# CHAPTER 2

## LITERARY RESEARCH FROM TEXTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>AIM</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>OBJECTIVES</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>INCLUSION CRITERIA</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>EXCLUSION CRITERIA</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN THE FIELD</td>
<td>9 – 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>PRESENTATION OF VERSES FROM VARIOUS TEXTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</td>
<td>14 – 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.1</td>
<td>Vedas – Source of every knowledge branch in India</td>
<td>17 – 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.2</td>
<td>Bhagavad Gita – a principle text on Yajna</td>
<td>19 – 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.3</td>
<td>Source of Yajna - Taittiriya Aranyaka</td>
<td>35 – 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8.</td>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.0 LITERARY RESEARCH FROM TEXTS

2.1 AIM

To compile Vedic concept related to Yajna and its relation to other spiritual practices

2.2 OBJECTIVES

1. To understand how concept of Yajna is inherent in Indian culture

2. To present a concise study of Yajna from the traditional viewpoint.

2.3 METHODOLOGY

Sources

- Bhagavad Gita
- Āyurveda texts
- Yoga Texts- Patanjali Yoga Sutras etc.
- Taittiriya Aranyaka
- Tantra Texts

2.4 INCLUSION CRITERIA

The texts which present the core concepts of Yajna and its implications were taken for study.

The texts, having a close connection between Yajna and Yoga, were included in the study.

Those texts were taken to study which emphasize maintenance of eco-balance through rituals and ceremonies prescribed in ancient texts.
2.5 EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Those texts were excluded which were merely dealing with the procedure of Yajña, without advocating their philosophy and science behind it.

2.6 PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

Ayurveda (Knowledge of Life and Science of Living) postulates that manifestation of diseases is caused by the impressions from the previous births, environment, and our relation to people and the world etc. There are multifarious methods to identify and cure diseases in Ayurveda. Diseases can be managed through Japa (repeating a sacred name of a particular God), Homa (fire offering) and Surarchana (worship of God). A Mantra from Rig Veda comprehends the result of performing Yajña with a specific note: \textit{Yajāmahe saumanasāyadevān} || (Rg Veda || 1-173-2), meaning ‘We perform Yajña in favour of Devatas for sanctifying and bracing the Manas (an aspect of Mind)” along with other facets of inner tools (Antahkarana) in order to reach an intended spiritual goal.

The Sanskrit word ‘Yajña’ etymologically means, ‘to worship’, ‘to unite or connect’, ‘to do charity Dana unconditionally in right manner to the deserved’ (Bheemacharya, 2011). Pūrva Mīmāmsa, one of the schools of Indian philosophy, proclaims that – \textit{Devatoddeśena dvrayatyāgaḥ} meaning for the purpose of satisfying the deities, we give oblations to them. Yajña is the procedure of offerings to deities (Gyanashruti & Srividanda, 2006).

One of the texts explains Yajña as a combination of offerings to Devatas, recitation of Mantras from three Vedas with Rtviks (performers of Yajña), and Dāna (acknowledgements or respecting noble people)(Acharya, 1998).
Yajña is a systematic process in which herbs are offered along with recitation of Mantras to accelerate the process of harmonizing the creation and human life. Smoke generated in a Yajña has medicinal value because of specific herbs offered into Agni; hence inhalation of the smoke brings changes in physical construction in humans. This action purifies Mahāprāna. In addition to it, Yajña influences spiritual values and life style changes. Chanting of Mantras produces vibrations which makes human body resonate to Mantras’ mystic powers and responds in a profound manner to synchronize oneself with the cosmos. These vibrations reverberate and spread specific subtle energy waves in the surrounding atmosphere while the oblations are offered with specific chants. So Yajña has physical, psychological, spiritual and social values.

The entire process of Yajña, consisting of mantra chanting, lighting the sacrificial fire and offering Havis (sacred sticks) to the gods in the form of ghee, Vanaspati (materials from plants and trees) and other objects, purifies the environment significantly. In fact, Yajñas have been successfully performed even in modern times to induce rainfall, to check spread of epidemics and for various mundane and spiritual purposes.

With reference to Yajña, Śrī Krishna says in Bhagavad-Gita, “The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food which is offered first in sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin” [Bhagavad Gita 4.31]. “Serve the gods through Yajña and let the gods be gracious to us. Thus, each serving the other selflessly will attain the highest good.” [Bhagavad Gita 3.11]. “Through Yajña, deities went to heaven, enmity transforms to friendship, so Yajna is considered to be the greatest performance one can deliver as an action. Oblations given to Agni reach the Sun, which in
turn transforms that into clouds through vaporization resulting in rainfall and gives back in the form of food grains which is the base for human progeny.” [Manu Smriti3.76].
### TABLE 1: STUDIES CONCERNING YAJNA AND ALLIED SUBJECTS

#### SUMMARY OF PUBLISHED RESEARCH AND THESES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>TOPIC &amp; STUDIES</th>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>LIMITATIONS</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | Yajñas, Yagas, Agnihotra and Homas: Surendra Rawat 2008 | • Concept of Yajña.  
  • The Rationale of Yajña  
  • Human-Divine Relationships and cooperation  
  • Eco-friendly life  
  • Typology of Yajñas— | • Types are described Well  
  • Shruti Yajnas are not discussed in detail | Aptoryama Yajnas  
 There are differences between Agnihotra and Agnikarya |                                                                                     |
| 2  | Concept of Kundalini according to Yoga and Spiritual Lore  
  Sanjay Kumar, 2004 | • Kuṇḍalini and spiritual psychosis; negative effects of wrong practices of kuṇḍalini; process of Kundalini | • Good references are provided  
  • Tantra tradition is not clearly mentioned | Kundalini Yoga is not a separate branch of Yoga  
 Science should be understood well |                                                                                     |
| 3  | Study of Siddhis in Indian Classical Literature,  
  Gourav Chandratre, 2006 | • The path of Siddhis— a step in Tantra through Samyama. Samyama becomes tool for Tantra Sadhana,  
  • Trifold path for Sadhaka, Saadhya and Sadhana, Channelizing the power in the right path. | • Philosophy of Siddhis is dealt in detail; the extraordinary powers which are innately available.  
  • Science of Siddhis is not described | Mechanism of Siddhis is given in Patanjali Yoga Sutras |                                                                                     |
All above studies summarize that spiritual path have many practices such as, Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Agnihotra, Pranayama, Yajna and other similar performances.

Though Kundalini Yoga is not an independent stream of Yoga, it was practiced independently in medieval Indian history. It is developed as a part of Tantra, giving rise to secret practices in much closed circles, because the masters of Tantra thought that, Tantra in the hands of thugs may harm larger society, rather being used as an extraordinary tool for spiritual growth. Even today there involves very esoteric effects and subtle changes in energy body.

Yajna are divided into 5 in Taittiriya Aranyaka, 2\textsuperscript{nd} chapter. Five divisions are as follows; Deva Yajna, Pitr Yajna, Bhuta Yajna, Manushya Yajna and Brahma Yajna. These have to be followed daily. Ultimately, leading life synchronized with nature, allows one to realize how important the nature in ones’ life is. It also implies, what can be the negative effects if the life is not synchronized.

Patanjali Yoga Sutras bring out the concept of Siddhis as one grows spiritually. Many masters of Yoga stuck with Siddhis, indulging the lives by showing their powers to others which eventually pulls down ones personality. Siddhis are acquired from 5 different sources; 1) birth, 2) special herbs, 3) Mantra, 4) Tapas and 5) Samadhi. Patanjali Yoga Sutras support three paths among 5; Mantra, Tapas and Samadhi. A spiritual sadhaka does not accumulate any result of action, because he follows Karma which \textit{Ashukla} and \textit{Akrishna}. 
2.7 PRESENTATION OF VERSES FROM VARIOUS TEXTS AND A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“VijnanamYajnamTanute”, this statement found in Taittiriya Upanishat leads us to the real concepts of science and spirituality. This statement harmonizes both spirituality and science paving the way for probing and for proving. Science becomes spiritually rooted when it works with ecology for eco balance at Brahmanda and Pindanda levels. This very endeavor for spiritual science and scientific spirituality was the main research area for the Rishis of yore. This endeavor is called Yajna where the real performer is Atman and the divine spouse accompanying him is none other than Shraddha (spiritual faith).

For Brahmajnana, it is accepted that Sannyasa is the only immediate step, not the performance of any other action. Contextually different components of Yajna to a Sannyasi will be explained here,

तस्यावेव विदुषो यज्ञस्य अत्माय यज्ञमानोऽविज्ञानात्मकातः
श्रद्धा पत्नी शरीरमिध्ममुरो वेदिन्द्रोमानि .... तै आ १०-८१ ॥

Tasyaivam vidusoa yajñasyaatma yajamanaḥ śraddhā patnī śartramidhmamuro vedirlomāni .... १०-८१ ॥

“For him (Sannyasi who is already realized - Jivanmukta), it was told how Sannyasa is very important and the Yajna to be performed by him will be as following, a) Atma, the witness of all sensory actions is said to be Yajamana (owner of performance), b) Shraddha, spiritual aspiration is considered as wife, c) Shariram, physical body is fuel, d) Uras etc (different organs in the body), are the stage or ground for performing Yajna, e) Loma, hairs on the body are flame sparkles etc……”.
In this context the whole life journey becomes Yajna where every activity is systematically structured, technologically innovative and ecologically harmonious and balanced.

Modern physical sciences are accepted and regarded for their utility, practicability and for bringing comfort. It is no doubt that the human endeavor is able to unearth the secrets of the physical world at its minutest levels to get the uttermost benefits out of any object through science. But, as the quantum physics argues, the uncertainty of the position of an electron at a given time, the science lags in its vividness to explain everything from the accepted facts starting from Newton’s laws of gravity to theory of everything and even meta-theory.

On the other hand, the science of eastern countries grounded on widely accepted and applied theories of non-measurable factors through physical parameters such as Prana, Prakriti, Devatas, Jeeva-Atma, Parama-Atma, Gunas, Samskaras and Vasanas etc,. Bharat has been promoter and extender of non-physical sciences (Shastras) and laid down the same knowledge from generation to generation. The Vedas and allied texts (Shrutis and Shastras) are authoritative source for all knowledge, though it seems to contradict day-to-day life from an apparent and relative perspective. Most of the Upanishadic (culminating section and core of Vedic texts) sentences seem to contradict themselves unless it is understood at their real core.

Vedas are interpreted in three different dimensions of existence which encompass all living and non-living beings i.e. Adhibhautika (consideration of living being all around and nature), Adhidaivika (considering natural forces/ cosmic conscious centers) and Adhyaatmika (centered at one-self including conscious, unconscious and subconscious levels). One scholar gave Yajna (fire ceremony) based interpretation i.e. Adhiyajnika. Yajna is the best and sacred
action which can be performed in a person’s life which admits offering prescribed physical materials to the fire and even nonphysical materials to the conceptual fire.

The eastern countries have been protected for very long time because they have one unique philosophy in diverse traditions with multiple schools of thoughts. Though Vedic knowledge is common all over the world, the implementation of the knowledge differs geographically according to the environmental and physical conditions. The Karmas (rituals/actions) referred to in Vedas deteriorated from generation to generation for lack of understanding and misunderstanding the practices which are entirely different from the actual. Of them, Yajnas are most commonly understood in wrong way confining it to just material offer.

There are many voices to bring the science behind ancient practices. Limitations of the measurements restrict the physical meanings in esoteric world which, in its turn causes non acceptance of the subtle facts. As Yajnas involve physical and meta-physical occurrences in it, all these research approaches can succeed partially, limited to the physical level. The practice and subjective experiences alone are considered to be real and the present nature of research work may fail totally in this field.

The type of scholars and scientists in the field of Indian sciences vary from very orthodox to highly liberal and logical approach according to the capability of understanding and experience of people.

**2.7.1 VEDAS – SOURCE OF EVERY KNOWLEDGE BRANCH OF INDIA**

For any available knowledge sources in India, Vedas are the base. Some of the knowledge seen to be directly available and some indirectly indicated. The secrets of the universe come
through personalities who attained a state of *Ritumbhara Prajna* which comes after intensive practice of Sadhana (spiritual practice) under proper guidance. *Rutumbhara Prajna* is a state of mind which reveals only the truth of the universe. It falls after “Nirvicara-vaisharadya” resulting Adhyaatma Prasada (spiritual silence) says sage Patanjali. One becomes absolutely hush and is able to bring out infinitely Prasada (calmness). The calmness which is already there in the individual will be expressed by these Sadhanas.

Human structure becomes an antenna to receive positive energy from cosmos on account of strict practice of Yoga. Normally, people are charged negatively in terms of subtle energy, and receive negative energy. Rishis are sacred souls who have purified and refined the entire individual existence without leaving even the smallest mark of dirt in the mind and body. Their life style is aligned to nature outside, and then without even an acknowledgement, inner being cohered to the creation outside. This is the reason the life-span of people of yore was verily long compared to the present generation. Entire process of life was synchronized with nature so that the changes outside can be cognized and remedial measures can be taken in advance.

Any traditional practice in different parts of the world, have inherited science at varied levels, brought up by natives of the respective region. There are rituals and austerities followed in India and are unique for its Vedic source of knowledge to unearth the secrets of nature. The practice of *Yajña* (Homa, Havana or Agnihotra – fire rituals in physical terms) is a unique contribution to humanity, originated from India. *Yajña* is a process of herbal sacrifices in Agni (holy fire) aimed at the finest utilization of the subtle properties of sacrificed matter, in physical terms with the help of the thermal energy of fire and the sound energy of the
mantras. Modern scientific research has also shown significant therapeutic applications of Yajñā and affirmed its potential in the purification of the environment.

Traditional practices and approaches of India such as Yoga, Nyāya (logical system), Vaiśeṣika (atomism) etc., are given status of independent sciences, considering their width of knowledge and applicability. Of these, Yajñā (fire ceremony) is considered to be the most sacred and sanctified ritual in practice. There are hundreds of customs and practices of Yajñā in different regions of country.

Worship should be eco-friendly, without disturbing any other systems including animals, birds, plants etc. Devatas (Energy centers in nature), bestow the best on all living beings if humans are in harmony with creation. Any imbalances in nature, (internal/external) natural energy centers cause calamities indicating wrong lifestyle of humans. Indian scriptures advocate techniques in order to avoid such disequilibrium. Thus, having synchrony with Devatas -, one leads a life as a serene outlook in cooperation with each other in the cosmos. Consequently, nature also imparts its positive energy to those who lead life accordingly.

2.7.2 BHAGAVAD GITA – A PRINCIPLE TEXT ON YAJNA

Normally, different actions have different intentions. Different actions may have a single grand cumulative intention or an action can have different intentions. So, the nature and the depth of action is depended on the intention attached to it.

Bhagavad Gita admits the result of an action as a binding factor, but here is an exceptional action which does not bind a sadhaka.
“The World is bound by action other than those performed 'for the sake of sacrifice';
do thou, therefore, O son of Kunti, perform action of that sake (for YAJNA) alone,
free from all attachments”.

When was the process of Yajna bestowed on humans? Why people are compelled to some
extent to perform Yajna without even considering status, cast and creed. The followers of
Hindu culture accept that Prajapati, the creator created this world and the created world is
being maintained well as given in this context,

PRAJAPATI (the Creator)-, having in the beginning (of creation) created mankind,
together with sacrifices said, “by this shall you prosper; let this be the milch-cow of
your desire --- "KAMADHUK" (the mythological cow which yields all desired
objects)".

After creation of manifested world and Yajna, the creator advised humans to follow the
natural process by performing Yajna,
Parasparaṁ bhāvayantaḥ śreyah paramāvāpsyatha || bha. Gī. 3-11 ||

“With this (Yajna), you do nourish the gods and may those DEVAS nourish you; thus nourishing one another, you shall, attain the Highest Good”.

It is not just Prajapati asked humans to perform Yajna, but he also assured that humans are blessed enough to gain anything they wish which should be nature friendly. Whoever does not follow the rule is considered to be a culprit. Culprit is punished heavily according to the rule of nature,

Iṣṭānḥoṁgaṁhi vo deve dāşyante yajñabhāvitaḥ: ।
Tairdattānapradāyaibhyo yo bhūṅkte stena eva saḥ || bha. Gī. 3-12 ||

“The DEVAS, nourished by the sacrifice, will give you the desired objects. Indeed he who enjoys objects, given by the DEVAS, without offering (in return) to them, is verily a thief”.

It is better to follow what is advised for human welfare. Whoever follows the natural process will be out of danger and avoid all types of impurities; otherwise the entire life is just chaotic.

Yajñāṣṭiṣṭāśīnaḥ santo mucyante sarvākṣīriṣṭaḥ: ।
Bhuṅjate te tvagham pāpā ye pacantyātmakarṇaṣṭ || bha. Gī. 3-13 ||

“The righteous, who eat the "remnants of the sacrifices" are freed from all sins; but those sinful ones, who cook food (only) for their own sake, verily eat but sin”.

Bhagavan Krishna now presents the actual status of Yajna, how it is a center of the creation, how everything is established in Yajna,
From food come the beings; through rain food is produced; from sacrifice arises rain, and sacrifice is born of action. Know you that action comes from BRAHMAJI (the creator) and BRAHMAJI come from the Imperishable. Therefore, the all-pervading BRAHMAN (God-principle) ever rests in sacrifice.

The above statements clarify the status of Yajna, the context continues to say,

“He who does not follow here the wheel thus set revolving, is of a sinful life, rejoicing in the senses. He lives in vain, O Son of Pritha”.

Almost all the religions discuss about two worlds; a) a physical world in which we all experience good and bad instantaneously and mostly immediately, and b) meta-physical world, the unseen world in which one experiences results of one’s many actions. The second world is divided into two, heaven and hell. Heaven is the world of joy and hell is the world of suffering. Our actions constitute placement of a human either in heaven or hell based on
amout and intensity of Punya (collection of results of good actions as merit) and Papa (collection of results of bad actions as demerit).

Following verse emphasises on a fact that on account of following actions prescribed by the Vedas, in this world the results are very quick in nature. So people, without even knowing the background, are anxious to get what they don’t even deserve. Worshiping gods became a customary to fulfill their greed, ego-stricken persons perform actions just to satisfy their greed. Thus, actions and worships lost their natural purity, Gita continues to say,

कार्यसंकल्प: कर्मणां सिद्धिः यजन्ति इह देवता: ।
क्षिप्रं हि मानुषे लोके सिद्धिभवति कर्मणं ॥ भ. गी. ४.१२ ॥

“They, who long for satisfaction from actions in this world, make sacrifices to the gods; because satisfaction is quickly obtained from actions in the world-of-objects”.

As told in previous verses, actions are performed with different intentions, only few sadhakas intend to reach Him (supreme reality), here different methods will be elaborated one after the other.

Basic concept of Yajna is offered here in following verse. It is in common practice all over Bharat to chant this Shloka before eating. Many people chant without understanding its meaning which may lead to a mechanical action and loose its importance. The very intention to chant this mantra is that every action - even if it is done for sustenance of life such as breathing, eating, excreting, observing, thinking and etc.- should be done consciously and with a divine touch. A quote glorifies importance of eating as the base of exisstance of the
body itself - ‘We are what we eat’. It does not mean all other actions have less importance.,
No one action is superior and others inferior. Following verse claims the same by saying,

\[
\text{ब्रह्मार्पणः ब्रह्म हविरभ्रांगाँ ब्रह्मणा हुतम्} \\
\text{ब्रह्मौ तेन गतन्तवः ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना} \| \text{भ. गी. ४-२४} \|
\]

\[
\text{Brahmārpaṇaṁ brahma havīrbrahmāṅgau brahmanā hutam} \\
\text{Brahmaiva tena gantavyaṁ brahmakarmasamādhinā} \| \text{bha. gt. 4-24} \|
\]

“BRAHMAN is the oblation; BRAHMAN is the clarified butter, etc., constituting the offerings; by BRAHMAN is the oblation poured into the fire of BRAHMAN; BRAHMAN verily shall be reached by him who always sees BRAHMAN in all actions”.

Any action and every action is great, hence, all action are compared to Yajna which is relatively accepted as devine action by society at large. The next few verses elaborate what other ways different people follow according to their convenience and with available recourses.

In every type of Yajna, there are four essential factors, (1) the deity invoked to whom the oblations are offered, (2) the fire in which the offerings are poured, (3) the material things that constitute the offerings and, (4) the individual who is performing the Yajna.

\[
\text{दैवमेवापरे यज्ञे पोषिनः पर्युपासते} \\
\text{ब्रह्मापरे यज्ञे यज्ञेनवपञ्जुहति} \| \text{भ. गी. ४-२५} \|
\]

\[
\text{Daivamevāpare yajñāṁ yogināḥ paryupāsate} \\
\text{Brahmāṅvāpare yajñāṁ yajñenaivopajuhvati} \| \text{bha. gt. 4-25} \|
\]

“Some YOGIS perform sacrifice to DEVAS alone (DEVA- YAJNA); while others offer "sacrifice" as sacrifice by the Self, in the Fire of BRAHMAN (BRAHMA-YAJNA)”. 

\[
\text{ओवादीनिद्यवाण्यने संयममार्गु जुहति} \\
\text{शब्दादीनिविषयानन्त्य इन्द्रयार्मिषु जुहति} \| \text{भ. गी. ४-२६} \|
\]
“Some again offer hearing and other senses as sacrifice in the fires-of-restraint (SAMYAMA-YAJNA); others offer sound and other objects of sense as sacrifice in the fires-of-the-senses”.

“Others again sacrifice all the functions of the senses and the functions of the breath (vital energy) in the fire of the YOGA of self-restraint, kindled by knowledge”.

“Others again offer wealth, austerity and YOGA as sacrifice, while the ascetics of self-restraint and rigid vows offer study of scriptures and knowledge as sacrifice”.

“Others offer as sacrifice the out-going breath in the in-coming, and the in-coming in the out-going, restraining the courses of the out-going and in-coming breaths, solely absorbed in the restraint of breath”.

25
“Others, with well-regulated diet, offer vital-airs in the Vital-Air. All these are knowers of sacrifice, whose sins are destroyed by sacrifice”.

“The eaters of the nectar ‘remnant of the sacrifice’ go to the Eternal BRAHMAN. Even this world is not for the non-performer of sacrifice; how then the other (world), O best of the Kurus?”.

“Thus innumerable sacrifices lie spread out before BRAHMAN (literally at the mouth or face of BRAHMAN). Know them all as born of action, and thus knowing, you shall be liberated”.

After presenting varieties of Yajnas, Sri Krishna’s final verdict is that everything ends or accomplishes in realization through Jnana,
Intention plays major role as said earlier, and is again elaborated.

"Verily the "fruit" that accrues to those men of little intelligence is finite. The worshippers of the DEVAS go to the DEVAS but My devotees come to Me”.

“Others also, offering the "Wisdom-sacrifice" worship Me, regarding Me as One, as distinct, as manifold-Me, who is in all forms, with faces (sight) everywhere”.

Punya and Papa are temporary, they are like currency, are exhausted after use; one has to earn them if one wants them again. In the process of gaining Punya and Papa, human beings give rise to new Samskaras and Vasanas which create Punya and Papa again. This vicious circle is called Samsara in ancient texts. Following verse presents this very concept.
They, having enjoyed the vast heaven-world, when their merits are exhausted, enter the world-of-the-mortals; thus abiding by the injunctions of the three (VEDAS), desiring (objects of) desires, they attain to the state of "going-and-returning" (SAMSARA).

Finally, Sri Krishna ends his comments, saying, ‘worship of any deity is but worshiping me’. Difference between the worshipers of other deities and worshipers of me, lies in the method of reaching directly or indirectly. Worshipers of other deities take a knotty path which demands many lives to reach Him, but those who worship Him (absolute reality) reach directly and quickly.

“Even those devotees, who, endowed with faith worship other gods, worship Me alone, O son of Kunti, (but) by the wrong method”.

“For I alone am the enjoyer in and the Lord of all sacrifices; but they do not know, Me in Essence, and hence they fall (return to this mortal world)”.

eteryammanubhognatant kāmākāma labhante || bha. gī. 9-21 ||

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28
The worshippers of the DEVAS or gods go to the DEVAS; to the PITRIS or ancestors go the ancestor-worshippers; to the BHUTAS or the elements go worshippers of the BHUTAS; but My worshippers come unto Me”.

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give in charity, whatever you practice as austerity, O Kaunteya, do it as an offering to Me”.

“Among the great RISHIS I am Bhrigu; among words I am the one-syllabled "OM"; among sacrifices I am the sacrifice of silent repetition (JAPA-YAJNA); among immovable things, the Himalayas”.

Yajna is one among intense spiritual practices according to 13th chapter of Bhagavad Gita.
control of the senses, sacrifice, study of the SHASTRAS, and straightforwardness etc. are spiritual practices”.

What kind of Yajna becomes fruitless and should be not practiced?

आत्मसम्भविता: स्तव्या धनमात्मानाचित्विता:।
यजनेता नामयजनेतेत्र दम्भेनामात्मानबिन्दर्वकम्।। भ. गी. १६-१७।।

“Atmasambhavita: stava dhnamatmanachitvita:।
Yajante namayajanaiste dambhenaatmavidhipurvakam || bha. gi. 16-17 ||

“What kind of Yajna becomes fruitless and should be not practiced?”

“Self-conceited, stubborn, filled with pride and drunk with wealth, they perform sacrifices in name (only) out of ostentation, contrary to scriptural ordinance”.

Arjuna had a question, ‘what if someone performs Yajna with very deep devotion but lacking the knowledge from the scripture? Is it right to practice without having any scriptural understanding? Are there any varities of Yajna that are performed by knowers of shastra and those performed by those ignorant of shastra? Sri Krishna answers as follows:

ये शास्त्रविभिन्नसृज्य यजनेत्र श्रद्धायन्विता:।
तेषां निष्ठा तु का कृष्ण सत्त्वमाहो रजस्तमः।। भ. गी. १७-१।।

“Those who, setting aside the ordinances of the scriptures, perform sacrifice with faith, what is their condition, O Krishna? Is it SATTWA, RAJAS or TAMAS?”

There are three types of devotion and performance of the same.

त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावना।
सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चैति तां शृणु।। भ. गी. १७-२।।

“There are three types of devotion and performance of the same.

“Three-fold is the faith of the embodied, which is inherent in their nature the SATTWIC (pure), the RAJASIC (passionate) and the TAMASIC (dull, dark). Thus thou hear of it”.

30
The faith of each is in accordance with his nature, O Bharata. Man consists of his faith; as a man’s faith is, so is he”.

The categories we observe here are natural and not forced. It comes naturally to a person. Satvik, Rajasik and Tamasik people perform as follows:

"The SATTWIC, or "pure", worship the gods (DEVAS); the RAJASIC or the "passionate" the YAKSHAS and the RAKSHASAS; the others, TAMASIC people, or the "dark or dull" folk, worship ghosts (PRETAS) and hosts of BHUTAS, or the nature/spirits”.

Here after Anna (food), Yajna, Tapas (austerity) and charity are devided on the basis of innate and inherent quality of a person,
“That sacrifice which is offered by men without desire for fruit, and as enjoined by ordinance, with a firm faith that sacrifice is a duty, is SATTWIC or ‘pure’.”

“The sacrifice which is offered, O best of the Bharatas, seeking for fruit and for ostentation, you may know that to be a RAJASIC YAJNA”.

“They declare that sacrifice to be TAMASIC which is contrary to the ordinances, in which no food is distributed, which is devoid of MANTRAS and gifts, and which is devoid of faith”.

Every action in Hindu culture starts with OM,

“OM, TAT and SAT” –this has been declared to be the triple designation of BRAHMAN. By that were created formerly, the BRAHMANAS, VEDAS and YAJNAS (sacrifices)”.

32
“Therefore, with utterance of 'OM' are begun the acts of sacrifice, gifts and austerity as enjoined in the scriptures, always by the students of BRAHMAN”.

There are different opinions regarding duties in Sannyasa. Some opine that Sannyasi should not do any desire-based activity other than acts for realizing oneself, being a roll model in any society. But Bhagavad Gita strongly recommends the performance of Yajna even for a Sannyasi,
“Hear from Me the conclusion or the final truth, about this "abandonment," O best of the Bharatas; "abandonment," verily, O best of men, has been declared to be of three kinds”.

Whatever be the condition, let not one indulge in not performing Yajna even a day, because Yajna is a purificatory factor for all humans.

“Acts of sacrifice, charity and austerity should not be abandoned, but should be performed; worship, charity, and also austerity, are the purifiers of even the 'wise’”.

Thus, Bhagavad Gita strongly advocates performance of Yajna in every condition at varied levels.

2.8.3 SOURCE OF YAJNA - TAITTIRIAY ARANYAKA

Taittiriya Aranyaka – Mahanarayana Upanishat (Tai. Aranyaka, chapter 10)

This is a prayer from an aspirer to Agni (fire):-, “O Agni please protect me by your luminous light, you are capable of removing sins of devotees swiftly; you are beyond water since you are the cause, you are above every mountain since your residential place is the tip of hills named Kanaka, Meru etc.; you are the stroller of all forests, you pervade all plants and trees such as Soma creeper etc.; most importantly, you engage every human and is worshipped by all. Though you reside in purest place such as Vedic ritual and impure location such as graveyard, you stay pure forever. Such great entity O Agni! Please protect me.”
Here is a Prayer to Paramatma, who is in the form of Yajna, “O almighty! My proximal salutations to you, please accept my offering to you to stay in my house, bless me with material enjoyment, lots of wealth, effulgence, since you are such a glorious personality. I too grow like you if you stay in my house. After performing Yajna you are to distribute the result of actions. For above all reason, I want your gracious presence”. Thus is the prayer offered, after praising Agni.

Sannyasa is considered to be the best tool among all the tools to destroy the vicious circle of cyclic repetition of Samsara. Similarly there are many more instruments that are presented; Satya (presenting a fact as experienced by one), Tapas (following austerities very strictly such as not eating food during specific timings as part of ritual etc), Dama (restraining of the ego, controlling all the senses), Shama (controlling inner tool by having mastery over emotional extremities), Dana (giving wealth to eligible people in right manner as prescribed in scriptures), Dharma (following Ishta, Purta, and Datta Karma as told in scriptures), Prajananam (begetting children), Agni (performing fire ceremonies), Agnihotra (specialized fire rituals), Yajna (performing Darshapurnamasa, Jyotishtoma etc. regularly since all gods attained heaven by performing these rituals), Manas (an aspect of inner tool (Antahkarana), Nyasa (retiring from all kinds of actions as guided by Rishis such as Aruni and Jabala etc.); thus this section glorifies Sanyasa. Even if all above tools are important to achieve the ultimate goal that is Moksha, Yajna which is one of tools plays an important role as said in Shatapatha Brahmana, ‘Yajna is the best action that humans can perform’ and Yajna is for purifying very existence itself.

All the above tools will be elaborated in detail in the following section one after the other; the eighth tool is Agni.
Garhapatya, Dakshinaadada and Ahavaniya are three Agnis. Knowledge about these three Agnis is important, since all Vedas intend to motivate performance of rituals and these rituals have to be performed with blessings of these three Agnis. These three Agnis are the path to attain godhood. Among these three Agnis, Garhapatya represents Rigveda and preponderantly discusses subjects related to Prithiviloka (the layer of creation in which earth-dominant beings live) having ‘Rathantarasama’. Dakshinagni represents Yajurveda and discusses about Antarikshaloka (the layer which has atmosphere above earth) having ‘Vamadevyasama’; and lastly Ahavaniya represents Samavaeda and covers the subjects concerned with Svargaloka (layer beyond atmosphere) having ‘Brihadrathantarasama’.

The ninth tool is Agnihotra;

Agnihotraṁ sāyaṁ prātargṛhāṇāṁ niṣkṛtiḥ svisṭag m suhṛtām yajñakratūnāṁ práyaṇaṁ m suvargasya lokasya jyotistasmādagnihotram paramaṁ vadanti। (Tai. A, chapter 10. 49)

Next tool for achieving our goal is performing Agnihotra etc. Agnihotra should be followed twice a day, evening and morning which involves much expenses and in its turn brings money. Bereft of Agnihotra Agni burns the entire house, because Agnihotra is Svishta (auspicious act, Yaga), is Suhrita (auspicious act, Homa). Yaga is defined as offering materials intending to reach the Devatas. Homa is offering materials into fire. This is the
beginning; all other rituals start after this, such as Yajna and Kratu. The difference between Yajna and Kratu is this; Kratu involves use of a Yupa (pillar of timber or log) in specialized rituals such as 7 Soma Yajnas, other fire rituals may not necessarily involve Yupa. In the list of all these great practices Agnihotra is placed at the beginning. Thus Agnihotra is an important tool. Hence it is called light-like instrument to reach heaven.

The tenth tool is Yajna;

यज्ञ इति यज्ञों हि देवा दियो गता यज्ञोंमुनास्यायामणुदन्तं यज्ञों द्विष्णो मित्रो मूर्तियो भवन्ति यज्ञों सर्व उपरिच्छितं तस्मादहाँ परम्परम बदलन्ति ।

Yajña iti yajñena hi deva divaṁ gataṁ yajñenaśurānapūdantantā yajñena devaṁ diyaṁmantaṁ mitrā bhavanti yajñe sarvam pratiṣṭhitam tasmādyajñena paramam vadamantā | (Tai. A, chapter 10, 50)

Some people consider Yajna is the best tool. This is because gods attained heaven by performing Yajnas, destroyed all evil forces by performing Yajnas. By performing Yajnas even enemies become friends. So Yajna plays major role for any important achievement.

Above discussed tools are directly related to fire ceremony and allied practices. Thus Yajna is glorified in this section among all the tools offered to an aspirer for reaching the desired goal.

After Yajna, Manas and Sannyasa will be discussed as great practices in detail.

5 MAHA YAJNAS

This section discusses in detail regarding 5 Yajnas which are actually the base for the entire Hindu culture and social structure.
Prajapati, the creator of all worlds at different levels of existence, conferred Agnihotra, Paurnamasya etc. together called Avasya which are relatively superior and other rituals, which were even earlier to Somayagas (Yajnas involving the juice of creeper called Soma). Affection towards Agnihotra led him to make categories of different Yajnas, guiding future generations to follow.

Taittiriya Aranyaka claims that study of Vedic texts and scriptures is the supreme practice by which even the greatest souls attained different levels of higher states of consciousness.

The eighth section of second chapter of Taittiriya Aranyaka is called Svadhyayabrahmana, because it emphasizes on Svadhyaya (Vedic self-study). Eligibility to attain higher states of consciousness is acquired by being sanctified through Svadhyaya. Hence Svadhyaya and other allied practices are glorified in this chapter. A remarkable work by Sayanacharya in second chapter of Taittiriya Aranyaka says how spiritual masters became so;

Kalpådāvee eva brahmanāḥ srṣṭā na hyasadādivatkapanmadhyā punah punarjātante tasmādajāḥ| Te ca pṛṣṇayaḥ śuklaḥ svarūpeṇaiva nirmalāḥ santo’pi punastapa ācaraṇ| tadyena tapasā tuṣṭaṁ svayambhu brahma jagatkāraṇātavana svataḥ siddham| parabrahmavastu kañcinmūrtiṁ dhṛtvā
tapasamānāṁistānṛṣṭānaugraḥitumahyānarsadābhinukhyena prayākasamāgacchat| Tatas tātapi muniyaḥ rṣidhātvamārtvāvyaptavādṛṣṭāḥ bhuvaṇ| Tasmādanyeṣūmaṇi pṛṣṭānaṁ añvayā
vyutpatyasītvāṁ sampānam| Tatas tātapi muniyaḥ sarvakāmarupadāṁ kīnicdyājñāṁ
kāmayamāṁ svayambhubrahamarūpāṁ tāṁ devatānvāpāsamantavaṁ| Taddevaṁ añgacchat
“Ajas (who do not have birth) were created in the beginning of Kalpa (4,320,000 human years). Ajas performed Tapas (austerity) even when they were pure by nature. Pleased by the austerity of these people, the creator took a form to reveal himself to Ajas. Hence forth, any aspirer who passes through this process of getting a vision of the original form of the reality would be named Rishis. Knowers of these started performing Yajnas which are capable of bestowing anything desired by any one and thus started their spiritual journey with Yajna. They worshipped the creator through Yajna which is in the form of study”.

These 5 Yajnas are performed on a daily basis. They are completed on the day of start, not finishing one Yajna on one day and starting the next on another day. Followings are five Yajnas, a) Deva Yajna, b) Pitr Yajna, c) BhutaYajna, d) ManushyaYajna and e) Brahma Yajna,

Pañca vā ete mahāyajñāḥ satati pratāyante satati santiṣṭhante devayajñāḥ pītryajñō bhūtayajñō manuṣyayajñō brahmâyajñā iti

“It was the glory and importance of study of scriptures explained in eighth chapter. Contextually 5 types of Yajnas are elaborated in detail with methods of their practice”;
(Indra, Varuna, and Agni etc.) is named as Deva Yajna. This process involves offering the desired or suitable materials to intended Devatas. The Sages, who came at a later period of time, started a new set of texts which can facilitate in every possible way, giving ideal method and supporting to original method. They also gave options to follow without lacuna in situations where it cannot be done in an ideal way. For example in the absence of Purodhasha, use of Samiths is accepted for offering.

This concept of performing Deva yajna is nothing but showing concern towards nature. As told in Bhagavad Gita, mutual help between human and gods is through nourishing mutually. But industrialization in the West leads us to forget the culture of preserving attitude and violating natural rules which in turn creates havoc in nature. It seems impossible for the modern person to get back to these original practices.

The second Yajna is Pitryajna;

यत्पित्रभ्याः स्वधा करोत्याप्यपस्तिपित्युप्रयः सन्तिष्ठते,

Yatpitrabhyaḥ svadhā karotyāpyapastipitrājñāḥ santīṣṭhate,

“In the absence of Pinda (solid ball of cocked rice as an offering to forefathers) through a specific word ‘SVADHA’, our entire dynasty is remembered including great Rishis. Thus offering once completes Pitr Yajna”.

Every branch of modern science is invented from a human being who was deeply involved in finding the truth behind simple natural happenings. Hence the branch of science considers the progenitor as an equal to GOD. Similarly in olden days, every family was in contact with such great scientists who could reveal the secrets of nature by their virtue and austerity. Since all our creativity and existence is grounded on our forefathers, it is hence obligatory to at least
remember them every day. Though it seems to be mechanical in nature, it should nevertheless be followed.

The third one is BhutaYajna;

यद्वृत्तमयो बलिंग्र हरति तद्वृत्यायः सन्तिष्ठते,
Yadbhūtebhīyo baligṛ harati tadbhūtayajñāḥ santiṣṭhate,

“After performing ritual Vaishvadeva, feeding animals and birds in the form of Bali (anything eatable by respective animals) is Bhuta Yajna. Bhuta means any creature which are plenty in number and which maintain balance in nature just by their mere existence”.

This is one of the most interesting and amazing aspect of living with nature. It is so predominant that the Vedic texts emphasis very much on looking after the animals around us. It gives such a closeness with other creatures that even some animals are able to communicate their feeling better than humans. Even today, in villages, folks name each and every cow and look after them like their own children. There are even historical events supporting this very fact. Thus taking care of creatures around humans is Bhuta Yajna.

Manushya Yajna is fourth one;

यद्रामणेऽपावः ददाति तन्मनुष्ययंत्यः सन्तिष्ठते,
Yadbrahmaṇeṇyo’nam dadāti tanmanuṣyayajñāḥ santiṣṭhate,

“After the performance of Vaishvadeva offering food or any respectable materials especially food and showing reverence to Atithi (a guest having no fixed appointment) is Manushya Yajna”.

One of the most sanctified concepts, Atithi, is a highly remarkable and respectful way of showing concern to needy. Whoever comes home without appointment and who is in need of
food, shelter or any kind of support should be looked after without any grudge. Today’s world needs this attitude urgently where human’s emotional growth is very much at stake. Even members of a family are unable to adjust each other; there is no respect to each other and inability to understand each other. The entire problem can be sorted out through this Manushya Yajna. Generally Brahmans (people spending time, energy and sources to promote knowledge, performing rituals for welfare of the society, sharing and accepting alms in society, who have real responsibility to take society forward) are given food or clothing.

Brahma Yajna is the final one;

यस्तवाययमपीतीतिकामिण्युक्त यजुः साम वा तद्भवयह्यं सन्तििषते
Yastvādhyāyamadhīyāikāmaprycami yajuḥ sāma vā tadbrahmayajñah santiṣṭhate

“Scriptural study of texts which were passed on to preceding generations in the dynasty from father, grandfather and great-grand fathers is said to be Brahma Yajna. Study of even a single sentence and doing sadhana on methods leading to realization is Svadhyaya which is nothing but Brahma Yajna”.

Patanjali Yoga Sutras consider two aspects as Svadhyaya –

प्रणवादिमन्त्रजयः मोक्षशास्त्राणाम् अध्ययनम् च
Prāṇavādīmantryaṇaṁ mokṣaśāstraṇāṁ adhyayanaṁ ca [P.Y.S. 2-1]

It means repetition of Mantras such as OM or ATHA etc. and the study of scriptures which bring freedom. Adhi Shankara discussed regarding three aspects in life leading to spiritual growth – getting human birth, strong desire of attaining realization (absolute freedom) and company of worthy people (Satsanga). Svadhyaya from this section of Vedas and other textual enforcement is always on Brahma Yajna. So, Vedic education was necessary to uphold spiritual values in any sane society.
Adi Shankara says, in his monumental work on Bhagavad Gita;

दीर्घेन कालेन अनुशास्त्रां कामोद्वात् दीयमानविवेकविज्ञानहेतुकेन अभिभूपमाने धर्मं प्रवर्धमाने चाधर्मं ……

Dirghena kālena anuśṭhātnāṁ kamodbhavāt hiyamānāvivekavijñānāhetukena abhibhyāmāne dharme pravardhamāne cādharme……

“It is the natural cycle of rising of Adharma and fall of Dharma and visa-versa. Performers of
great rituals were in the clutches of lust and desires, eventually infatuation grew. Thus great
performances lost their importance and their esoteric effects. All these happen by humans
filled with ego and other evil forces. “Whence Adharma rises, thence the creator incarnates to
protect righteous and destroy the evil forces”.

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगो युगो || भ-गी ४.८ ||

Paritṛaṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtāṁ
dharmasaṁsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge|| Bha-Gī 4.8||

“For the protection of godly people and to destroy the evil, I incarnate in every Yuga.

This is the actual concept of 5 Yajnas in detail.
FIGURE 1 – UNIVERSAL WELLBEING – MECHANISM OF YAJNA

Universal wellbeing

Wellbeing of humans

Rhythmic cycles in nature

Individual thought and behaviour

Collective consciousness

Lifestyle

Nature and Nurture

Habits – Impressions

Results of past actions

Sancita  Prarabdha  Agami
Past  Present  Future

यज्ञः - YAJÑAH
Figure 5 (model) explains, how Yajna is at the core of human performance and an important cause to establish universal wellbeing. Yajna influences two layers; individual life style and collective consciousness.

All actions that humans perform, should ideally be centered at universal wellbeing as the focus. Human beings can maintain wellbeing if the surrounding nature is conducive and biological rhythm is maintained well.

यदेव ब्रह्माण्डः तदेव पिन्दाण्डः।
yadeva brahmāṇḍe tadeva piṇḍāṇḍe ā
tadeva pîndāṇḍe ā
‘What is in every individual is out in there in creation also’.

PLATE 1 - BRAHMANDA AND PINDANDA

This very sentence establishes the oneness of everything in creation, inside and out. Hence, well being of every living system is depended upon the wellbeing of the nature outside. How is nature outside maintaining balance?
Human wellbeing is based upon the thoughts and the behavior of an individual; the rhythmic cycles in nature is the collective consciousness of people living in a specific region, which creates diverse culture and social scenario in different locations on the surface of earth.

Most well established societies frame norms and laws which eventually evolve as a particular lifestyle in that society. Gradually society considers some behavior as favorable and some others as unfavorable. Therefore, social values and norms are confined to a limited scope of application. But, there can be universal values which should be followed without barrier of caste, creed, gender, location, time and space. Sage Patanjali names all these universal values as Yama; non-violence, uttering the truth, non-stealing, mastery over the senses and non-accumulating of material things more than required.

Since society is based on the individuals, that society becomes the ideal which accommodates a high number of ideal individuals. Individual beings act and behave as they are brought up along with qualities they have innately at birth. Thus, social ethics and moralities tend to create habits and impressions in all individuals in that society very strongly; therefore, individuals connect every activity with good and bad, favourable and unfavourable behavior.

Individuals’ nature is decided based in results of past actions. The present life, in Samskritam, is endowed with Prarabdha Karma, a set of past actions starting their fruictification. For example, if an individual actioned Papa (actions which accumulate suffering as a result) in the past life, Prarabdha Karma will be resulting in taking birth as animal or bird or any other lower (in terms of freedom to think and act) creature. That is its Prarabdha.

So, all living beings are always connected with their own Karma (actions), according to Indian scriptures. This vicious circle of connecting with Karma, consequential accumulation of
Punya and Papa, results in enjoyment and suffuring. Thus vicious circle continues forever, binding human beings in this world.

Bhagavad Gita proclaims that performing any action as Yajna (sacrifice) releaves one from bondage; therefore, one should do every action with an attitude of Yajna. Gita continues to educate how the sustenance of world is completely in control of Yajna.

**PLATE 2 – MAINTANANCE OF GROSS WORLD**

*The all pervading BRAHMAN (God-principle) ever rests in Yajna (sacrifice).*

Bha Gî - 3.15
Deeper understanding of the Vedas conveys that very the nature is god. Literal meaning of word ‘Deva’ is that which is illuminating, shining, effulging etc. Indirectly, these denote any source of energy considered as god; hence, Vedic culture has many gods, because there are many manifestations of energy. Though all are forms of energy, a manifestation of energy differs from each other. Vedic scriptures say earth originates from water, water from fire, fire from the air and the air from ether.

\[ \text{tasmadh eva tasmad atmanam akasha sambhutam. taittiriya upanisad - 2.2} \]

“From Atma ether (Akasha) took birth”.

Sequentially all other elements came into existence from these five basic elements. So, coextually all these later creation process is nothing but the energy source in different forms. The entire manifested world is permutation and combination of 5 elements.

**PLATE 3 – PANCHIKARANA AND EVOLUTION**

Presenting triple combination of the evolution theory, Chandogya Upanishat says, "Let me make each of these three tripartite" (Chandogya. Upanishat. 6. 3. 3). According to these mantras, Lord first created fire, water, and earth and combined them according to the process of triple combination. This process is also called *Trivritkarana*, which resembles
Pancikarana of Nyaya and Vaisheshika. Each of the gross elements fire, water, and earth contains half of its own kind and one fourth of each of the other two. The creation of five elements is supported by the Shruti and smriti.- Ether and air have been apparently left out in the Trivritkarana process. Though these five gross elements are alike in so far as each of them contains the five elements, yet they are differently named as ether etc. owing to the "preponderance of a particular element in them" (Brahma Sutras 2. 4. 22). [Preponderance—Each is named after the element it contains in the largest proportion].

After explaining the evolution process, the mantras say, God in the form of water intended to create earth, therefore all the elements in the sriptures are considered as Deva (God, the source of energy). In this context, the group of Devas making collective consciousness, influenced by individual performance, especially satisfied by the performance of Yajna. All the gods will be rejoicing by the offerings of human prayers through Yajna; positive attitude of individuals, cuasing universal wellbeing in larger picture.

2.8 CONCLUSIONS

Yajna transforms the life into spiritual journey. It’s a gift and responsibility which are offered to humankind to maintain equilibrium with nature. The natural synchrony brought in this creation by following Yajna.