

Significance of Havan - Homam

Introduction

In the Vedic Hinduism, a homa also known as havan, is a fire ritual performed on special occasions by a Hindu priest usually for a homeowner ("grihasth": one possessing a home). The grihasth keeps different kinds of fire including one to cook food, heat his home, amongst other uses; therefore, a Yagya offering is made directly into the fire. A homa is sometimes called a "sacrifice ritual" because the fire destroys the offering, but a homa is more accurately a "votive ritual". The fire is the agent, and the offerings include those that are material and symbolic such as grains, ghee, milk, incense and seeds.

It is rooted in the Vedic religion, and was adopted in ancient times by Buddhism and Jainism. The practice spread from India to Central Asia, East Asia and Southeast Asia. Homa rituals remain an important part of many Hindu ceremonies, and variations of homa continue to be practiced in current-day Buddhism, particularly in parts of Tibet and Japan. It is also found in modern Jainism.

A homa is known by alternative names, such as yajna in Hinduism which sometimes means larger public fire rituals, or jahnavidhana or goma in Buddhism. In modern times, a homa tends to be a private ritual around a symbolic fire, such as those observed at a wedding.

The homa ritual grammar is common to many sanskara (rite of passage) ceremonies in various Hindu traditions. The Vedic fire ritual, at the core of various homa ritual variations in Hinduism, is a "bilaterally symmetrical" structure of a rite. It often combines fire and water, burnt offerings and soma, fire as masculine, earth and water as feminine, the fire vertical and reaching upwards, while the altar, offerings and liquids being horizontal.[25] The homa ritual's altar (fire pit) is itself a symmetry, most often a square, a design principle that is also at the heart of temples and mandapas in Indian religions.[26] The sequence of homa ritual events similarly, from beginning to end, are structured around the principles of symmetry.

The fire-altar (vedi or homa/havan kunda) is generally made of brick or stone or a copper vessel, and is almost always built specifically for the occasion, being dismantled immediately afterwards. This fire-altar is invariably built in square shape. While very large vedis are occasionally built for major public homas, the usual altar may be as small as 1×1 foot square and rarely exceeds 3×3 feet square.[citation needed]

A ritual space of homa, the altar is temporary and movable.[1] The first step in a homa ritual is the construction of the ritual enclosure (mandapa), and the last step is its deconstruction.[1] The altar and mandapa is consecrated by a priest, creating a sacred space for the ritual ceremony, with recitation of mantras. With hymns sung, the fire is started, offerings collected. The sacrificer enters, symbolically cleanses himself or herself, with water, joins the homa ritual, gods invited, prayers recited, conch shell blown. The sacrificers pour offerings and libations into the fire, with hymns sung, to the sounds of svaha. The oblations and offerings typically consist of clarified butter (ghee), milk, curd, sugar, saffron, grains, coconut, perfumed water, incense, seeds, petals and herbs.

The altar and the ritual is a symbolic representation of the Hindu cosmology, a link between reality and the worlds of gods and living beings. The ritual is also a symmetric exchange, a "quid pro quo", where

humans offer something to the gods through the medium of fire, and in return expect that the gods will reciprocate with strength and that which they have power to influence.

Homam/Havan (Fire ritual) and its significance

Sin is the basis of suffering. Rituals such as homam, & yagnam are prescribed in the Vedas for expiation of sins and for the acquisition of merit/virtue. The general significance behind all these rituals is to seek the help of deities (divine beings) that are capable to deliver one from sins and to make one acquire punyam (merit) to fulfill one's material or spiritual desires.

I. Why fire?

Before understanding the significance of homam, it is important to know why only fire and water are used in homam, yagnam and tarpanam. The Vedas proclaim that the entire cosmos is made up of panchabhootas (five elements) in varying proportions. On the basis of the ability to retain and transmit energy, among these five elements, the earth is the heaviest and most concrete. As a medium it can retain energy but cannot transmit it. On the other hand, air and space elements are the lightest of all and are too abstract. They can transmit but cannot retain energy. So, the ancient sages have chosen the fire and water elements for their sadhana to give offerings to the divine beings because these two elements have the best ability to retain and transmit divine energy.

II. Significance of Homam and Agni

Just as the five elements exist in the cosmos in the world around us, they exist inside the human body too. Inside the being, Agni (fire) exists in two forms – as Jatara-agni (digestive fire in the physical body) and as Bhoota-agni (internal spiritual fire in the subtle body). In most humans, jatara-agni burns brightly and the bhoota-agni burns low merely as a flickering dim flame. A yogi with his spiritual practices converts the jatara-agni into bhoota-agni. Hence he feels very little/no hunger (due to lack or absence of digestive fire). Bhoota-agni, on the other hand, is spiritual in nature and is capable of sustaining divinity. When a yogi performs the nama/japa/mantra/offerings to a deity, the deity enters into the bhoota-agni and receives the

offering directly. This is said so because a yogi's bhoota-agni burns so brightly inside his sookshma sarira (subtle body) that it can sustain within it, the divinity of a deity or any other divine being. Since, a normal human being's bhoota-agni burns poorly, he makes use of an external fire, to invoke the deity into the fire so that the deity may receive the offerings directly from the external fire. In return, the deity fulfills the righteous desire of the person who performs the homam.

Out of all the types of rituals prescribed, Homam is the quickest way to derive the deity's grace. Ganapati Homam , Chandi Homam, Sudarshana Homam, Paashupata Homam, Mrityunjaya Homam, Ayush Homam – These are some of the well known homams performed by priests in temples and homes of India. The fire ritual immensely aids in Nadi-shuddi and in maintaining good health. More often than not one feels very cleansed and rejuvenated after performing a fire ritual. The gases that come out of a homa-kunda revitalize the atmosphere and environment around us and promote well being. Many researches have been conducted about the environmental benefits of homam and yagnam. Even today, these results can be witnessed in many cases where rains from the sky drench the earth with showers immediately after the conclusion of a massive fire ritual. In the ancient days, people performed fire rituals everyday. Such people were called Nitya-Agnihotris. Rama was a Nitya Agnihotri too. He performed the worship with fire even during the time of exile in the forests. With the passage of time, lifestyles have changed and mankind lost most of the knowledge about the significance of such ancient rituals.

We all are human beings and people knowingly and unknowingly make mistakes in their life. It is also believed that mistakes made in the past life are considered as sins in the present life. Sins make your life filled with pain and suffering. So, according to the Hindu scriptures, people who perform Homam makes you eliminate all the negativities in your life and seek blessings from God.

So, what is Homam?

Havan or Homam or Homa is a sacrifice ritual where you offer some symbolic things to Lord Agni. It is a kind of prayer to God with all the shlokas and mantras to abolish all the sins and attain merit.

Sometimes, people strive hard to get success in examinations, business, and to get a job. In some cases, even after going through the number of matching profiles, people don't meet their life partner and that leads to late marriage. Such kinds of problems are due to the sins that you are carrying from your past life or past years or due to some doshas in your Kundli. In order to get rid of all these problems, people prefer to perform havan or pooja with the best homam pandits.

Homam, a traditional Hindu ritual is also followed by Buddhists and Jains as a votive ritual. However, there are many types of homams performed based on the religious scriptures and each homam ritual holds a great significance. Some of the types of Homam performed for the betterment in life are Ganapathi Homam, Lakshmi Narayana Homam, Saraswati Homam, Rudra Homam, Sri Gayathri Homam, Lalitha Homam, Hanuman Homam, and many more.

When you perform Homam ritual there are certain things that you can offer to Lord Agni. Some of the materials include clarified butter, incense, and seeds, grains, oil, milk, etc. Even the type of materials you are offering to fire depends on the type of homam you are performing and the significance behind it. Homam is also performed by the new couple during their wedding ceremony.

The Homa ritual is observed in many Hindu ceremonies like house warming functions, naming, marriage, and many more. You can book the best Pandits for Homam in Varanasi to perform pooja in an effective way. In addition, when you perform a particular homam with the best homam pooja service, the divine spirit activates in your area and blesses you with peace, prosperity, health, and wealth.

This tradition puja to God should be performed with great devotion and faith towards God and your mental well-being stabilizes with the mantras and shlokas recited after purohitis for homam pooja. Furthermore, you should also get all the pooja items at one place through which homam

purohits will make you perform particular pooja in an effective way. The homam which is performed by any person or couple in your family will bless all the family members with goodwill and good health. Do perform homam with the best homam pandits and stay blessed.