by our ancestors. It starts with Samidadhanam in Brahmacharya asrama. We should teach our children to do Samidadhanam and attain wellbeing.

Upanayanam means leading the disciple to Veda (Upa-near; Nayanam- leading to Guru or Veda). Only after this samskara, the person attains the state of Brahmana or Dvija, the second birth. He attains third birth while starting to perform yaga. Manusmriti (2:139) says so:

मातुरग्र अधि जननं द्वितीयं मौञ्जिबन्धनात् ।
तृतीयं यज्ञदीक्षायां द्विजस्य श्रुतिचोधनात् ॥

Brahmachari is one who who studies Veda well and practises all regulations for retaining Veda firmly in his mind. Aapastamba Grihya Sutra says: गर्भाष्ट्मेषु ब्राह्मणमुपनयीत.

As per the commentary of Sri Sudarsana, brahmanas should perform upanayanam in the 6th, 7th or 8th year from the date of conception.

उपनयनं विद्यार्थस्य श्रुतितः संस्कारः ॥

Upanayanam is mandated in Veda. It is a samskara karma prescribed in Veda for learning Vedic rules. As it is prescribed in Veda itself, there is great importance for it among brahmanas.

आयुर्दा देव जरसं गृणानो घृतप्रतीको घृतपृष्ठो अग्ने ।
घृतं पिबन्नमृतं चारुगव्यं पितेव पुत्रं जरसे नयेमम् ॥

“O Agni Deva, You, who grant us long life and have glowing limbs and grow with ghee, please accept our prayer. Consuming this ghee, having the fragrance of cow and equal to nectar, be pleased with this Homa with Samith and lead this student towards old age like a father would his son.” When this mantra is chanted by the Guru, the disciple performs Homa at the close of the mantra.

इममग्र आयुषे वर्चसे कृधि

“O Agni Deva, grant this student long life and brilliance (good health).

अग्निष्ट आयुः प्रतरां दधात्वग्निष्टे पुष्टिं प्रतरां कृणोतु

“May Agni grant you long life and physical strength.”

Those meritorious jivas, who practise their respective asrama karmas as laid down in Veda in the spirit of karmayoga with discipline and devotion to Bhagavan without looking for fruits, will get relieved from the cycle of samsara in this birth itself or in the coming births, depending on their Prarabdha karma.

Sanyasasramam

If one performs karmas with faith in Sastras and devotion to Acharya, he can absorb the Agni, which he worshipped outside (Samidadhana Agni, Aupasana Agni or Tretagni consisting of Garhapatya, Ahavaniya and Dakshinagni), on his own Atma and perform Ahuti of the entire world in the Agni of Gnana in his Sanyasasrama. Upanishad calls him Atmayaji.

आत्मन्यग्नीन् समारोप्य सोऽग्निहोत्रि महायतिः (सन्यासोपनिषत्)

Bhagavan Krishna says the same thing in Gita – ज्ञानाग्निः भस्मसात् कुरुते अर्जुन

He burns away all karmas – merits and sins – and their fruits in the Agni of Gnana and attains Mukti. Sri Manu also says:

वेदाभ्यासोऽन्वहं शक्त्या महायज्ञक्रिया क्षमा ।

नाशयन्त्याशु पापनि महापातकजान्यपि ॥

If one performs Vedic study, Agni Upasana with the five great yagnas etc. as per his capacity, it will destroy all his sins including sins classified as great. Hence Agni Upasana is very important for the brahmana. (Manusmriti 11:245).

यथैधस्तेजसा वह्निः प्राप्तं निर्दहति क्षणात् ।

तथा ज्ञानाग्निना पापं सर्वं दहति वेदवित् ॥

Just as Agni burns away firewood etc. in a second and reduces them to ashes, Gnanagni burns away the sins of those who study Veda. Gnanagni removes all karmas root and branch and grants the state of no rebirth. (11:246).

15. Traditional Vedic Agni Upasana in Kashmir – **Sri Laugakshi Grihya Prayoga**

Our Vedic religion is known as Sanatana Dharma. Vedic dharmas are found spread all over the world even to this day. Especially in our Bharatadesa, Vedic rituals including Agni Upasana have been practised from Kashmir to Kanyakumari for ages, and crores of people have enjoyed their benefits here and hereafter. Kashmiri Pandits, who are brahmanas, have been performing Vedic rites including Agni Upasana to this day. **Katha Sakha** (branch) of Krishna Yajurveda must have been mostly in practice there.

Grihyasutras of Maharishi Laugakshi in palm leaves were first found and printed in Sarada Lipi (script) in 1927 and published by Pratapa Simha, the then Maharaja of Kashmir. The famous Veda book titled 'Kashmira Mantra Kalpadruma', also known as 'Mantra Ratnakara' written by Maharishi Laugakshi was found in 1835 in the form of palm leaves and was preserved carefully since then.

Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Sankaracharya Swamigal, the 69th Peethadhipathi of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham and Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Sankaracharya Swamigal, the 70th Peethadhipathi have been organising with great effort Rigveda Samhita Homam, Chaturveda Parayanas, Chandi Homam etc. every year in remote places like Jammu, Leh (Ladakh) etc. for wellbeing of the world, specially of Bharatadesa and for removal of the misery of Kashmiri Pandits. Jagadguru Sri Acharya Swamigal personally attends these proceedings. On one such occasion, Kashmiri Pandits handed the above two rare books to Sri Swamigal and prayed that the books be printed and published. The Jagadgurus very happily got the books published in 2011 through Sri Venkateswara Vedic University of Sri Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam. Kashmiri Pandits have been praising the great and rare efforts of Srimatham for protecting Vedas. They claim with happiness that it would not be an exaggeration to say that for the first time in the history of Bharat, Chaturveda Parayana was held in Kashmir through Srimatham's efforts.

Grihya Sutras of Maharishi Laugakshi

This book was published through Srimatham's efforts in 2011 with the commentary of Devapala.

Vivarana (gloss) for the Grihya Sutras was written by Sri Aditya Darsana. Another explanatory text called Panchika or Paddhati written by Sri Brahmanapala, son of Sri Madhavadhvaryu, is also there. Sri Devapala's commentary is also available.

Gobhila Grihya Sutras and Agastya's Sloka Darpana are in use in Kashmir even today. Laugakshi Grihya Sutras are known variously as Kataka Grihya Sutras, Charaka Grihya Sutras and Charayaniya Grihya sutras. It is noteworthy that these Grihya Sutras are worded in the same way as those in practice in South India like Aapasthamba, Aasvalayana, Bodhayana or Draahyayana Grihya Sutras.

In the first part of Laugakshi Grihya Sutras, there are 73 kandikas. We have given below a few of them used in Agni Upasana in Poorva Karmas. This shows how Agni Upasana is well established even in the Himalayan area of Kashmir, the head of Bharatadesa.

At the beginning of 1st kandika, the Sutra starts with Upanayana vrata:

उपनयनप्रभृति व्रतचारी स्यात् (१-१)

सायं प्रातः सन्ध्यामुपासीत (२-६)

सायं प्रातः सन्ध्यानिःसरणं भैक्षाचरणमग्नीन्धनम् ॥

The tem 'Agnindhanam' shows that brahmacharis must do Agni Upasana called Samidadhanam in the morning and evening.

In the 13th kandika, after vivaha:

चतुर्विधःपाकयज्ञो भवति

हुतोऽहुतः प्रहुतः प्राशितश्चेति ॥ (१३-२)

दर्शपूर्णमासप्रकृतयः पाकयज्ञाः । (१३-७)

In the 20th kandika, it is stated that in the night before marriage, Devatas like Agni should be worshipped.

स्थालीपाकस्य जुहोत्यग्नये सोमाय.....इति (२१-१)

In the 41st kandika, upanayanam:

सप्तमे वर्षे ब्राह्मणस्योपायनम् (४१-१)

जन्मनःप्रभृति सप्तमे वर्षे गर्भादष्टमे ब्राह्मणस्योपायनम् ।

नवमे राजन्यस्य ॥

एकादशे वैश्यस्य ॥

ब्रह्मचार्यसि । अपोऽशान । कर्मकुरु ।
दिवा मा स्वाप्सीः । वाचं यच्छ ।

Brahmacharis should pray to Samidadhana Agni:

हे अग्ने! त्वत्प्रसादात् सर्वव्रतो भवामि भूयासम् ।

“O Agni, with your grace, I shall observe all discipline properly.”

In the 49th kandika, details of Nakshatra Ishti are given:

नक्षत्रयज्ञेषु नक्षत्रदेवतानामृचस्ताभिर्यजेताग्निःयमो दाधारेति प्रत्यृचम् ।

In the 63rd kandika, Sutras giving procedures for Sraaddham are given:

अग्नौ करवाणीत्युक्त्वा ॥ (६३-८)

अग्निं परिस्तीर्य सोमाय पितृमते स्वधानमोऽग्रये ।

कव्यवाहनाय स्वधा नम इत्यग्नौ हुत्वा ॥ (६३-९)

Is it not clear that Poorva and Apara Karmas (rituals observed during life and post-death) prescribed in Sruti and Smriti have been the same all over Bharatadesa? It is the motiveless compassion of Veda Matha that humans and, specially brahmanas, should live their lives as per the Grihya Sutras given by Maharishis, applicable to their own Veda Sakha and Sutra, please Bhagavan through that process and develop purity of mind and have direct vision of Bhagavan. Agni upasana has been at the root of this scheme of karmas.

In the second part of Laugakshi Grihya Sutras, Apara karmas are covered.

In the same manner, Maithili brahmanas of Bihar and those in all other Indian States including U.P., M.P., Odisha, A.P., Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra have all along been engaged in Agni Upasana through Srouta and Smartha karmas prescribed in Vedas.

(Reference: The Grihya sutras of Laugakshi Maharishi with Bhashya of Devapala published by Sri Venkateswara Vedic University, Tirupati and edited by S.Sudarsana Sarma, Vice-chancellor.)

16. Agni Upasana all over the world

People of Stone Age worshipped fire. Initially they were afraid on seeing sparks of fire emanating when two particular stones were struck against each other. Gradually they overcame the fear and knew how to put the fire to productive use and started to worship fire. Then they found out how to make fire by rubbing and churning two pieces of wood. They therefore came to be known as Prometheans (from प्रमन्था Pramantha in Sanskrit, meaning one who churns). This practice is prevalent in China even today under the name of Suy-Jin. People gradually started to worship and protect fire throughout their lives. Fire is protected even today in many traditions in different parts of the world. In Korea, the fire worshipped by the ancestors is preserved through generations. As civilisation developed, the belief that by protecting the fire continuously people's wishes get fulfilled, took deep roots.

In Europe there are said to be separate temples for fire. Greeks, Latins, Persians, Mexicans, Peruvians and others have been protecting flames of fire on top of pyramids and worshipping them. 'Akhanda Deepa' (uninterrupted light of lamp) like in our country is being practised there in the form of continuously burning flame. It is noteworthy that the governments in those countries appoint officials to protect the flames. In case the flame gets put out, work is stopped in homes and government offices. All people right from children to elders fast. After completing some prayers, the flame is lit again. It is to be noted that except for natural calamities, the flame is truly maintained in uninterrupted manner.

Agni is worshipped in many countries. Romans are the most important of them. Impure and unnecessary materials should not be dropped and lit in the vessels of fire or lamps; the flame should never be put out by blowing air from mouth. This is practised as a sacred requirement in Albania, the Galtchas of Ferghana and Tadjikas of Bokhara. (This is in accordance with our Sastras). All family members and government officials are maintaining separate fire altars with uninterrupted flame. Hundreds of fire altars appear to exist in northern countries. These practices do remind us of rituals like Samidadhanam, Aupasanam, Nitya Agnihotram etc. prescribed in Veda.

In our yagas, we plant yupasthambhas (sacrificial posts) and offer prayers. In western countries, they plant oak trees and light fire on top. The fire gradually travels down till the entire oak tree is reduced to ashes. This takes about a year from Christmas of a year to Christmas next year. Farmers believe that by sprinkling those ashes in the fields, good harvest is achieved. Kings considered that worship of fire increased their strength.

Mongolians practise a tradition that however much a girl is scolded or abused, she should not be touched if she stands between her bed and the place where fire is kept and worshipped. Just as we go round Agni three times during marriage and worship, girls in Germany and neighbouring countries go round the fire altar three times on returning home after marriage in the church. They also apply the ashes from the altar on their forehead, or, sprinkle ash water on their bare feet. People think that their families, government etc. are prosperous because of this type of Agni worship. In Olympic games, we find that Olympic torch is carried from country to country. The Olympic torch lighting ceremony is celebrated as a big festival in western countries. Activities related to Agni are thus practised in various ways all over the world.

Courtesy: "Agnihotram (The Vedic Solution for Present day problems)" by M.S. alias Baburao Parkhe, Vaidika Samsodhana Mandal, Pune.

Savants in our country proclaim that it can be established with proof that our Veda dharma is indeed worldwide.

Agni karma is prescribed for people of all castes. All people should perform Aupasanam during marriage and protect the Agni for all time. Parsis do protect Agni now. Their religion is known as **Zend Avastha**. The part of Veda called **Chandovastha** has turned into that religion. Their founder Zoroastra's name is derived from Sourashtra. Their country's name Iran is muted form of Aryan. In case Agni gets put out, they do Prayaschitta at great expense. Aryans were known as 'Fire worshippers'. (from Voice of God-Part II of Sri Maha Swamigal).

17. Antyeshti – Purusha Ahuti to Agni Bhagavan

In the Pooja performed in the morning and evening, it is usual to remove Nirmalyam (old flowers) from the deity by chanting the mantra:

देहो देवालयः प्रोक्तः जीवो देवः सनातनः ।

त्यजेत् अज्ञाननिर्माल्यं सोऽहंभावेन पूजयेत् ॥

“Our body is said to be temple; the Jiva in the body is the eternal Bhagavan. We should remove the Nirmalyam of Agnana (ignorance) and worship with the attitude of ‘I am He’.” Here our body is extolled as Devalaya, temple. As Bhagavan resides in the human body, it is called Devalaya. Though Bhagavan resides in the bodies of all creatures, it is only in human form that one has the ability to have vision of Bhagavan. Many savants have glorified the human form’s greatness in many ways. Manu also says: शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम् - “This body is the prime instrument for performing all dharmas”. The Saivaite Nayanmar, Appar sings of ‘body as temple’. Kathopanishad says: आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु । “Consider the body as chariot and Atma as the charioteer”. Bhagavan Krishna preaches to Arjuna in Bhagavadgita:

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशे अर्जुन तिष्ठति ।

भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥

“Iswara is seated in the heart of all beings and revolves them through his Maya, as if mounted on a revolving machine.” Bhagavan also says in the Gita:

इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते ।

क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत ॥

The body is ‘kshetra’ (field of action) and Bhagavan present in the body of all beings is ‘kshetragna’ (knower and controller of kshetra).

Tirumular in his Tirumandiram extols the greatness of the human body in the 3rd Tantra: “If body deteriorates, life will ebb. If you do not have a strong body, you will not be able to have access to firm spiritual knowledge. Hence I have found the means of looking after the body and thus caring for life. Earlier I used to think that body is inferior. Then I found the Eternal Truth inside the body. As Bhagavan resides in the body, I look after the body now.”

Veda Matha instructs that the human body of such importance, where Bhagavan resides, should be disposed of in Vedic karma after death by burial or consigning to Agni. Maharishis have

therefore handed to us the procedures of Antyeshti, similar to a yaga, with proper chanting of mantras and performance of kriyas. These rites should be observed as per one's respective Veda Sakha and Sutra. This is also spoken of very highly in Tamil literature as a sacred duty of human beings.

On separation from the body, the Jiva does not reach Pitru-loka, nor does it take another birth immediately. It takes one year for it to travel to reach the other world. Our Sastras declare that the Jiva crosses Vaitarani river and goes to the city of Yama. Greeks also believe that the Jiva crosses the river Styx and reaches the city called Hades, where watch-dogs called Cerberus are present. The monthly post-death Vedic rites practised by us are also observed by Christians as rites with the name of Viaticum. In addition to the last rites performed on death, they also observe All Souls Day for the satisfaction of all departed Jivas on 2nd November every year all over the world. They have modelled their acts on the Sraadh with offering of Pindas that we perform in places like Rameswaram, Badri, Gaya, Kashi, Prayag, Kurukshetra etc. In our Bharatadesa, all people observe Uttarakriyas for departed Jivas in their hour of grief. We observe that the dead body is bathed, decorated with sandalpaste, Vibhuti, garland etc. and placed on a bedstead and last rites performed to the playing of instruments. That this practice has been in vogue for ages is clear from the commentary of Sri Adi Sankaracharya on Chandogya Upanishad (8:8:5):

एषोपनिषत्प्रेतस्य शरीरं भिक्षया वसनेनालङ्कारेणेति ।

संस्कुर्वन्त्येतेन ह्यमुं लोकं जेष्यन्तो मन्यन्ते ॥

तयोपनिषदा संस्कृताः सन्तः प्रेतस्य शरीरं कुणपं भिक्षया गन्धमाल्यान्नादिलक्षणया वसनेन

वस्त्रादिनाच्छादनादि प्रकारेणालङ्कारेण ध्वजपताकादिकरणेनेत्येवं संस्कुर्वन्त्येतेन कुणप संस्कारेणामुं प्रेत्य प्रतिपत्तव्यं जेष्यन्तो मन्यन्ते ॥

Virochana, the king of Asuras, thought of the body as Atman. Hence his followers glorified the body and performed the last rites elaborately on death as mentioned here in Chandogya Upanishad.

On close scrutiny of Sastras, it can be seen that on the Jiva departing from the body, the deities presiding over the sense organs like Surya in the eyes, Agni in the mouth, Indra in the arms etc. do not go back to their original abodes immediately. We send these deities back to their abodes only through Preta Samskaras. The meaning of the mantras chanted in the rites makes this clear.

'Samskara' means making good and pure. Sastras direct that 40 Samskaras should be performed for purifying the Jiva at every stage from conception onwards. These 40 samskaras are intended in Sastras as yagas with Ahuti to Iswara. Similarly the relatives perform Antya Ishti (last yaga) to the corpse after death. That Agni is called Chitagni. Just as the materials offered in Homa are purified before use, the body is bathed, ghee is applied all over and then the body is cremated. The body is offered as Ahuti to Agni Bhagavan. Even if buried in earth, it is also an offering to Bhagavan.

The Antyeshti of brahmanas is practised in two ways: Brahmamedha samskara and Pitrumedha samskara. The antyeshti karma is superior to all yagas. Sruti, Smritis and Puranas preach that these karmas are means to the lofty state and help in attainment of Iswara Sayujya (union with Iswara). This Purushahuti samskara is laid down in Sruti and the relevant mantras are found in all the four Vedas. Maharishis, who have written Kalpa Sutras, like Aapasthamba, Bodhayana, Bharadvaja, Draahyayana, Aasvalayana, Katyayana and Satyaashada have handed to us Pitrumedha Sutras covering Aparas Prayogas. In our Sanatana Dharma we have been taught from ancient times to associate Vedic spirit and Bhagavan with Samskaras connected with Aparas Kriyas and this has set the tone for the whole world to follow.

The story of Prahlada is told in Srimad Bhagavatham in skandha 7. After the killing of Hiranyakasipu, Nrisimha Bhagavan instructs Prahlada:

श्री भगवानुवाच :-

भवन्ति पुरुषा लोके मद्भक्तास्त्वामनुव्रताः ।
भवान् मे खलु भक्तानां सर्वेषां प्रतिरूपदधृक् ॥
कुरु त्वं प्रेतकार्याणि पितुःपूतस्य सर्वशः ।
मदङ्गस्पर्शनेनाङ्ग लोकान् यास्यति सुप्रजाः ॥
पित्र्यं च स्थानमातिष्ठ यथोक्तं ब्रह्मवादिभिः ।
मय्यावेश्य मनस्तात कुरु कर्माणि मत्परः ॥

"Your followers become my devotees in this world. You are the best among my devotees and are an example for others. Your father became pure in all respects by contact with me. You do the Uttarakriyas for him. Child Prahlada, he will attain to good realms as he has been the father of a good child. You assume your father's position as king. With your mind directed to me, perform karmas as directed by Vedic scholars and dedicate them to me."

प्रह्लादोपि तथा चक्रे पितुर्यत्साम्परायिकम् ।

यथाह भगवान्नाजन्नभिषिक्तो द्विजोत्तमैः ॥

Prahlada performed Antyeshti for his father accordingly. As instructed by Bhagavan, he was anointed king by the best of brahmanas.

All Srouta and Smartha karmas are being performed for ages as detailed in Sastras. We know from Itihasas and Puranas that numerous people have performed the karmas as laid down in Vedas, attained purity of mind thereby and broken off from the cycle of birth and death.

In Sri Ramayanam, Sri Vasishtha instructs Bharata to perform Antyeshti karmas of Emperor Dasaratha on his death (Ayodhya Kandam):

तमेवं शोकसन्तप्तं भरतं कैकयीसुतम् ।

उवाच वदतां श्रेष्ठो वसिष्ठः श्रेष्ठवागृषिः

अलं शोकेन भद्रं ते राजपुत्र महायशः ।

प्राप्तकालं नरपतेः कुरु संयानमुत्तमम् ॥

Rishi Vasishtha, the best among speakers, said to Bharata, who was agonising in grief.

“O Reputed Prince, enough with grieving. Perform the best Aparas Kriyas for the emperor in time. May you be well.”

वसिष्ठस्य वचः श्रुत्वा भरतो धारणां गतः ।

प्रेतकृत्यानि सर्वाणि कारयामास धर्मवित् ॥

ये त्वग्नेयो नरेन्द्रस्य ह्यग्नेयागाराद्विष्कृताः ।

ऋत्विग्भिर्याजकैश्चैव ते ह्यन्ते यथाविधि ॥

“Bharata, who knew Dharmas, acted on Vasishtha’s instructions and, resuming mental balance, performed all Aparas Kriyas.”

“The Agnis maintained by Dasaratha were brought from his Agnisalas and Homa was performed in them by Ritviks and Dikshitas as per Sastras.”

तथा हुताशनं हुत्वा जेषुस्तस्य तमृत्विजः ॥ (76-18)

जगुश्च ते यथाशास्त्रं तत्र सामानि सामगाः ॥ (76-19)

“Ritviks chanted mantras and performed Homam in those Agnis. Singers of Sama mantras sang them as per Sastras.” Thus Aahitagni Samskara was performed for Emperor Dasaratha by Bharata.

Led by Sri Vasishtha, Bharata and Satrugna, accompanied by mothers Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi and people of Ayodhya, met Sri Rama, Lakshmana and Sita at Chitrakoot. They conveyed to Sri Rama the news of the death of Dasaratha. Sri Rama and Lakshmana fell unconscious for a moment owing to grief. Ayodhya kanda, 102nd Sarga says that they then performed Tarpanam, Pindadanam etc. Sri Rama said to Lakshmana:

आनयेङ्गुदिपिण्याकं चीरमाहर चोत्तरम् ।
जलक्रियार्थं तातस्य गमिष्यामि महात्मनः ॥ (102-21)

सीता पुरस्ताद् ब्रजतु त्वमेनाभितो ब्रज ।
अहं पश्चाद्गमिष्यामि गतिर्ह्येषा सुदारुणा ॥ (102-22)

सिषिचुस्तूदकं राज्ञे तत एतद्भवत्विति ॥ (102-26)

प्रगृह्य च महीपालो जलपूरितमञ्जलिम् ।
दिशं याम्याभिमुखो रुदन्वचनमब्रवीत् ॥ (102-27)

“I am going to the Mandakini river for performing Tarpanam to the high-souled father. Bring the upper dress of bark and bring also oil-cake of Ingudi. Let Sita go in front; you follow her; I shall come at the end. This is the order during Aparā Kriya.” After the three took bath in Mandakini, they performed Tarpanam facing south, saying “May this Tarpanam reach Emperor Dasaratha.”

Sri Rama, the king, raising his joined palms full of water and looking towards south and weeping, said:

एतत्ते राजशार्दूल विमलं तोयमक्षयम्
पितृलोकगतस्याद्य महत्तमुपतिष्ठतु ॥ (102-28)

ततो मन्दाकिनीतीरात्प्रत्युत्तीर्य स राघवः ।
पितुश्चकार तेजस्वी निवापं भ्रातृभिः सह ॥ (102-29)

ऐङ्गुदं बदरीमिश्रं पिण्याकं दर्भसंस्तरे ।
न्यस्य रामः सुदुःखार्तो रुदन्वचनमब्रवीत् ॥ (102-30)

इदं भुङ्क्व महाराज प्रीतो यदशना वयम् ।
यदन्नं पुरुषोऽश्नाति तदन्नास्तस्य देवताः ॥ (102-31)

“O best among kings, may this pure water be inexhaustible for use by you, who are in Pitṛloka. The radiant Sri Rama came out of the river to the bank and, accompanied by brothers, offered Pindas to his father. Sri Rama made an offering of oil-cake mixed with jujube fruit on darbha bed and said with grief: O Emperor, Whatever a man eats, the same is offered to Devatas, who accept it. We are offering you the oil-cake of Inguna, which we eat; please accept it happily.” Thus Sri

Rama, the very incarnation of Dharma, performed Antyeshti karma for his father Dasaratha as laid down in Sastras.

In Yuddhakandam in Srimad Ramayanam, after killing of Ravana, Sri Rama instructs Vibhishana to perform Antya karmas for Ravana.

मरणान्तानि वैराणि निर्वृत्तं नः प्रयोजनम् ।
क्रियतामस्य संस्कारो ममाप्येष यथा तव ॥

“Enmity is only upto death; our action is completed. This Ravana is same for me as for you; let his Antyeshti be done.”

Similarly in Aranya kandam, Sri Rama grants Moksha to Jatayu and himself performs Antya samskaras for Jatayu. He says:

नाथं पतगलोकस्य चितामारोपयाम्यहम् ।
इमं धक्ष्यमि सौमित्रे हतं रौद्रेण रक्षसा ॥
यत्तत् प्रेतस्य मर्त्यस्य कथयन्ति द्विजातयः ।
तत् स्वर्गगमनं तस्य पित्र्यं रामो जजाप ह ॥
शास्त्रदृष्टेन विधिना जलं गृध्राय राघवौ ।
स्नात्वा तौ गृध्रराजाय उदकं चक्रतुस्तदा ॥

“Lakshmana, I shall place this bird, killed by the cruel Rakshasa Ravana, on funeral pyre myself and cremate him.”

“Sri Rama chanted the mantras, chanted by brahmanas during Pitru karmas for human bodies, mantras which would reach the jiva to Svarga.”

“The two Raghavas, Rama and Lakshmana, took bath in river Godavari and offered Tarpanam to the eagle king Jatayu as prescribed in Sastras.”

स गृध्रराजः कृतवान् यशस्करं सुदुष्करं कर्म रणे निपातितः ।
महर्षिकल्पेन च संस्कृतस्तदा जगाम पुण्यां गतिमात्मनः शुभाम् ॥

“Jatayu, who had fallen in the fight after performing an illustrious and very difficult act, attained to the lofty and meritorious state, after Uttarakriyas were performed by Sri Rama and Lakshmana in accordance with Kalpasutras of Maharishis (the sixth Vedanga).”

Antyeshti is in practice for ages. By worshipping Pitrus as said in Sastras, we attain good health, long life, progeny, plenty and prosperity, strength, power, all types of wealth, high status in this world and the next etc. Our ancestors have enjoyed all this directly. Meanings of only some of the

mantras of Antyeshti karma used for giving Ahuti to Agni Bhagavan have been given here. This will enlighten people on the importance of the karmas and interest in performing them. The importance can be noted from the Dharma Sastra text, Smritimuktaphalam in Sraaddha kandam.

Sri Vriddha Manu and Yagnavalkya have said:

आहिताग्निर्यथान्यायं दग्धव्यस्त्रिभिरग्निभिः ।
अनाहिताग्निरेकेन लौकिकेनेतरे जनाः इतिः ॥

Here the usage of the type of Agni is defined. “The cremation of Aahitagnis (Nityagnihotris) should be done with three Agnis as said in Sastras. Anaahitagnis, i.e. those who have not been performing Agnihotram should be cremated in Aupasanagni. The others should be cremated in Loukikagni.”

Sri Vriddha Vasishtha has classified Agni in the following categories:

1. Uttapanagni उत्तपनाग्नि

दर्भष्वग्निं समारोप्य पुनर्दर्भेषु संस्थितः ।
पुनर्दर्भं तृतीयेषु वह्निरुत्तपनः स्मृतः ॥

“Take three fistfuls of Darbhas. Introduce one in Agni. Introduce the second cluster in the Agni of the first. Show the third cluster in the Agni of the second. The Agni from this third cluster is called Uthapanagni.” In the case of male, whose wife is no more, and female, whose husband has expired, they should be cremated with this Uthapanagni.

2. Tushagni तुषाग्नि

कपालमग्नौ निक्षिप्य तप्ते चैव तुषं क्षिपेत् ।
करीषं वा समुद्भूतस्तुषे तु तुषपावकः ॥

“Put some husk of grain in a heated clay vessel (kapala) and generate Agni in the husk. This Agni is called Tushagni.” This is to be used in cremation of unmarried girl, and boy for whom upanayanam has not been done.

3. Kapalagni कपालाग्नि

यावत् तप्तकपालेन केवलेनाग्निसंभवः ।

तावत् कपालसंभूतः पावकः परिकीर्तितः ॥

“After heating clay vessel (kapala) well, put some cow-dung cake pieces in it and generate Agni. It is called Kapalagni.” Cremation of brahmachari is to be done with this Agni.

Bodhayana says: “Aahitagni should be cremated along with his yagna vessels in his Agnis; Grihastha in Aupasanagni; brahmachari in Kapalagni; others in Uthapanagni.”

आहिताग्निमग्निभिर्दहति यज्ञपात्रैश्च गृहस्थमौपासनाग्निना ।

ब्रह्मचारिणं कपालाग्निना अन्यान् उत्तपाग्निना ॥

Sastras declare that one who has deserted Agni should do ‘Vichinna Agni Sandhanam’ while starting again. Maharishi Vishnu says:

मृतायामपि भार्यायां वैदिकाग्निं न तु त्यजेत् ।

उपाधिनाऽपि तत् कर्म यावज्जीवं समाचरेत् ॥

“Vaidikagni should not be abandoned even if wife expires. The Agni karma should be performed throughout one’s life with Prakriti at least.” (Elders say that the conduct of the virtuous and practice prevalent in a particular place should be followed.)

Meanings of some of the Veda mantras chanted while giving Ahuti (offering) of Purusha (dead body) to Agni are given below for the purpose of generating interest in Agni Upasana.

1. May this Havis of Purushahuti be to Agni Bhagavan, who fulfils the karmas performed earlier and being performed now.
2. O Agni, go on a good path avoiding the two dogs of Yama, as they are obstacles in the path of the jiva. They keep watch over the dog called ‘Sarameya’. Give this body to them.

During Asthi Sanchayanam (collection of bones)

3. O Corpse, the Agni which we created by churning (sticks) during Pasubandham (yaga) and which we used for preparing you, we put off with milk and water.
4. O Agni, now that you have cremated the dead body, you may please return.
5. O Agni, the body, which was offered on the pyre as Ahuti with mantras, is moving about with the water and Pindam offered with chant of ‘Svadha’. Please send that jiva to Pitru-loka. O Agni, may that jiva unite with a body and enjoy the rest of the pleasures with long life.

Prayer to Agni in Tenth day Homas

6. O Agni, man did not commit any cruel act for your satisfaction. O Agni, please burn so as to destroy our sins. Please purify our wealth. Burn so as to remove sins again. May this good Ahuti be for Mrityu Deva for that purpose.
7. O Agni, you are associated with barley (yava). Please remove our sins and enemies.
8. O Agni, may we, who praise you specially, beget good progeny.
9. O Agni, for our welfare, you cross miseries and reach us beyond suffering. Just as we are led to cross the ocean here in a boat, please lead us across the ocean of sorrow. Shine so as to remove our sins.

18. Gnanagni – Splendour of Great persons who perform Gnanayagna

The ancient text named **Sarva Vedanta Sara Sangraham** says:

समाराधितचिद्वह्निं बिम्बानन्दामृताभिधम् ।

सोमं पीत्वात्मयाजी सन्ब्राह्मणो मोक्षवान्भवेत् ॥

“Brahmana, who possesses Agni of Consciousness, which he has worshipped well, and who performs yagna in Atma, drinks Soma juice called Bliss of (presence) of Atma in himself and attains Moksha.”

ईश्वरादि-विराडान्तं विस्तारप्रस्तरं बुधः ।

आत्माग्रौ जुहुयादात्मविद्या पूर्णाहुतिश्चरेत् ॥

“The wise Atma Dikshita should perform Ahuti of the complete creation from Iswara to Virat Purusha, and Purnahuti of Atmavidya.”

ब्राह्मणस्तपसा दीप्तो महान्तं यत्नमास्थितः ।

इष्ट्वेहज्ञानयज्ञेन रमते मुक्तिरम्बया ॥

“The Atmayaji brahmana, shining with the tapas of Self-enquiry, and performing Gnanayagna with great efforts, enjoys the Bliss with the Apsara Rambha called Mukti.”

शरीरयज्ञशालान्तां प्रदहेद् ज्ञानवह्निना ।

प्रारब्धदीनविप्राय दद्याद्वादीरधीर्मुनिः ॥

“The courageous Atmayaji should burn the yagnasala of body with Gnanagni, or give it away to the poor brahmana called Prarabdha.”

In **Srimad Bhagavadgita**, Bhagavan Krishna teaches Arjuna about the greatness of Atmagnani. There he refers to the Gnana of Atmagnanis, who are Jivanmuktas, as Gnanagni. Refer to chapter 4, Gnanakarma Sanyasayoga, where he uses the terms Gnanayagna and Gnanagni.

यस्य सर्वे समारम्भाः कामसङ्कल्पवर्जिताः ।

ज्ञानाग्निदग्धकर्माणं तमाहुः पण्डितं बुधाः ॥

19

“The wise call him a sage, whose undertakings are all devoid of desires and purposes, and whose actions have been burnt in Gnanagni.”

गतसङ्गस्य मुक्तस्य ज्ञानावस्थितचेतसः ।

यज्ञायाचरतःकर्म समग्रं प्रविलीयते ॥

23

“In case of one, who is devoid of attachment, who is liberated, whose mind is established in Gnana, and who performs his duty as yagna, all his actions are dissolved.”

ब्रह्मार्पणम् ब्रह्महवि-ब्रह्माग्रौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् ।

ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ॥

24

“Brahman is the act of oblation; Brahman is the Havis of ghee etc.; by Brahman is the Havis poured into the Agni of Brahman. Brahman shall be verily reached by him who always sees Brahman in all actions.”

दैवमेवापरे यज्ञं योगिनः पर्युपासते ।

ब्रह्माग्नावपरे यज्ञं यज्ञेनैवोपजुह्वति ॥ 25

श्रोत्रादीनीन्द्रियाण्यन्ये संयमाग्निषु जुह्वति ।

शब्ददीन्विषयानन्य इन्द्रियाग्निषु जुह्वति ॥ 26

सर्वाणीन्द्रियकर्माणि प्राणकर्माणि चपरे ।

आत्मसंयमयोगाग्नौ जुह्वति ज्ञानदीपिते ॥ 27

“Some yogis perform yagas to Devas. Some others offer Homam of Atma by Atma in the Agni of Brahman.”

“Some offer hearing and other senses as Homam in the Agni of restraint. Some others perform Homam of sound and other objects of sense in the Agni of senses.”

“Others offer Homam of all activities of senses and vital breath energy in the Agni of yoga of sublimation of mind in Atma, the Agni shining with brilliance of Gnana.”

द्रव्ययज्ञास्तपोयज्ञा योगयज्ञास्तथा परे ।

स्वाध्याय ज्ञानयज्ञाश्च यतयः संशितव्रताः ॥ 28

“Others offer wealth, austerity and yoga as Havis, while the ascetics of self-restraint and firm vows offer study of scriptures and Gnana as Havis.”

अपाने जुह्वति प्राणं प्राणेऽपानं तथापरे ।

प्राणापानगती रुद्ध्वा प्राणायामपरायणाः ॥ 29

अपरे नियताहाराः प्राणान्प्राणेषु जुह्वति ।

सर्वेऽप्येते यज्ञविदो यज्ञक्षपितकल्मषाः ॥ 30

“Others offer as Havis the outgoing breath in the incoming, and the incoming breath in the outgoing, restraining the courses of the outgoing and incoming breaths, solely absorbed in the restraint of breath.”

“Others, with well-regulated diet, offer vital airs in the Vital Air. All these are knowers of yagna, whose sins are destroyed by yagna.”

People have to perform different types of yagas depending on their innate attitude. Performing yaga is the only appropriate means of release from the sin of shackles of samsara.

यज्ञशिष्टामृतभुजो यान्ति ब्रह्मसनातनम् ।

नायं लोकोऽस्त्ययज्ञस्य कुतोऽन्यः कुरुसत्तम ॥ 31

एवं बहुविधा यज्ञा वितता ब्रह्मणो मुखे ।

कर्मजान्विद्धि तान्सर्वानिवं ज्ञात्वा विमोक्ष्यसे ॥

32

“O best of Kurus, Arjuna, those who partake of the remnants of yagna as Amrita attain to the eternal Brahman. For those who do not perform yagna, even this world is not available (for enjoyment), how then the other world?”

“Thus many types of yagnas are described in Veda. Knowing them all as born of karma, you shall be liberated.”

All naturally occurring karmas can be transformed into yagna. One who does so has realised the true principle of Veda. Though karma tends to bind man, the same karma, by being converted into yaga (performing karma without desire for fruit and dedicating it to Bhagavan), will bestow Moksha.

श्रेयान्द्रव्यमयाद्यज्ञाज्ज्ञानयज्ञः परंतप ।

सर्वं कर्माखिलं पार्थ ज्ञाने परिसमाप्यते ॥

33

यज्ञदानतपः कर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥

(18-5)

शमो दमस्तपः शौचं क्षान्तिरार्जवमेव च ।

ज्ञानं विज्ञानमास्तिक्यं ब्रह्मकर्म स्वभावजम् ॥

(18-42)

“Gnana-yagna is superior to yagna where materials are offered as Havis. Partha, all karmas in their entirety culminate in Gnana.”

“Yagna, charity and austerity should not be abandoned, but should be performed. Yagna, charity and austerity are the purifiers of the wise.”

“Control of mind, control of sense organs, austerity, purity, forgiveness, straightforwardness, knowledge of Sastras, Self-experience of Gnana and faith in Bhagavan are the actions of brahmanas, born of their innate nature.”

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।

स्वकर्मनिरतः सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु ॥

(18-45)

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।

स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥

(18-46)

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मा विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।

स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥

(18-47)

“Devoted, each to his own karmas, man attains perfection. How, engaged in his own duty, he attains perfection, listen, Arjuna.”

“From whom is the evolution of all beings, by whom all this is pervaded, worshipping him with one’s own karma, man attains perfection.”

“Better is one’s own duty though devoid of merits, than the duty of another well-performed. He, who does the duty ordained by his own nature, incurs no sin.”

बुद्ध्या विशुद्धया युक्तो धृत्यात्मानं नियम्य च । (18-51)

The purified intellect is devoid of doubts and confusion. Pure intellect results only from performance of karmas ordained by Bhagavan with dedication to Bhagavan and no desire for fruits; this is Bhagavan’s teaching.

In Mahabharata in Santi Parva in the chapter on Moksha dharma, **Sri Vishnu Divya Anusmriti Stotram** has been told. When Maharishi Satanika asks Maharishi Sounaka regarding the qualities of thinking of Bhagavan, Sri Sounaka recalled Sri Bhishma Pitamaha’s teaching to Emperor Yudhishtira of Anusmriti Stotram taught by Sri Mahavishnu to Maharishi Narada. In that stotram Bhagavan is praised:

अनुस्मृति स्तोत्र रत्नम्

योगावास नमस्तुभ्यं सर्वावास वरप्रद ।

यज्ञगर्भं हिरण्याङ्ग पञ्चयज्ञ नमोस्तु ते ॥ 30

Here Bhagavan is praised as Yagnagarbha (one who created yagnas) and Panchayagna (Lord of five yagnas) associating him with Agni Upasana through yagnas.

एकान्तिनो हि निर्द्वन्द्वा निराशीः कर्मकारिणः ।

ज्ञानाग्निदग्धकर्माणस्त्वां विशन्ति विनिश्चिताः ॥ 47

“Those, who perform karmas while they are alone, beyond the pairs of opposites, free from expectations, and whose karmas are burnt in the fire of Gnana, enter into you with determination.”

Here we find the term ‘Gnanagni’ used in Srimad Bhagavadgita by Sri Krishna in chapter 4 in verse 19. Sri Mahavishnu then teaches Maharishi Narada:

अभ्यर्चयन् पितृन् देवान् पठन् जुह्वन् बलिं ददत् ।

ज्वलन्नग्निं स्मरेद्यो मां स याति परमां गतिम् ॥ 76

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ।

यज्ञं दानं तपस्तस्मात्कुर्यादाशीर्विवर्जितः ॥ 77

नम इत्येव यो ब्रूयान्मद्भक्तः श्रद्धयान्वितः । 78

तस्याक्षयो भवेल्लोकः श्वपाकस्यापि नारद ।

किं पुनर्यो यजन्ते मां साधका विधिपूर्वकम् ॥ 79

Bhagavan asserts that those, who perform the five great yagnas as per rules laid down by Maharishis in the Prayogas of their Sutras, merge themselves in 'Gnanagni' and attain the supreme state of Jivanmukti. **All karmas right from birth upto death are Agni Upasana only.**

19. Some Special Notes on Agni Upasana

Various Names of Agni

Agni has the duty to convey the Homas we perform in it as per Vedic principles, to the respective Devas. Srutis therefore call Agni by the name of **Havyavahana**. The Havis we offer to Pitru Devatas is called Kavya. As Agni conveys the Sraadha and Pitru related Havis in subtle form to Pitrus, he is called **Kavyavahana**.

If a word denotes a thing, it will certainly refer to the special feature of that thing. As Agni carries forward, he is called **Agni**. As he conveys Havirbhaga to Devas, he is **Vahni**. As he burns all, he is **Dahana**. As he is not satisfied with any amount of offering and devours everything, he is **Anala** (Alam means enough; Anala means not enough). Saradatilakam, the Mantrasastra text assigns eight types of names to Agni (21-47):

जातवेदाः सप्तजिह्वो हव्यवाहनसंज्ञकः ।
अश्वोदरजसंज्ञोऽन्यः पुनर्वैश्वानराह्वयः ।
कौमारतेजाः स्याद्विश्वमुखो देवमुखः स्मृतः ॥

The eight names are: 1.Jatavedas 2.Saptajihva 3.Havyavahana 4.Asvodaraja 5.Vaisvanara 6.Koumarateja 7.Visvamukha 8.Devamukha. He is also called Svahapathi.

The Agnis worshipped by Grihasthas daily are: 1.Dakshinagni 2.Garhapatyagni 3.Ahavaniyagni 4.Sabyam 5.Avasatyam 6.Vaisvanaragni 7.Vaisvadevagni 8.Aupasanagni.

Saradatilakam gives yet another 10-12 names of Agni:

ते जातवेदसः सर्वे कल्माषः कुसुमस्तथा ।
दहनः शोषणश्चैव तपनश्च महाबलाः ॥
पिठरः पतगः स्वर्णस्त्वगाधो भ्राज एव च ॥

1.Jatavedas 2.Kalmasha 3.Kusuma 4.Dahana 5.Soshana 6.Tapana 7.Mahabala 8.Pithara 9.Pataga 10.Svarna 11.Agadha 12.Bhraja.

जृम्भको दीपकश्चैव विभ्रमभ्रमशोभनाः ।
आवस्थ्याहवनीयौ च दक्षिणाग्निस्तथैव च ॥
अन्वाहार्यो गार्हपत्य इत्येव दश वह्नयः ।

1.Jrumbhaka 2.Dipaka 3.Vibhrama 4.Bhrama 5.Sobhana 6.Aavasthya 7.Aahavaniya 8.Dakshinagni 9.Anvaharya 10.Garhapatya.

Srimad Bhagavatham, 5th Skandha tells us that the names of the ten sons of Emperor Priyavrata were all Agni's names:

आग्निध्रेध्मजित्त्वयज्ञबाहुमहावीर हिरण्यरेतोघृतपृष्ठ ।

सवनमेधातिथिवीतिहोत्रकवय इति सर्व एवाग्निनामानः ॥

1.Aagnidhra 2.Idhmajihva 3.Yagnabahu 4.Mahavira 5.Hiranyareta 6.Ghritaprishtha 7.Savana
8.Medhaatithi 9.Vitihotra 10.Kavaya.

In Sri Devi Mahatmyam Sri Devi is praised as being of the form of Svaha, Svadha and Vashatkara:

त्वं स्वाहा त्वं स्वधा त्वं हि वषट्कारस्वरात्मिका ।

Notes on Agni Upasana

In the book on abridged Dharma Sastra, in Varnasrama Dharma kandam, the following notes on Agni Upasana have been given:

1. If one's father and elder brother are not performing Agnihotram, he has no right to perform the same. If elder brother permits, he can do it. But if father is not performing, even if he permits, he cannot do it.
2. Aupasanam should be done in the morning and evening after performing Sandhyavandanam. Yajamana Grihastha should worship Agni with Yava (barley) or rice.
3. If Yajamana Grihastha is unable to perform, his son, brother, Guru, nephew, son-in-law or disciple may do Agni Upasana on his behalf.
4. Wife can do Agni Upasana without mantra; only kriyas to be done by her.
5. Agni should not be merged with another Agni.
6. Agni should not be put out with water or by blowing air with mouth. Agni can be made to blaze with blowpipe.
7. Aupasanam done after Sunrise is called Udita Homam; if it is done before Sunrise it is Anuditha Homam. It should be performed as per the Sutra of the Sakha to which the karta belongs.
8. A. Rites to be performed in Aupasanagni:
 - 1.Seemantham 2.Punarudvaham 3.Pumsavanam 4.Nityahomam 5.Vaisvadevam
 - 6.Masika Sraadham 7. Ashtaka 8.Parvana Sraadham 9.Isanabali 10.Sarpabali
 - 11.Kushmandahomam
- B. Rites to be performed in Loukika Agni:
 - 1.Choulam 2.Jatakarma 3.Godanam 4.Snanam 5.Upanayanam 6.Vratas 7.Lajahomam

8.Samitkaryam.

9. Feet should not be dried in Agni.

10. Agni should not be kept on earth.

11. One should not cross Agni.

12. Homa should not be performed in Agni which has smoke.

13. Agni should not be made to blaze using hand, face, hand fan, winnowing basket, leaf and wooden stick.

14. Homa should be done in Agni with good flames caused by many wood pieces, and no smoke.

15. After doing Homa in Agni with smoke, it should not be made to blaze.

16. While doing Homa in Agni, the material offered should be touched with left hand.

17. Cow's ghee is good for Homa; if unavailable, buffalo's ghee may be used.

Samiths for Homam

1.Palasa (Purasu) 2.Khadira (Karungali) 3.Asvatha (Arasu) 4.Sami (Vanni) 5.Udumbara (Athi)
6.Apamarga (Nayuruvi) 7.Arka (Erukku) 8.Aruhu 9.Darbha

Prayer to be chanted while gathering Samith:

समिधःपावनाः पूज्याः चर्मयुक्ताः परात्पराः ।
युष्मान् हरामि होमार्थं अस्मान् रक्षत सर्वदा ॥

Samith should be with skin, of proper shape, of same dimensions, dried from green state, similar to one another, of the girth of index finger, unbroken, not with two branches, not tainted by worms etc., with green leaves, and strong.

For Sroutha karma, Samith should be 10 to 12 inches long, twice that for Idhmam and thrice that for Paridhi. For Smartha karma, Idhmam should be 5 inches and Paridhi should be 10 inches long.

The limbs of Agni are said to be:

Where Agni is thick: Ear; Smoke: Nose; Small flame: Eye;

With heavy ash: Head; With flame: Tongue.

Homa performed in flame of blue colour in Agni with light ashes is equal to Homa for Brahman.

Pleasure of Devas

The divine face of Agni Bhagavan is that part of Agni where the flames have subdued to a minor presence; Homam done there pleases Devas.

Where Agni blazes with flames on all four sides, Agni is of the form of Visvedevas; Visvedevas are pleased with Homa there.

Where Agni shines with good red flames, he is of the form of Indra; Indra is pleased with Homa there.

Where the wood is red with fire, Homa in that place pleases Prajapathi.

By performing Homa in specified forms of Agni, Vasus, Rudras, Adityas, Visvedevas, Indra, Prajapathi and Bhagavan are all satisfied.

Agni's Seven Tongues

सुवर्णा अनकारक्ता कृष्णाश्चैव तु सुप्रभा ।
अतिरक्ता बहुरूपा च सप्तजिह्वाः प्रकीर्तिताः ॥

Name of Agni	Place of Ahuti	Karmas
1. Suvarna	West	Marriage
2. Anaka	Centre	Yagas
3. Rakta	North	Upanayanam
4. Krishna	South	Pitrukaryas
5. Suprabha	East	Kamya Karmas
6. Atirakta	Southeast (Agni corner)	Santhi karmas
7. Bahurupa	Northeast (Isana corner)	Karmas related to Enemy

Mundakopnishad gives the following names for the seven tongues of Agni:

काली कराली च मनोजवा च सुलोहिता या च सुधूम्रवर्णा ॥
स्पुलिङ्गिनी विश्वरुची च देवी लेलायमाना इति सप्तजिह्वाः ॥

1.Kali Karali 2.Manojava sulohita 3.Sudhumravarna 4.Sphulingini
5.Visvaruchi 6.Devi 7.Lelayamana.

Agni's names are listed thus in Namalinganusasanam, also called Amara Kosam:

अग्निर्वैश्वानरो वह्निर्वीतिहोत्रो धनञ्जयः ।	105
कृपीटयोनिर्ज्वलनो जातवेदास्तनूनपात् ॥	106
बर्हिः शुष्मा कृष्णवर्त्मा शोचिश्केश उषर्बुधः ।	107
आश्रयाशो बृहद्भानुः कृशानुः पावकोऽनलः ॥	108
रोहिताश्वो वायुसखः शिखावानाशुशुक्षणिः ।	109

हिरण्यरेता हुतभुग्दहनो हव्यवाहनः ॥	110
सप्तार्चिर्दमुनाः शुक्रश्चित्रभानुर्विभावसुः ।	111
शुचिरप्पित्तमौर्वस्तु वाडवो वडवानलः ।	112
वह्नेर्द्वयोर्जालकीलावर्चिहेतिः शिखा स्त्रियाम् ॥	113
त्रिषु स्फुलिङ्गोऽग्निकणः संतापः संज्वरः समौ ॥	114

1. Agni – Having tongues of fire growing upwards or in bent form.
2. Vaisvanara – Son of Muni Visvanara.
3. Vahni – Carries Ahutis offered in Yagas for Devas.
4. Vitihotra – Acceptor of Ahutis of various foods.
5. Dhananjaya – Wins wealth and gives to worshippers.
6. Krupitayoni – Place of origin of water.
7. Jvalana – Agni having flames.
8. Jatavedas – Grants sense of feeling.
9. Tanunapat – Does not protect wood, which forms his body.
10. Barhi – Grows with Darbhas.
11. Sushma – Dries up.
12. Krishnavartma – Leaves a black trail wherever he goes.
13. Sochishkesa – Has flames as hair on head.
14. Usharbudha – Appears in Yaga altars in morning when Dikshitas and worshippers offer Ahutis.
15. Aasrayaasa – Consumes his own foundation.
16. Brihadbhanu – Has large rays.
17. Krisanu – Grows from a small spark, or Agni who thins down by burning.
18. Pavaka – Purifier.
19. Anala – Never says 'enough'; Agni who always needs more and more Ahutis.
20. Rohitasva – Agni whose vehicle is red horse; or deer.
21. Vayusakha – Agni whose friend is Vayu.
22. Sikhavan – Has tuft of hair of flames of fire.
23. Aasusukshani – Dries up fast.
24. Hiranyareta – Melts gold and gives out as molten liquid.
25. Hutabhuk – Consumer of Ahutis.

26. Dahana – Burns everything.
27. Havyavahana – Receives Ahutis and conveys them to Devas.
28. Saptarchi – Has seven types of rays: 1.black/ ash coloured (in peaceful time) 2.hot (not soft)
3.spreads faster than mind 4.has also good red colour 5.of colour of smoke
6.flies as sparks 7.spreads everywhere.
29. Damuna – Depresses all (those who take refuge in him).
30. Sukra – Gives sorrow; or Shines.
31. Chitrabhanu – Has rays of different colours.
32. Vibhavasu – Has wealth of shine.
33. Suchi – Pure; or makes people sad.
34. Appittam – Drier of water.

Further names of Agni:

35. Ourva – Agni produced by Mahamuni Urva in the middle of the sea. As the sea water increases, Agni dries up correspondingly more.
36. Badava
37. Badavanala – Badava is mare (female horse). Agni is in her face. At Devas' prayer Siva calmed and made his anger into a mare and drowned it in the sea and asked her to have sea as food; so says Kalika Purana.
38. Jvala – the flame of fire.
39. Kila – stops little moths from approaching him.
40. Archi – Fit to be worshipped.
41. Hethi – Touches those who approach him.
42. Sikha – Tuft of Agni.
43. Sphulinga – Spark f fire.
44. Agnikana – Particle of fire.
45. Santapa – Heats up nearby materials.
46. Sanjvara – Troubles the body much.
47. Ulka – Fire-torch.

By merely knowing the various names of Agni, mind gets a kind of Samskara of peace.

In Chandogya Upanishad, chapter 2, kandam 12, mantra 2 (rik):

न प्रत्यङ्ङाग्निमाचामेन्न निष्ठीवेतत् व्रतम् ॥

Sri Sankaracharya's commentary for this is:

न प्रत्यङ्ङग्रेरभिमुखो नाचामेन्न भक्षयेत्किञ्चिन्न ।

निष्ठिवेच्च क्षेष्मनिरसनं च न कुर्यात् तद् व्रतम् ॥ (2-12-2)

Chandogya Upanishad mentions certain rules to be observed in Agni upasana: doing achamanam, eating, blowing the nose, spitting phlegm etc. in front of Agni Bhagavan should not be done.

Agni Bhagavan lives in our tongue. That is why there is driness of mouth when we talk for long. When we drink water, also born of Agni, the tongue returns to normalcy. This is our everyday experience. Sometimes people talk without any control over words in times of anger and come to grief. Tiruvalluvar says that the wound caused by fire will be cured, but the mark of wound left by words from tongue will never be cured.

In Srimad Bhagavatham, skandha 1, chapter 18, Emperor Parikshit reached the asram of Maharishi Samika to quench his thirst. The Maharishi was in deep meditation of Bhagavan at that time. Parikshit thought that the Maharishi disregarded him and threw a dead snake around his neck and returned to his palace. The Maharishi's son Sringi, on coming to know of this, cursed the offender by his power of brahmacharya tapas. His words, uttered after touching the water of river Kausiki, were let out like Vajrayudha.

कौशिक्याय उपस्पृश्य वाग्वज्रं विससर्ज ह ॥ (1.18.36)

Great people talk less and remain in silence.

In the commentary of Kalpavalli of Prayoga Chintamani, three Mudras are mentioned as Homa mudras. They are Mrigi, Hamsi and Sookari. Mrigi mudra is used in Homa of ghee or til; Hamsi in Homa of Samit; Sookari (or Varahi) mudra in Homa of Charu.

When all fingers are joined together, it is Sookari mudra; joining all fingers except the small finger is Hamsi; joining the three fingers other than the small and index fingers is Mrigi mudra.

Some government servants about to retire are obliged to go for training in pursuit of the instructions of their superiors. They cannot avoid training simply because they are anyway about to retire in a few days; they have to undergo training compulsorily. Similarly we should obey the instructions of Veda Matha, who is compassionate and intent on our welfare, and perform svadharma rites properly. All should try to learn their respective Sutra Prayogas (procedures for rites). Importantly, Sandhyavandanam thrice a day, Samidadhanam if brahmacharis, and

Aupasanam and Vaisvadevam if grihasthas should be learnt and performed; Sri Acharyas are pleased with this. Many in Chennai even today perform these rituals without fail even while attending office. They collect materials for Homam religiously. Cowdung cakes etc. required by them are supplied as required by:

Nityagnihotri Vajapeyayaji Kalancheri Brahmasri Lakshmi Venkataramana Dikshitar,
Vedasastra Gurukulam, Soliappan Street, 4th Paditturai, Kumbakonam – 612001.
Tel: 0435-2424135, 2403999, 9842442413, 9443188245.

As instructed by Sri Kanchi Acharyas, he supplies materials and motivates many to perform Svadharma rites. Everyone should utilise this opportunity and fulfil the aim of the brahmana birth.

Jagadguru Sri Kanchi Acharya's Discourse

Shall we find out how our ancestors spent time? Sri Adi Sankaracharya says in his Durvasana Pratikaram:

प्रातर्वैदिक कर्मतस्तदनुसद्-वेदान्तसंचिन्तया
पश्चाद्-भारतमोक्षधर्म-मननात् वासिष्ठ-रामायणात् ।
सायं भागवतार्थ-दिव्यकथया रात्रौ निदिध्यासनात्
कालो गच्छति नः शरीरमरणं प्रारब्धकण्ठार्पितम् ॥

They perform Vedic karmas in the morning; study and listen to Sri Sankara Bhashyas of Prasthanas Traya Granthas with deep thoughts on Vedanta. (Prasthanas Traya Granthas are Ten Upanishads, Srimad Bhagavad Gita and Brahmasutras). They then read Moksha Dharma Parva in Mahabharatam and Yoga Vasistham (which contains essence of Vedanta and Upanishads taught by Maharishi Vasishtha to Sri Rama). They would read at least five sargas of each of these texts. They then perform rites of midday including Vaisvadeva and take food. After some rest, they take bath and perform Vedic rites in the evening. This is followed by giving or listening to discourses on Puranas like Srimad Bhagavatham containing Bhagavan's lilas and qualities. They thus organise their lives in a divine manner till the body caused by Prarabdha karma drops.

People should perform svadharma rites as far as possible while in service, and proper Grihya karmas after retirement instead of looking for another job, by handing over household responsibilities to the next generation. In this way their future generations will attain great benefit. Family members should all extend full cooperation in this.

20. 'Santhi Vilasam' by Sri Nilakantha Dikshitar (Yatiswara)

Let us look at some of the slokas from the book 'Sri Santhi Vilasam' by Advaita Vidyacharya, Kavi Sahridaya Brahmasri Nilakantha Dikshitar (Sri Nilakantha Yatiswara, Palamadai Adhishthanam, Tirunelveli), grandson of the younger brother of the famed Padavakya Pramana Paravara, Sarvatantra Svatanttra, Advaita Vidyacharya, Apta Vajapeyayaji Brahmasrimad Appayya Dikshitar. This book was written about 300 years ago. If we study all the slokas in that book, devotion to Bhagavan as well as interest in performing Svadharma rites will well up in us.

नानोपायैर्दिशि धनन्यर्जयित्वा व्ययित्वा
सम्यक् संपादित-मिदमहो स्थौल्यमेकं शरीरे ।

श्रुत्वा श्रुत्वा बहुजनमुखाद्-आयुषैतावताऽपि
प्रासं दर्शावधि-तिमिरवद्-गाढमज्ञानमेकम् ॥ 13

“Having earned wealth by many means from many directions and spent it also, what we have attained quite well is the stoutness of this body alone, o Bhagavan! Having heard frequently all these years from many people many matters of Sastras (like the greatness of Dharma and the transience of the body), what we have attained is the dense Agnana (ignorance) enveloping us like the darkness growing upto Amavasya.”

कृच्छ्राल्लब्धं धनमपि शतांशाधिकप्राप्ति लोभात्
पत्रे किञ्चिल्लिखित-मुपलभ्यैव सर्वं त्यजामः ।

शास्त्रैः सिद्धे बहुशतगुणाधिक्यलाभे परत्र
व्यर्थाशङ्काकलुषमनसो नोत्सृजामोऽर्थलेशम् ॥ 19

“Driven by the avarice of earning interest higher than one percent, we give away all the wealth earned with great effort in exchange of a piece of paper on which something is written. We do not give even a small amount of wealth for dharma for which Sastras promise benefit many hundreds of times in the next world, as we have minds tainted by fruitless suspicions. What foolishness!”

को नु व्यासः क इव स मनुः कोन्वसौ याज्ञवल्क्यो
यैरुद्घुष्टं हितमसकृदस्मासु पित्रेव पुत्रे ।

पश्याम-स्तान्निरुपाधि-कृपासागरा-ल्लोकवन्धून्
पश्यामोऽस्मा-न्निरवधितमः क्षमाधारान्ब्रह्मबन्धून् ॥ 24

“Who is Vyasa, Manu and this Yagnavalkya; by these unmotivated oceans of compassion and friends of the world, Sastra has been explained in many ways for our wellbeing, like a father would advise a son. But, look at us, who are unparalleled in lack of discrimination and conduct; we are the lowest brahmanas.”

सर्वानर्थप्रथमकरणे सर्वभावैर्जिहास्ये
देहे मोहो यदि परिणतः पोषणीयो मयेति ।

आस्तामेवं वपुरिदमिवागामि चास्माकमेवे-

त्येषाऽप्यास्तां मतिरिति परं धर्मशास्त्रेषु घोषः ॥ 25

“If you think in ignorance that this body, the cause of all troubles, and detestable in all respects, is indeed to be nourished, you should consider the bodies to be acquired in future also as yours and that it is necessary to nourish them too. Dharmasastras declare that in order to nourish the future bodies it is essential to perform acts of dharma right now.”

साध्या शंभोः मथमपि दयेत्यप्यसाध्योपदेशः

कोपं तस्य प्रथममपनुद्यैव साध्यः प्रसादः ।

कोपो वर्णाश्रम-नियमिताचार-निर्लङ्घनोत्थः

शान्तिं नेयः सकथमधुनाऽप्यव्यवस्थाप्रवृत्तैः ॥ 42

“It is futile to advise that Bhagavan’s grace should somehow be earned. We are totally unfit to receive his grace, as we have incurred his wrath by transgressing the dharmas of varna and asrama and committing evils. We can expect Bhagavan’s grace only after removing this deficiency. As we are bent upon transgressing even now the rules of varna and asrama, how can we expect to overcome his wrath?”

दिष्ट्या लब्धं द्विजवरकुले जन्म तत्रापि दिष्ट्या

धर्माधर्म-स्थिति-रवगतैव प्रसादाद्गुरुणाम् ।

जन्मन्यस्मिन्नपि यदि न मे संभवेदास्तिकत्वं

निस्तारः किं निरयभवनात् सर्वमोक्षेऽपि लभ्यः ॥ 47

“We have been fortunate to get the birth of brahmana. We have also been fortunate to know the distinction between dharma and adharma through the grace of Gurus. If we do not develop faith in the next world even in this fortunate circumstance, how can we be rescued from naraka even when all jivas are granted Moksha?”

नाहं याचे पदं-उडुपतेर्-नाधिकारं मघोनो
नापि ब्राह्मीं भुवनगुरुतां का कथाऽन्यप्रपञ्चे ।
अन्यस्यान्यः श्रियं-अभिलषन्नस्तु कस्तस्य लोको
मह्यं शम्भो दिशमसृणितं मामकानन्दमेव ॥

49

“I do not seek the positions of Chandra, Indra, Brahma and other leaders of the worlds, not to speak of other minor positions. Will one, who desires another’s position and wealth, attain good state? What I seek is my own true state of bliss. Sambhu, please grant me.”

स्वामिन् गौरीरमण शरणं नस्त्वमेव त्वमेव
“O Lord, Consort of Gowri, you alone, you alone are my refuge.”

21. Rigveda Agni Ashtottara Satanamavali

Rigveda Agni Ashtottara Satanamavali compiled by Gokarna Brahmasri Samba Dikshitar:

॥ अग्नेः अष्टोत्तर शतनामावलिः ॥

ओं अजाय नमः	
ओं अजराय नमः	१-५८-२
ओं अजिराय नमः	७-११-२
ओं अजुर्याय नमः	१-६७-२
ओं अतन्द्राय नमः	१-७२-७
ओं अग्रये नमः	१-१-२
ओं अद्भुतक्रतवे नमः	८-२३-८
ओं अंकूयते नमः	६-२५-२७
ओं अंगिरसे नमः	१-३१-१७
ओं अर्वते नमः	६-१२-६ १०
ओं सप्तहोतृभिरञ्जानाय नमः	३-१०-४
ओं आशृण्वते नमः	४-३-३
ओं आशुहेमाय नमः	२-३५-१
ओं अप्याय नमः	१-१४५-५
ओं आसते नमः	६-७-१
ओं असुराय नमः	४-२-५
ओं आहुताय नमः	२-८-२
ओं आदित्याय नमः	४-१-२
ओं आपये नमः	१-३१-१६
ओं आबाधाय नमः	८-२३-३ २०
ओं आकूतते नमः	
ओं आघृणीवसवे नमः	८-६०-२०
ओं इधानाय नमः	१-७९-५

ओं इद्धाय नमः	१-६६-९	
ओं इन्धानाय नमः	१-१४३-७	
ओं इषः सहस्रिणीर्दधते नमः	१-१८८-२	
ओं ईड्याय नमः	१-१-२	
ओं ईलेन्याय नमः	१-७९-५	
ओं ईशानाय नमः	७-१५-११	
ओं इषयते नमः	६-१-२	३०
ओं इळाय नमः	१-१३-४	
ओं ईळिताय नमः	१-१३९-७	
ओं उक्थ्याय नमः		
ओं उक्षते नमः		
ओं उक्षमाणाय नमः	२-२-४	
ओं उक्षान्नाय नमः	८-४३-११	
ओं दिवमुत्पतते नमः	१९-६५-२	
ओं ऊर्जःपुत्राय नमः	१-९६-३	
ओं ऊर्जसनाय नमः	६-४-४	
ओं ऊर्ध्वाय नमः	१०-७०-१ ४०	
ओं ऊर्जानपदे नमः	१-५८-८	
ओं उशते नमः	२-३६-४	
ओं पृथिविमुतद्यामृजूयमानाय नमः	१०-८८-१	
ओं ऋताय नमः	१-६५-३	
ओं ऋत्वियाय नमः	३-२९-१०	
ओं ऋतप्रवीताय नमः	१-७०-७	
ओं ऋतचिदे नमः	१-१४५-५	
ओं ऋतावते नमः	४-१-२	
ओं ऋन्धाय नमः	१०-११०-२	
ओं ऋग्मियाय नमः	८-२३-३	५०

ओं ऋषूणांपुत्राय नमः	ॡ-२ॡ-१	
ओं ऋषुकृते नमः	१-३१-१६	
ओं ऋतवृधे नमः	३-२-१	
ओं ऋतुपे नमः	३-२०-ॡ	
ओं ऋभवे नमः	३-ॡ-६	
ओं ऋषीणां पुत्राय नमः		
ओं ऋषभाय नमः		
ओं ऋभ्वने नमः	१०-२०-ॡ	
ओं ऋतुपतये नमः	१०-२-१	
ओं ऋषये नमः		६०
ओं ओषधीनांगर्भाय नमः	३-१-१३	
ओं एकाय नमः	१०-१-ॡ	
ओं चर्षणीसदामोजिष्ठाय नमः		
ओं ककुदे नमः	ॢ-ॡॡ-१६	
ओं ककुद्गते नमः	१०-ॢ-२	
ओं क्रतुविदे नमः	१०-२-ॡ	
ओं कृष्णयामाय नमः	६-६-१	
ओं कनिक्रदते नमः	१-१२ॢ-३	
ओं कण्वतमाय नमः	१०-११ॡ-ॡ	
ओं कण्वसखाय नमः	१०-११ॡ-ॡ	७०
ओं केवलाय नमः	१-१३-१०	
ओं कृष्णवर्तनये नमः	ॢ-२३-११	
ओं कपये नमः		
ओं कवये नमः	१-१२-६	
ओं कवितमाय नमः	३-१ॡ-ॡ	
ओं कविशस्ताय नमः		
ओं कविक्रतवे नमः	१-१-ॡ	

ओं कविप्रशस्ताय नमः	५-१-८	
ओं कृष्णाध्वने नमः	२-४-६	
ओं ऋव्यादाय नमः		८०
ओं ऋव्यवाहनाय नमः	१०-१६-११	
ओं क्षत्राणि धारयते नमः		
ओं क्षत्राय नमः		
ओं क्षपावते नमः	१-७०-५	
ओं क्षत्रभृते नमः		
ओं क्षयाय नमः	३-२-१३	
ओं गणश्रिये नमः	८-२३-४	
ओं चरथां गर्भाय नमः	१-७०-३	
ओं अपांगर्भाय नमः	१-७०-३	
ओं गातुवित्तमाय नमः	८-१०३-१	९०

ओं ब्रह्मीनामपसांगर्भाय नमः	१-९५-४	
ओं स्थातांगर्भाय नमः	१-७०-३	
ओं गुहाहिताय नमः	४-७-६	
ओं गृस्याय नमः	३-१-२	
ओं गृहपतये नमः		
ओं गध्रवे नमः	१-७०-११	
ओं गोपे नमः	२-९-६	
ओं घोराय नमः	४-६-६	
ओं चनोहिताय नमः	३-११-२	
ओं जातवेदसे नमः	१-४४-१	१००
ओं तपुर्मूर्धे नमः	७-३-१	
ओं दीर्घतन्तवे नमः	१०-६९-७	

ओं धृतरताय नमः	
ओं बृहद्भानवे नमः	१-२७-१२
ओं मधुवचसे नमः	४-६-५
ओं यज्ञाय नमः	७-१६-२
ओं रण्वाय नमः	१-६५-५
ओं वनस्पतये नमः	१-१३-११ १०८

22. Purnahuti

अग्नि उपासन ज्ञान यज्ञ पूर्णाहुति

Let us now pray to Agni Bhagavan for removal of deficiencies in this Gnana yagna called “Agni Upasana”. The following mantra should be chanted at the close of all Homas and Ahuti of ghee performed.

अनाज्ञातं यताज्ञातं यज्ञस्य क्रियते मिथु ।

अग्ने तदस्य कल्पय त्वँहि वेत्थ यथातथं स्वाहा - अग्नय इदं न मम ।

“Agni Deva, please make this Yaga complete by filling in any mistake that might have been committed by me knowingly or unknowingly in this Yaga (Homa – Agni Aradhana). You alone are aware of the truth as it prevails.”

Those who helped by donating the required paper, books etc. for this Gnana yagna called “Agni Upasana” (Tamil book):

1. Nityagnihotri Vajapeyayaji Kalancheri Brahmasri Lakshmi Venkataramana Dikshitar, Founder, Vedasastra Gurukulam, Soliappan Street, 4th Paditturai, Kumbakonam – 612001.
2. Brahmasri G.K.Sitarama Sastri, M.A., M.Phil., Founder, Vedavidya Gurukulam, Kalancheri, Thanjavur Dt.
3. Brahmasri M.Sabarigirisa Srourthigal, Kanchipuram
4. Kallur Sri Rudrapathi, Vastu Sastra Expert, Nanganallur, Chennai
5. His son Kallur R.Swaminathan, Auditor, Nanganallur, Chennai
6. Rigveda Bhushanam Brahmasri V.V.Sitarama Sastrigal, M.A., M.Phil., Chennai
7. Brahmasri E.Vasudeva Sastrigal, Delhi
8. Shashti Janakirama Iyer & Friends, I.I.T., Chennai
9. Saraswathi Stores, Ambur (through Puujyasri Ambur Swamigal)
10. Sri G.Sriram, S/o (Late) V.Ganesa Iyer, Kumbakonam
11. Avadi Sri Krishnan, Avadi Sri Krishnamurthy Aiyer and friends
12. Sri K.Chandrasekharan, Srinivasanallur, Tirunageswaram.

अग्नय इदं न मम

॥ ओं तत् सत् ब्रह्मार्पणमस्तु ॥