

Homa havis yajna and samskArAs



**Annotated Commentary In English By
Sri nrusimha sEva rasikan
Oppiliappan kOil Sri.VaradAchAri SaThakOpan**



Sincere Thanks To The Following:

- For Compiling Source Document : Smt. Krishnapriya
- For Images :
Nedumtheru Sri.Mukund Srinivasan
Sri.B.Senthil
Sri.Lakshminarasimhan Sridhar and
www.ranganatha.org
- For Assembling The E-Book: Dr. Smt. Kala Lakshminarayanan
Smt.Jayashree Muralidharan





CONTENTS

Hindu Samskaras	1
Mahasamprokshanam: Why we do homams?	21
Homam, Havis Yagna and Yaga	30
Pavithrothsavam	34





sadagopan.org





श्रीः

श्रीमते रामानुजाय नमः

HINDU SAMSKARAS

Every religion has its rites and rituals to help us one along the journey of life. We flutter like "the candle in the wind" during our stay on this earth until we reach the Lord's abode. Hinduism has a most beautiful set of FORTY SAMSKARAS for our spiritual welfare from the time of conception to the final moment at His Leela vibuthi. These samskArAs form the core of a Hindu's life.

These are rites performed to help the human being to purify their body and mind in "seen and unseen ways." The seen aspect is the creation of a shining new object by removing dirt and grime from a tarnished object with detergents. The unseen aspect, according to one AchAryA is that the SamskArAs are like the sanctification of the water by "charging" it with the Veda mantrAs for punyAvAchanam and Udaka sAnthi rites.

There is a proper age and time in human life to perform these samskArAs. If that is followed, it is believed that the effects (benefits) of the samskArAs are the greatest. Out of compassion for us, the laggards, our merciful sAsthArAs give us "substitute periods (kaalAs)", if one misses the appropriate time recommended by the SAsthArAs.

The life of the Hindu rotates around these series of life cycle rituals referred to as SamskArAs. They are rooted in the eternal VedAs. The minimum number of SamskArAs to be observed by men and women vary. Manu, Gautama, ApasthampA, Yaj~navalkyA and other kalpa sutrakaarAs have written extensively on these samskArAs and the proper procedure to perform them to gain maximum seen and unseen benefits. Great AchAryAs of Ahobila mutt like the 25th, 26th, 27th, 42nd and the current Jeeyars have written extensively and have left great ahnika granthAs. These granthAs are known as SadAchaara





NirNayam and dwell at great length on the nityA and naimmitthika karmAs. adiiyEn will now write about the SamskArAs in this section .

WHAT IS A SAMSKAARAA ?

According to the Tarka sAsthRAs, the word SamskArA is defined as "an impression on the memory". Steady practise of scriptural injunctions establishes firm tracks in the memory so that the practitioner does not swerve from the correct path. According to another definition, SamskArA means "betterment" (Sams) of a thing (kaaram). The cleansing process set in motion by the observance of SamskArAs leads to the betterment of life and qualifies a person for spiritual upliftment.

SAMSKAARA & THE AATMA GUNAAS

The practice of SamskArAs develop eight auspicious guNAs (attributes) that help to remove the samsAric ills caused by the sensory attachments. Since these guNAs have an impact on the soul, they are described as Aathma GuNAs. A steady practice of the samskArAs leading to the acquisition of the aathma guNAs helps a person to attain the state of akhanda aathma anubhavam, the supreme experience exemplified by the tenets of Sri VisishTaadvaitam that celebrates the "Oneness" of the supreme being (brahman), who is qualified by "the gross and subtle forms of the sentient and insentient entities, at the two states of manifestation and dissolution of the universe". The **akhandAathama anubhavam** extolled by AzhwArs and AcharyAs in their granthams is the elaboration of the concept that "the Lord is the soul and that the world of men and matter constitutes His body".

THE EIGHT AATHMA GUNAAS

The names of the eight aathma guNAs are worthy of being commented upon:

1. **DAYAA** or universal compassion and love for all living beings





2. **KSHAANTHI** or tolerance of ill-wishers
3. **ANUSUYAI** or freedom from jealousy or rancor
4. **SAUCHAM** or body cleanliness
5. **ANAAYASAM** or relaxed state characterized by EASE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS
6. **MANGALAM** or inner happiness radiating as harmonious conduct
7. **AKAARPANYAM** or generosity of spirit and time
8. **ASPRUHAM** or detached state of mind arising from a dispassionate nature

NISHEKAATHI SMASAANAANTHA SAMSKAARAAS

The samskArAs cover the life span of a Hindu from the time of formation (conception) of the embryo (nishEkam) to the time of cremation in the burning ghaat (smasaanam). Agni is an indispensable part of the samskArAs that cover the entire span of one's life. Agni is therefore saluted as a witness to the samskArAs. Even cremation is considered as an offering of the ghee-smeared body to Agni as the ultimate offering.

PLACE AND TIME FOR SAMSKAARAAS

Some of the samskArAs are not time consuming, whereas the others are elaborate and require continuous performance over many days. Some of the samskArAs are done at home, whereas the others need a spacious site as well as extensive time for the collection of the required utensils representing the body of Yaj~na VarAha Murthy, ingredients (saamagris) and helpers (rthviks).

A number of samskArAs --OupAsana, AgnihOthrA and the pancha MahA Yaj~nAs -- have to be performed daily. Two other samskArAs -- Darsa PoorNa Maasa and SthAlipAKA -- have to be practiced twice a month. ParvaNi srArdhA has to be conducted once a month. Rest of the samskArAs have to be





performed once a year or atleast once in one's life time.

CLASSIFICATIONS OF THE SAMSKAARAAS

The forty samskaaraas can be split into the following six categories:

1. a set of seven starting from GarbhadhAnA to Chudakramaa
2. Another set of seven starting from UpanayanA to VivAhA
3. A group of five Yaj~nAs known as Pancha MahA Yaj~nAs
4. A set of seven Paaka Yaj~nAs
5. A group of seven Havir Yaj~nAs
6. Another group of seven Soma Yaj~nAs



PURNAhUti - various rituals involve agni





BEFORE UPANAYANAA

All the seven samskArAs prior to Upanayanaa are performed by the parents on behalf of the child, since it has not reached the stage of discriminating knowledge. These are:

GARBHADHAANAM: The placement of the seed by the husband in the wife's womb is known as GarbhAdhAnam. From the moment the embryo forms, the life cycle rituals of the Hindu begins. The married couple have to conceive in a state of mind tamed and purified by the Vedic rites of Saanthi KalyANam. This way, they can conceive a child with auspicious qualities. The "**Jaayamaana KatAksham**" of Sriman NaarAyaNaa helps towards the birth of great devotees such as DhruvA. In his outstanding Sri Desika Darsana PanchAngam released by Sri SevA SwamigaL, he points out that the days, when the following stars when in ascendance are auspicious for garbhAdhAnam: Asvini, UtthirAdam, Satayam, Uttaram, Hastham, Chitthirai and SvAathi.

PUMSAVANA SAMSKAARAA: This is to be performed during the third or fourth month of pregnancy, which is much before quickening of the growth of the embryo.

The Aapasthambha Soothram says "**PumAn yEna sooyathE tath pumsavanam naama karma**". This Pumsavanam is performed one month before the SeemanthOnnayanam and is done by one seeking a male child. Both (Pumsuavanam and SeemanthOnnayanam) are intended for the First pregnancy. The leaves from the peepal tree from a branch growing eastward or north is picked at the sprout level. This should be crushed by a maiden, who has not become rajaswalaa, on a granite ammi and the essence is filtered thru a cloth. That essence should be squeezed into the pregnant woman's right nostril, while she is seated on the western side of sacred fire. Her head should be tilted east, The mantram to be said is : "**Pumsuavanamasi**". It is essential to perform this karmaa, whether one wants to have a boy or a girl. This Karmaa is also important to have quick delivery without pain (**Kshipram suvanam**). There are





also a set of seven mantras for additional protection against the dangers of placenta (**jaraayu**) not releasing itself quickly after birth. Water from a flowing river is placed at the foot of the pregnant woman during Pumsuwanam; a branch of medicinal plant known as DhUryanthi or ShOshyanthi Pushpitha agni sikhA (which has leaves like Bamboo and flowers in midday with a fiery red flower) is placed on the head of the pregnant lady by the husband for the blessings of sukha prasavam. Pumsuwanam is done during Pushya Nakshathram.



pumsavanam - the peepal leaf essence is squeezed into the pregnant woman's right nostril

SIMANTHONAYANA SAMSKAARAA: This samskArA (hair parting of the pregnant mother) has to be performed either in the sixth month or in the eighth month of pregnancy. SaasthrAs recommend the performance of seemanthOnnayanam during the fourth month of pregnancy, a month after Pumsuwanam.

One should not combine the Pumsavana with the SimanthOnayana samskaaram, as is being done these days. These samskArAs are abandoned these days. These two are purificatory rites sanctioned by the VedAs for the proper





growth of the fetus inside the womb of the mother. Therefore, these samskArAs should not be abandoned.

Seemantham is to create a parting on the hair of the pregnant woman (Seemantham). That Parting is known as Vahidu amaitthal in Tamil. It is defined as "Yasmin KarmaNi garbhiNyA: seemantha unneeyathE" (that seemanthOnnayanam). It is done once and future pregnancies are taken care of this one time samskAram. Aapasthambhar's soothram is: "SeemanthOnnayanam praTamE garbhE chathurTE maasi"



seemantham - parting of hair

The day before, Naandhi Sraardham (BrahmaNa bhOjanam) is done and their blessings are received. Next day, Homam is done from agni roopa sandhAnam to Aajya bhAgam. PradhAna AahUthi with 8 mantrams (dhAthaa dhathAthu, yasthvaa etc). During these AahUthis, the pregnant wife should be touching the husband. Next, the grabhiNi is seated on the west side of the Homa Kuntam. A bunch of three dharbhams, bunch of pEtthi plant and the quilt of porcupine is constructed and used in parting the hair in an upward manner with





the recitation of the two mantras (raakahamaham, yaasthE raakE) with the three vyAhrudhis (Bhur bhuva: suva:) for three times (thrishu pradhEsEshu yenee ivEthaa thrENi). After that VeeNaa ghAnam is to be heard. In the houses of Brahmins, "sOma yEva nO" is played in the VeeNA. For VaisyAs, there is another mantram to be recited by the VeeNaa Player.

The string of germinated Yava grains is bound to the hair of the garbhiNi now and the garbhiNi should keep silent until the appearance of the stars. At this time, the husband Should accompany his wife in a northern direction walk, while touching a young calf and reciting the VyAhruthis by the husband. Some commentators say that both the husband and wife have to maintain mounam until the time of the utterance of VyAhrudhis. These will not be easy to follow in modern day city life .

JAATHA KARMAA: This is performed soon after the child's birth. The tongue of the newly-born is touched thrice with ghee to the accompaniment of appropriate Vedic manthrAs seeking protection and long life for the newly born. It is done for a male child only.

The 15th khaNDam of Aapasthasthambha Gruhya Soothram covers in detail the mantrams to be recited during the Jaathakarmaa. The father touches the child (Mantram:dhivaspari) keeps the child on his lap (Mantram: asminnaham) and performs abhimantraNam, smelling the forehead (Mantram:aSmaa bhava)



abhimantraNam





and Japam in the right ear (Mantram: mEdhAm tE). The name of the Nakshatram associated with the birth of the child is whispered into the ear of the child. An equal mixture of honey and ghee are mixed and the child's lips are touched (prAsanam) with that



jAtakarmA

mixture thrice with the accompaniment of the mantram (thvayi mEdhAm—sUryO bhrAJO dhadaathu). SnAnam follows. In a bronze vessel, the mixture of ghee and curd is prepared and the 5 mantrams starting with "KshEthriyai thvaa" are recited and prAsanam is done with the accompaniment of vyAhrudhis. Rest of the mixture is blended with water and poured into the place where the cows drink (Thotti). Next, the Mother places the child in her lap and shows her right breast to the child for the nourishment of milk to the accompaniment of the Mantram: "ayam kumara:". The child is now placed on the bhUmi with the two mantrams starting from: "yadhbhUmEr hrudhayam". The child is now touched with the accompaniment of the mantram: "naamayathi na rudhathi". A pot filled with water is placed near the head and homam is done with a mixture of mustard and rice husk (tavidu) with the 8 mantrams starting with "ayam kalim ---payArdhvam svAhaa". This samskArAm is done soon after birth. Each time anyone goes into the birth room should place the homa saamagriyai into the fire without mantrams for protection of the baby against infections from outside. This homam is done for ten days after birth .

NAAMAKARANAA: This fifth samskArA deals with the naming of the child on





its eleventh day of its birth (vide: PeriyAzhwaAr's celebration of Sri KrishNA's NaamakaraNam in his Thirumozhi). There are strict rules in choosing the name for the newly born based on the constellation at the time of birth or the time of the day, when the child is born. As PeriyAzhwaAr has instructed us, auspicious names associated with Sriman NaarAyaNA and MahA Lakshmi or great AchAryAs should be chosen for the baby with the lessons learned from AjaamiLOpAkhyANam.



Over paddy grain bed

On the tenth day, the mother gets up and has her bath and she and her husband name the child. On that utthAnam is done (removal of udhaka kumbham and agni used during the first ten days following prasavam). Both the parents utter then name of the child. The daughter should have names with odd number of letters (Bharathi, Kamalaa, KamalEkshaNaa). For males, "Su" sabhdam is preferred to be added in the front (Sudarsanam, SulOchana:). Five Mantrams are recited for the male child . One mantram is used for the female child .





ANNAPRAASANAM: This deals with the feeding of the baby for the first time with solid food at the age of six months. This samskArA is performed generally at the local temple. The parents recite manthrAs, while they feed the child. It is a beautiful sight to observe this ritual at GuruvAyoor temple.

On the sixth month of birth, Anna PrAsanam is done. Brahmanaas have to be fed and blessings received from them. A mixture of curd, honey, ghee and cooked rice is given to the child .

CHUDAKARMAA: The last of the pre-upanayana samskArA is chuda Karmaa for a male child, when a tuft or sikhA is created. The sikhA is created with the samkalpA to the Lord and hence, should not be removed impulsively or with abandon. The purpose of the SikhA is to protect the most sensitive nerve center on the top of the head known as Brahma ranthram from any abnormal vibrations. SikhA will also qualify the BrahmachAri or celibate for the performance of Vedic rites such as SamidhAdhAnA or the offering of palaasa twigs to the fire as apart of the daily observance.

The householder has to ring his sikhA after his bath every day to offer sikhOdhakA or the water from his tuft to his pithrus or ancestors. Without the sikhA, no water from the tuft can be offered. In the Hindu way of life, only the sanyAsi has no sikhA, since he has to shave his hair at the time of his entering sanyAsAsramam. This is allowed for this asramamam, since the sanyAsi is free from the observance of offerings for his ancestor.

This samskArA is done on the third year of birth with mantram. For the girl child, it is done without mantrams. The one done for the boy is chouLa karma and the one done for the girl is chUdA karma. At the 16th year, there is a ghO dhAnam prescribed .

UPANAYANAM

A child normally starts schooling at the age of five. When it reaches the age of eight, it possesses a grip on the language and therefore is considered





eligible for receiving Vedic Instruction. A sacred thread ceremony known as Upanayanam is performed by the father and the boy is blessed with the initiation into reciting the sacred Gayathri Manthram. Next, his Vedic instruction begins with the proper guru. The definition for upanayanam is: "yEna AchArya kulam upaneeyathE kumara: tath upanayanam naama karma".



upanayana ceremony - kumbham and palasa dandam

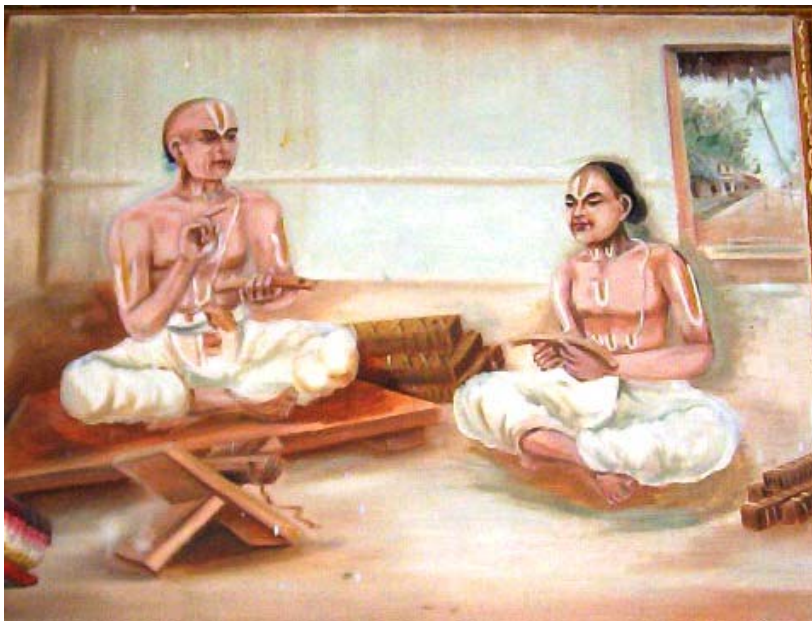
Upanayana means bringing one close to the guru or the teacher, who initiates the child into Veda vidyA. The boy learns one Veda with its limbs (angAs). It takes 12 years to complete the learning of one Veda with its angAs. The boy stays in the house of the guru and observes the ancient practise of gurukulA and performs services to the guru and his family in return for receiving his education. He also practices celibacy (Brahmacharyam) during these 12 years. Brahmacharya is the first of the four aasramAs for a Hindu. The recitation of the VedAs with swarAs (proper intonations) from a qualified guru is the goal of this aasramA.

The child without upanayanam is not eligible to perform any Sroudha or





SmArtha karmas. The samskAram is done on the eighth year including the time of conception for Brahmins. The upanayanam for the KshathriyAs and VaisyAs are done at the ages of 11 and 12 respectively. Vasanatha Kaalam is the time for upanayanam for Brahmins. Ghreeshma ruthu and Saradh ruthu are for the KshathriyAs and the VaisyAs .



Upananyanam brings one close to the guru

The BrahmachAri observes four additional samskArAs during this period of receiving Vedic instruction. These four samskArAs are linked with the completion of each of the four khAndAs (sections) of the individual VedA. For instance, a celibate receiving instruction in KrishNa Yajur VedA has to complete the four khAndAs of PrAjApathya, Soumya, AagnEya and VaisvadEva. During the completion of each of the four khAndhAs, the brahmachAri observes the samskArAs of each of the above four khAndAs. Similarly, Rg VedA has a set of four samskArAs known as MahAnAmni, MahAupanishad and two GodhAna vratAs that have to be performed by the student. The Khanda rishi tarpaNam is connected with our thanks giving to the rishis of the khAndams (Yajur, Rg and Saama UpAkarmAs in the Sundara Simham series).

At the conclusion of the samskArAs associated with the final khAndhA of the



Veda, the bachelor is adjudged as having completed his Vedic instructions successfully. He offers his homage to his guru and returns home to perform a samskArA known as samAvartanA, which literally means return to home at the end of his studies. He takes a ritual bath called SnAnA and is thereafter he is known as SnAtakA, who has completed his gurukula vaasam. He goes on pilgrimage to Kaasi kshEthram and on return from that journey is ready for marriage or VivAham. He is now ready to enter into the second aasramam known as GrihasthA (house-holder). From UpanayanA to VivaahA, we have thus witnessed seven samskArAs. After VivAha, he is expected to observe Brahmacharya for one year and thereafter, he is qualified to perform the samskArA of garbhAdhAnam associated with the conception of a child.

VivAha for women is equivalent to the Upanayanam ceremony. After VivAham, she participates in all the Yaj~nAs with her husband as sahadharmachAriNi. Hence, VivAham is called SahadharmiNi SamprayOgam. It may be pointed out that both the VivAham and Upanayanam should be conducted during the UttarAyaNa puNya kaalam. adiyEn has covered the individual stages of Vedic VivAham connected with AanDAL's VaraNamAiyram in the ebook # 20 - Sri RanganAtha Mahima vol-I available under <http://www.ahobilavalli.org/>



vivaham



PANCHA MAHA YAJ~NAS

We have so far covered 14 samskArAs for the period leading up to VivAham. In the married state, the householder has to observe five more samskArAs daily and they are known as the five great yaj~nAs (pancha mahA yaj~nAs).

The performance of these five samskArAs helps the householder to discharge his debts to DevAs, his ancestors and all living beings.

These pancha MahA Yaj~nAs are:

1. **Brahma Yaj~nam** : which is performed through the recitation of the VedAs and helps to discharge the debt to Vedic rishis or manthra drashtAs. They collected the Veda samhithAs through their spiritual powers.
2. **Deva Yaj~nA** : which requires the performance of pujAs and Yaj~nAs for Gods.
3. **Pithru Yaj~nAs** : The debt to one's ancestors is discharged through the offering of pindAs during the tarpaNAs as oblations.
4. **Maanushya Yaj~nA** : The athithi sathkAram or feeding of one's guest with respect, discharges one of his debts to the community.
5. **BhUta Yaj~nA** : This samskArA consists of feeding the living entities other than human beings. Offerings are made to them as they are an extended set of human family.

We have described 19 samskArAs so far. The remaining 21 fall into three distinct subsets: Paaka, Havir and sOma Yaj~nAs. There are a seven of each of the three subsets. Brief descriptions of these 21 yaj~nAs will be presented here. The various kalpa sUtrAs and GrihyAsUtrAs describe these Yaj~nAs in great detail.





SEVEN PAAKA YAJ~NAS

These are small yaj~nAs. The names of these are:

1. sthAlipAkA
2. ashtakai
3. anvashtakai
4. paarvaNi srArdhA or sarpa bali
5. agrahAyaNi
6. Chaitri or EesAna bali and
7. aswayuji.

Most of them are done at home in GrihyAgni, which is the Agni in which the husband and wife perform their daily OupAsanam. We will not go into the details on the performance of these yaj~nAs here.

1) Briefly, **SthAlipAkA** is the first of Paaka Yaj~nams, which is done by a gruhasthan from VivAhaa Agni started at the time of marriage and maintained by doing OupAsanam twice a day. It is done on Prathamai days. Agni Suddhi is acquired by doing sthAlipaakam (literally means cooking in a vessel). This karma precedes many Yaj~nams .

(2-3)**Ashtakai and Anvashtakai** go together and are performed on Ashtami and the next day (navami). It is a Pithru srArddham in the form of a Tila tarpaNam and is done in the 8th and the 9th days of KrishNa Paksham of Maasi month .

4) **PaarvaNi Srarddham or Sarpa Bali**: This is done during the SravaNa month. This should be done every year. It starts on SrAvaNa PourNami and the Uthsargam (discontinuation) is during Maarghazhi PourNami. Daily





BaliharaNam (offering of Bali) is stopped. Like all PaarvaNa homams, Two kinds of AahUthis (Aajya Paaka and MukhAhUthI) are made to the fire and they are followed by upastharaNa, avadhAna abhikAraNams and the aahUthis are offered with the mantram "**SrAvaNyai PourNamAsyai SvAhaa**" and Palaasa or KonRai flowers are offered to the sacred fire. This is continued from SravaNa PourNamAsai to Maarghazhi PourNamAsai and after sunset, sthAlipAkam is performed to conclude.

5) **AgrahAyaNi**: This is done once a year or once in one's life time. The timing is Maarghazhi PourNami. SthAlipAkam is done with newly harvested rice and the balls made of it are used to make four kinds of AahUthis (**IndhrAgnibhyAm Svaahaa, Agni-indhrAbhyAm svaahaa, ViSvEbhyO dEvObhya svaahaa** and **dhyAvaa-priTveebhyAm svaahaa**).

6) **Chaitri or EesAna Bali**: This is done once a year during the month of Chitthirai. This is done in UttharAyaNam Sukla Paksham. It has no time restriction like Sarpa Bali.

7) **Aswayuji**: This is also done once a year during the month of Tulaa or Iyppasi.

The procedure for the paaka Yaj~nAs are described in Grihya sUtrAs belonging to Smrithis. Hence, these Paaka Yaj~nAs are referred to as SmArtha karmAs. These are thus distinct from Srautha karmAs (Havir and sOma Yaj~nAs), since the latter derive their authority from Sruthis. It must be pointed out that the SmArtha and Srautha karmAs are equal in importance.

HAVIR YAJ~NAS

These are also seven in number and are a little more elaborate in performance than paaka yaj~nAs. Their names are:

1. Agni aadhAna





2. AgnihOthrA
3. darsa pUrNa maasa
4. AgrAyANaa
5. ChaathurmAsyaa
6. NiruDa pasubhandha and
7. SouthrAmaNi.

These yaj~nAs are performed in SroudhAgni, which is also known as TrEtAgni. Aapasthampa sUtrAs in their trEtHAgni khAndham (section) give the details of construction of the Yaj~na kundAs and the maintenance of trEtAgnis or the three sroudhAgnis revered as gArhapathyam, dakshiNAgni and aahavaneeyam.

1) **Agni AadhAna:** This is done once in a life time after the marriage ceremony. At that time, the sacred fire used in VivAham is divided into two: GruhyAgni for doing daily OupAsanam (derived from the word UpsanA) and SroudhAgni used for performing AgnihOthram and other related Yaj~ams.

2) **AgnihOthram** is done daily using ghee or milk.

3) **Darsa PoorNa Maasa** is done twice a month (each PraTamai).

4) **AgrAyANaa:** It is done once a year or once in a life time. Iyppasi PoorNimai is the recommended time.

5) **ChAthurmAsyam** is an agni Karmaa for a gruhasthan and has no relationship to the ChAthurmsya Vratam of a SanyAsi although both are done during the rainy season. The gruhasthan does it once a year or once in a life time.

6) **NirooDa Pasu Bhandham:** In the olden times, animal sacrifice was involved and today, Pishta Pasu Bhandham involving the image of the animal made in flour is used. This is also done once a year or once in a life time.





7) **SouthrAmaNi**: This is done once a year or once in a life time as well and uses Suraa to please the Kshudhra dEvathAs (insignificant dEvathAs).

Elaborate details on Sroutha Karmaas have been provided in great detail by the monographs "**Aapasthambha Gruhya Soothram**" by Ghanapadi VaduvUr Veeravalli SaThakOpaacchAr Swamy and the one on Sroutham by Sri V.K. RaamAnujAcchAr Swamy .

SOMA YAJ~NAS

These are also seven in number. There are fewer hOmAs in these sOma Yaj~nAs, but more eulogies or sthuthis (sAma ghAnam). SaamaVedic recitation is central to these seven Yaj~nAs. Saama Vedam has been identified as "**VedAnAm Saama vedOsmi**" by GeethAchAryan. The four KhandAs of Saama Vedam (AgnEya KhAndA, Aindra KhAndA, PaavamAna khAndhA and aaraNyaka KhAndhA) provide the sama riks or dashtis (collection of ten verses) for the following seven sOma Yaj~nAs :

The individual names of these seven Yaj~nAs are:

1. AgnishtOmA or JyOthishtOmA
2. AthyagnishtOmA
3. UkthyA
4. ShOdasi
5. VaajabhEyA
6. AthirAtrA and
7. abhthOryAmA

Soma Yaagams are elaborate and very formal. The NambhUdhri Brahmins of KeraLaa perform them even today, where Soma rasam is filtered and the





effusion is offered to Indhran and other DevathAs using Rg and Saama Veda mantrams. adiyEn is pleased to learn that my dear friend Sri KrishNa Prasad will be bringing out a lot of manuscripts of AgnihOthram Sri RaamAnuja TaatAchAr Swamy into CDs; Sri AgnihOthram Swamy is an authority in the performance of many Yaj~ams Please refer also to the following two URL for details :

<http://namboothri.com/articles/yaagam-photos.htm> and

<http://www.Ramanuja.org/sv/bhakti/archives.nov2000/0040.html>

One who completes a sOma yaj~nA is hailed as a sOmayAji. Even if one can not do all of these seven Yaj~nAs, it has been recommended that atleast one of the seven (agnishthOma) should be performed in one's life time.

SANYASINS

For sanyAsins, there are no samskArA of cremation. They are buried in BrindhAvanams by the riverside or near a holy spot. A peepal sapling or TuLasi bush is planted over the site.

CONCLUSION

The importance of the samskArAs can not be underestimated in the Hindu sanAtana dharmA. They form the core of the Hindu life cycle rituals and guards the practitioners from swerving into paths not sanctioned by the VedAs. They protect them from the time of conception to the last moment on this earth of our Lord. The samskArAs prescribed for the four successive/ separate aasramAs can not be abandoned until one's last breath. Through the knowledge of these ancient samskArAs, it is our hope to incorporate them into our lives within the limits of our abilities and help others keep up the tradition with Sriman NaarAyaNA's krupA.



MAHA SAMPROKSHANAM - WHY WE DO HOMAMS

The Most important items during any Vaidhika Karma like PerumAL's Maha samprOkshaNam are Homams performed in consecrated YaagasAlai. After Agni prathishtai, and Saanthi Homam, Nithya Homams and PoorNAhUthis are performed daily for the consecration of the Temple as a place sacred for the residence of the PerumAL and ThAyar at the different Sannidhis.

On the second day, the Lord's eyes are ceremonially open (NethrOnmeeLanam) and right after that Agni KunDa Homam is done to set in motion the other Homams on the subsequent days.



ashtothra satha kalasa thirumanjanam

(Courtesy:Sri.B.Senthil)

Let us reflect on why we do Homams (yaj~nams/Yaagams) by taking as an example Purusha Sooktham, which describes the greatest of Yaagams done by



SaadhyA DEvAs (Nithya Sooris) and Rishis for the creation of the Cosmos through the invocation of the Parama Purushan, Sriman NaarAyanan. Prior to study of the Purusha Sooktham as the primordial Homam in a Yaagam called Sarvahuth Yaagam, let us study the references to the mysteries of Yaj~nam and the Lord's role in it as a doer, helper and enjoyer of the fruits of the Homam. The references are in Sri VishNu Sahasra Naamam almost at the very end of the Sahasra Naamam (Names 971-982). Please see <http://www.ahobilavalli.org/e-books> 29 to 33 for detailed commentaries on the SrI VishNu Sahasra nAmams.

Let us cover the brief meanings of these 12 Naamams relating to Homams/ Yaj~nams based on Professor A. SrinivAsa Raghavan's translation of Swamy PrAsara Bhattar's BhAshyam :

971: (PraNavam) Yaj~nya Nama:

The Lord is identified here as the Yaj~nam or Sacrifice. He serves as the UpAyam for those, who do not have the spiritual rigor/Tapas and yet wish to attain His sacred feet. Through japa Yaj~nam, He Himself becomes the Yaj~nam.

972: (PraNavam) Yaj~napathayE nama:

As the Lord of the Yaj~nam, He gives the Yaj~na phalan to those, who performed the Yaj~nam to please Him. A Supreme example is Lord VaradarAjA, who appeared before Chathur Mukha Brahma to bless him with the fruits of that Yaj~nam performed on Hasthigiri at Kaanchi.

973: (PraNavam) YajvanE nama:

The Lord Himself becomes the performer of the Yaj~nam for the purification of those who are unable to observe the daily rites. He says:"I Myself am doing without fail this type of Yaj~nA at both dawn and dusk of every day".

974: (PraNavam) Yaj~ngAya nama:





There are capable adhikAris, who perform these Yaj~nams. Those Yaj~nams become auxiliaries to the Yaj~nam that He does at dawn and dusk of every day. These Yaj~nams become sEsham to the One performed by the Sarva Seshi, Bhagavaan Sriman NaarAyanan.

975: (PraNavam) Yaj~na-VAhanAya nama:

He assists those who perform the Homams by blessing them with sakthi, adhikAram, faith and accessories to complete their Yaj~nams.

976: (PraNavam) Yaj~nabhruthayE nama:

Even if the Homam is imperfectly performed and has deficiencies (Vikalasam) as a result, out of His KaaruNyam, He rectifies it and blesses the performer of the Homam to think of Him (KrishNANusmaraNam) and reach thereby the final sacrificial offering stage known as PoorNAhUthi.

977: (PraNavam) Yaj~na-kruthayE nama:

He is the Creator of the Homam and Yaj~nam for the KshEmam of the Universe (Jagath Hitham).

978: (PraNavam) Yaj~nE nama:

He is the YajamAnan (Master) for whom all the Homams are done.

979: (PraNavam) Yaj~na BhujE nama:

He is the ultimate enjoyer of all the sacred offerings associated with the Homams & Yaj~nams.

980: (PraNavam) Yaj~na SaadhanAya nama:

He stands as the gateway to Dhivya Jn~Anam that leads one to the performance of the Homams/Yaj~nams.

981: (PraNavam) Yaj~nAnthakruthE nama:



He provides the fruit of the Homams. What is that Fruit? Attainment of True Knowledge about Him as ShAdguNya SampoorNa BhagavAN is that supreme fruit of the HOmam.



shadgunya sampoorNa bhagavan
SrI nrusimhaswamy in garuda vahanam
(Courtesy: www.ranganatha.org)

982: (PraNavam) Yaj~na GuhyAya nama:

He is the secret of the Homam and Yaj~nams. Professor A.SrinivAsa Raaghavan's translation of Swamy ParAsara Bhattar's commentary for this naamam is: "Though BhagavAn is not in wants (NirapEkshan), He accepts the offerings (Havis and PoorNAhUthi) made in a sacrifice (HOmam/Yaj~nam) as



though He has long been expecting them and enjoys them". Thus, He feels satisfied and also satisfies those who perform the Homams to please Him. This is understood by the wise and not by those, who have superficial knowledge about the injunctions, means and fruits of sacrifices. Hence, the name: "the secret of the Yaj~nam/Homam".



**Kumbham procession during the 2001 samprokshana mahotsavam at
Sri Ranganatha temple New York
(Courtesy: www.ranganatha.org)**

Please come and witness the Homams for Prathishtai of the Lord in His consecrated temple wherever a MahAsamprOkshaNam takes place. These Homams and the ways of performing them to please the Lord has been elaborated by Sages Sounakar, Aapasthampar and BhOdhAyanar. The Rthviks will be performing these ancient Homams at the Temple in YaagasALA with specially constructed Agni Kuntams.

adiyEn will cover the First Homam/Yaj~nam known as the Sarvahuth Yaj~nam (all encompassing Yaj~nam of Yaj~nams) that is described in Purusha





Sooktham. This Yaj~nam created the four VedAs and the entire Naama-Roopa prapancham. In view of the importance of this Aadhi Homam/Yaj~nam, Purusha Sooktham that describes it is housed in all the Four VedAs with some variations (Rg Vedam : Tenth mandalam, Nintieth Sooktham; Sukla Yajur Veda VaajasanEya Samhithai(31-1-16); KrishNa Yajur Vedam TaittirIya AraNyakam (3-12-13); Saama Vedam (4-3) and Atharvana Vedam (19-6-3).

The Sarvahuth Yaagam described in Purusha Sooktham is about the MaanasIka AarAdhanam for PurushOtthaman, Sriman NaarAyaNan. This Purusha Sooktham finding its house in all the Four VedAs is considered the essence of all Sruthis (Vedams).

Two great BhAshyakArAls (Commentators) have blessed us with detailed commentaries for Purusha Sooktham. One of them is Saayana, who was one of the greatest Vedic Scholars of Vijaya Nagaram Empire and the other is Periya Jeeyar or Sri RanganAtha Muni. Sri V.Sundar has an elaborate posting on Purusha Sooktham, which is archived in the Sri VaishNavA Homepages (<http://www.ramanuja.org/>) maintained by Sri Mani VaradarAjan under the section, "The VedAs". Please refer to that outstanding essay by Sri V.Sundar.

The Sarvahuth Yaagam (the offerings of All) is the Aadhi Yaagam done by Brahma for the creation of the Cosmos and its beings. ChEthana-AchEthana Prapancham was created from that Maanasa Yaj~nam.

This Yaj~nam is an AarAdhanam for the Parama Purushan. Brahma performed this Yaj~nam using his VirAt SarIram given by the PurushOtthaman. Brahma's Indhriyams, the DevAs, served as the Rthviks officiating at the Yaj~nam. In that Yaj~nam, the Spring Time was the Ghee (aahUthi), Summer was the Samith (sacred sticks for kindling the Fire), Autumn was the Havis (sacred offerings) and Parama Purushan served as the Agni receiving that Havis. Brahma sacrificed himself as the PoorNAhUthi (Final Offering at the end of the Yaj~nam). After the Sarvahuth Yaj~nam, Brahma instructed us to perform all Yaagams/Homams similar to the Sarvahuth Yaagam, where one sacrifices all





including themselves at the feet of the Lord and end up gaining all they wished as Phalan (SarvAbhIshta Siddhi from the Boon giving VaradharAjan).

In our MahA samprOkshaNam for Lord RanganAthan, we have to sacrifice all (ego, possessions known as MadhIyam) and regain all (apunarAvrutthi with the anugraham of our AchAryAs) from the most merciful Lord, the Parama DayALu.



Mahasamprokshanam for Sri Ranganatha Temple at New York
(Courtesy: www.ranganatha.org)

Homams at the samprOkshaNam are done or should be done in this spirit. In this context, an important step in the MaanasIka AarAdhanam known as BhUtha Suddhi (Cleanising of One's Prakruthic body to qualify oneself for the performance of BhagavathArAdhanam) comes to my mind. The sankalpam for BhUtha Suddhi is:

"Sri Bhagavath-Aj~nyayaa Sriman NaarAyaNa Preethyartham
Bhagavadh-AradhanE YOGYATHAA SIDDHYARTHAM BhUtha Suddhim





KarishyE"

In BhUtha Suddhi, the blemishes of the body arising from the sambhandham with Prakruthi and the 24 tattvams associated with it are dried and burnt and reduced to ashes thru appropriate manthrams and that ash is soaked in the sacred GangA waters that flows out of the Lord's sacred feet to produce a divine sarIram fit for engagement in the Bhagavath AarAdhanam. There are lots of steps in performing BhUtha Suddhi that we will not get into here.

This Hruth Yaagam (Maanasa AarAdhanam) of which BhUtha Suddhi is an essential part is considered far superior to the external AarAdhana (BhAhyArAdhanam). We perform the Homams in a spirit reminiscent of BhUtha Suddhi. Aalaya Suddhi arises from these Homams. PerumAL feels joyous to enter such Temples consecrated by Homams in His Suddha Sathva Svaroopam. During the course of the year, our RajO and TamO guNams create blemishes in AarAdhanam and the Sannidhyam of the Lord is affected. To restore the Sannidhyam, PavithrOthsavam is done and Homams are an essential part of such annual consecrations. MahA SamprOkshaNam has many such Homams for the consecration of the Home for the Lord, the ThripAdhUrthva Purushan saluted by the Purusha Sooktham. Periya Jeeyar's commentary on the glories of this PurushOtthaman, with one part below in Prakruthi MaNdalam and the rest of the three parts in Parama Padham is a marvelous one:

(achinthya VibhavOdhatim, anantha sakthim, SarvEsvaram, SarvAnandha SampoorNam, SarvaJ~nam, SarvAnukoolam, SarvAdhAram -- vrutthi-kshaya vivarjitha Vignam, SvAdhIna-nikhila chEshtam, Jagath-udaya-vibhava-laya-leela-vilAsinim, SvAthmArAmam, Svathruptham, JyOthirmayam, apramEyam, Sarva-pramANa - kOcharam, asEsha jagadhEka-kaaraNam, Vaangh-manasAdhitha-Vaibhavam, SthOthum asakthA: Sruthaya: "ThvamEva thvAm vEttha yOasi sOasi", kO attha: Vedha ka iha pravOchEth, sO anga Vedha yathi na Vedha: " ithyAthi vadhanathi).





Here, Periya Jeeyar extols the anantha-klayAna Gunams of the Parama Purushan and says that Vedhams stumble in their efforts to describe Him as of this nature or that nature. They say that He alone knows about Himself. Some times even they wonder whether He Himself fully knows the extent of His Vaibhavam.

We salute this ThripAthudhaith Purushan in our Homams and beseech Him to enter into our HrudhayAkAsam and occupy the seats that we adoringly prepare Him for residence in the temples consecrated for Him.



We beseech Him to enter into our Hrdayam
(Courtesy: www.ranganatha.org)

sadagopan.org





HOMAM, HAVIS YAGNA AND YAGA

Homam, Havis, Yajna and Yaga are closely related terms dealing with a Sacrificial/sacred act with offering to Gods through the medium of Fire (Agni). adiyEn will comment for the record on their individual connotations and provide additional details on these terms and their Vedic Significance.

YAJNA in the broadest sense has been defined as a sacrificial rite or spiritual offering made generally in fire.

Grahashtas are expected to observe the following daily Yajnas:

1. **Bhootha Yajna**, an oblation or offering to all of the created beings with whom we share this earth.
2. **Pitru Yajna**: Obsequial offerings in the form of libations of water to the deceased ancestors.
3. **Deva Yajna**: Sacrifice to Sudarsana, Lakshmi Narasimha, and others through oblations offered in fire with Veda Mantras or Bijaksharams. This is commonly called HOMA.
4. **Manushya Yajna**: Athiti Satkaaram or hospitality to guests or strangers, who visit one.
5. **Brahma Yajna**: Teaching and recitation of the Vedas

In Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavan declares that He is of the Japa Yajna among the various Yajnas. Here reference is to the Mantra Japam of one's Ishta Daiwatam or Upasana Murthy or the Sacred Ashtaakshara Maha mantram.

YAGA is generally associated with elaborate performance of fire sacrifices on a large scale (Vaajabheyam, Poundarikam, Aswamedham et al). Special priests with expertise in Vedic Injunctions (Vidhis) such as:

1. Advharyu (officiating priest),





2. Hotr (for Rg Vedic Recitation),
3. Udgaata (Sama Vedic passage reciter) and
4. Brahman (Presiding priest, often employed at a Soma Yaga)

are involved in the successful conductance of these Yagas. The Number of priests can go as high as 16 in complicated sacrifices (Yagas).

HOMAM is generally a small scale "Yaga" and is performed at home as opposed to Yagas, which take place in a public place with attendance of a large group of people. Some times the scriptural passages are recited in the format of a Homam. Examples of such Homams are the Purusha Sukta Homam and Bhagavat Gita Homam. Agni is involved and sacrificial offerings are made to propitiate Gods or the Sacred passages associated with the Vedas or Bhagavan.



homam





HAVIS is the term used for the oblations offered to the God, which are tossed with reverence into the Fire. Havis generally is an oblation of burnt offering. It can be clarified butter also. Agni is the medium, which carries the Havis to the different Gods. **Havyapaaka** - is the oblation cooked with butter and milk.



Agni carries the Havis to different Gods
Narasimha homam at Sri Ranganatha temple, New York
(Courtesy: www.ranganatha.org)

Purvamimamsa Sutras of Jaimini go into great detail about the various aspects (the vessels to be used, the different priests, et al) of the Yaagas.

The Vishnu Sahasra Namas (971-982) deal with the Yajna swaroopam of Sriman Narayana. The Naamas and the meanings as interpreted by Parasara Bhattar and translated by Professor Srinivasaraghavan were discussed in the previous section on "why we do homam?"

The Namaa "Yajna Guhyam" is very elaborately commented upon by Parasara





Bhattar this way: "Though Bhagavan is not in wants, He accepts the offerings made in a sacrifice as though He has been long expecting them and enjoys them. Thus, He feels satisfied and also satisfies those, who do sacrifices. This is understood only by the wise, who know the injunctions, the means and the fruit of sacrifices, but not by those who have only a superficial knowledge. Hence the name of HIM as the Secret of the Sacrifice."

"All the Vedas and all that has to be learnt, all the Sastras and all sacrifices, and all worship--All are Sri Krishna. O Kings! Those, who know Krishna correctly in this way, may be considered to have completed successfully all sacrifices."

"All the shining luminaries in the world, the three worlds and three guardians of the Worlds, the three fires and the five offerings in them and all the Gods--All are Sri Krishna, the son of Devaki."

YAJNA VARAHA MURTHY AND SRIMAD BHAGAVATHAM

The relation between Bhagavan and the Yajnas is described by Srimalad Bhagavatham.

The third Canto of Bhagavatham in the verses 13 to 35 describe the body of the Lord as made up of the various utensils used in the Yajnas, the ceremonies and all the Havis. In this description, the Havis known as Purodasam is seen as the stomach of the Lord, Praachityam (Brahma's havis) as the mouth of Yajna Varaha Murthy. Bhagavatham also describes the 7 Soma Yajnas (Agnishtomam, Atyagnishtomam, Ukthyam, Shodasi, Vaajabehyam, Atiraathram, Abthoryaamam) as taking the parts of Skin, Flesh, Metas, Bones, Majjai, Blood and Suklam. The total view of the Yajna Varaha Murthy is that of a Yajna without the affiliation of the Soma Creeper (Latha).

Blessed indeed are those, who can do Homam in one form or other, while understanding the significance of them and their intimate relationship to the Lord .





PAVITROTSAVAM

Annual Pavithrothsavams are purificatory rituals recommended by Aagamas to expiate the commissions and the omissions associated with daily worship (Aaraadhanam) of the Lord at His consecrated temples. Lapses in the performance of the Aaraadhanam are recognized and a detailed ceremony consisting of homam in front of the Uthsava Moorthy at a specially constructed yaaga saala. The decoration of all the Moorthys of the temple with specially prepared necklaces made of dyed cotton thread is carried out and the day concludes with a poornahoothi. This is an elaborate uthsavam, which can be conducted from 3-10 days depending on the temple tradition. The time for the performance of the Pavithrothsavam is different from temple to temple. At Thirumala, it is scheduled in August; at Thiruvazhunthur dhivya desam, it is performed in the Tamil month of Iyppasi (October-November). At the Pomona Sri Ranganathar temple, it was celebrated for 3 days during October. Special pavithra maalais were brought over from Srirangam and were used for decoration of all the deities in the eight sannidhis.

Before we discuss the annual Pavithrothsam, it is relevant to point out that another purificatory ceremony performed inside the sanctum sanctorum (garbha graham) known as "Koil Azhwaar Thirumanjanam" (KAT) is quite different from the annual pavithrothsavam. The KAT is performed four times an year at the sanctum sanctorum of Thirumala Srinivasan's temple. Pavithrothsavam is performed only once a year in all temples. On the day of KAT at Thirumala, the Uthsava moorthys and the akanda dheepam are removed from the sanctum sanctorum and placed in the ante-chamber. The sanctum is cleaned thoroughly and a paste consisting of Kumkumam (vermillion), Camphor and other special ingredients are applied to the inner walls. After a short period of time, this paste is wiped clean and a light abhishEkam is performed for the Moolavar and Bhoga Srinivasan. Naivedhyam is offered and distributed. This is a physical cleaning act. Pavithrothsavam is a well prescribed ritual, where the archakar prays for forgiveness for all lapses--conscious or





otherwise-- in the daily worship of the Lord.



pavitram for pavitrotsavam
(Courtesy:Sri.B.Senthil)

On the evening before Pavithrotsavam, a prayer to the Lord (Bhagavath praarthanai) is offered; this is followed by:

- (1) Acharya-Yajamaana sankalpam (vow to perform the Pavithrotsavam)
- (2) Vaasudeva Punyahavachanam (cleansing act before any ritual at the temple with appropriate veda manthras and sprinkling of the areas of uthsavam with consecrated water)
- (3) Mrudh sankrahanam (Collection of earth)
- (4) ankuraarpanam (germination of seeds in special vessels in the earth housed in special vessels) and
- (5) Vaasthu Saanthi (prayers to Vaasthu Purushan of the temple for auspiciousness)

On the morning of the second day, a ritual known as theertha sangrahanam is



performed and is followed by Acharya-Bhagavan raksha bhandham (tying of raksha on the wrists of the Lord and Acharyaas). The special priests versed in aagama rituals enter the yaaga saalai (pravesam) and the dhwaara poojai is performed. Next Kumbha, Mandala, Bhimbha poojaas are conducted. Consecration of the Agni for the homams (agni prathishtai) follows. All the specially constructed pavithra maalais are consecrated and adorn all the Uthsava and Moola bherams. Pradhaana homam and PoorNaahuthi followed by laghu Saarrumurai concludes the morning's ceremonies.

On the evening of the second day, Yaaga Saalai pravesam, Dhwaara Poojai are performed first and is followed by Chathur-sthaana archanai, Kumbha-Mandala-Bhimbha-Agni poojaas. Nithya homam and Poornaahuthi conclude the day's rituals.

On the morning and the evening of the third day, the sequence of procedures of the second day is followed. The special events for the third day evening are: the abhishekam (Thirumanjanam) for the Lord with 81 kalasams as at Srirangam. A very special homam with deep ritualistic significance known as "Shodasa Tatthva Nyaasa Homam" is performed. Saanthi homam and Saarrumurai are the final rituals for the third day.



pavitrotsava homam



On the morning of the fourth day, the ceremonies of PavithrOthsavam come to a conclusion in the following sequence:

1. Yaaga saalai pravesam,
2. dhwaara pooja,
3. chathur sthaana archanai,
4. nithya homam,
5. Mahaa Poornaahoothi,
6. Mahaa dhwaara devathai yathaa sthaanam,
7. Kumbha yathaa sthaanam, and
8. Kumbha yaathraa dhaanam.

The consecrated waters from the three day long ceremonies are sprinkled over all corners of the temple. A big Saarrumurai and Mangala Aaratthi are then performed. The Pavithra maalais are removed and distributed to devotees, who took part in the ghoshti and prasaadham is offered to the Lord and distributed to all.

The PavithrOthsavam is concluded this way and the path is laid out for another year of worship at the temple to receive the blessings of the dhivya dampathis.

THE KINDS OF UTHSAVAMS AT THE VISHNU AALAYAMS (TEMPLES)

In the consecrated temples of the Lord SrIman NaarAyaNa, there are three kinds of Uthsavams:

1. NithyOthsavam,
2. NaimithikOthsavam and





3. KaamyOthsavam.



Pavitrotsavam at Thirumalai

NITHYOTHSAVAM:

Every month there are Pancha Parva Uthsavams that are recognized as NithyOthsavams. These five Nithya Uthsavams during each month are:

1. PerumAl's Thirunakshathram (Revathi for SrI RanganAtha, SravaNam for Lord SrinivAsa),
2. Two EkAdasis (Sukla and KrishNa Paksha EkAdasis),
3. First day of the Tamil Month (Maasa PiRappu),
4. AmAvasai (New Moon Day).





NAIMITTHIKOTHSAVAM:

This is a samprOkshaNa (Consecration) Uthsavam, when any one of these misfortunes happens:

1. The **dhurbhiksham** (inauspiciousness) caused to the community by Asubha (inauspicious) graham (constellation) combinations
2. **Gathi BhEdhams** of the Moon and the Sun
3. the falling down of Gopuram, MaNtapams and temple structures
4. Epidemics and horrible diseases (The Visha Jwaram at Thirupputtkuzhi Dhivya Desam during Swamy Desikan's Times),
5. the fracture of the consecrated images (ThiruveLLUr Moolavar's hand, which was corrected by one of the Azhagiya Singars, The shift in Peetam of ANDAL Uthsava Vighram at SrI PerumbhUthUr et al)
6. Failure of rains in the land.

These are the NaimitthikOthsavams.

KAAMYOTHSAVAM:

This Uthsavam is to seek any one of the Four PurushArTams (Dharma, Artha, Kaama and Moksham) from the Lord thru prayers and observance of dedicated festivals (Golden RaTa Uthsavam at Oppiliappan Sannidhi).

PAVITHROTHSAVAM

This is a special annual Uthsavam for the purposes of the banishment of all blemishes, lapses in the Year's aarAdhanams by ArchakAs and to restore Saanidhyam for the Lord. This is hence a Sarva DhOsha NivAraNa uthsavam.

It is carried out during the time period between AavaNi month and Kaarthikai





month and is for the preethi of VishNu and for chEthanam's Moksham. Sukla Paksham in these months are preferred for the observance of this Sarva DhOsha NivAraNa Uthsavam. Prathamai, Thrutheeyai, Panchami, EkAdasi, Dasami ThrayOdasi, DhvAdasi, PourNami thithis are to be selected for the start of this Uthsavam.

Regarding Nakshathrams, RohiNi (Lord KrishNA's Birth star), Pushyam, Mrughaseersham, ChithrA, SravaNa, Revathi, Asvini nakshathrams are preferred. From Sukla Paksha Prathamai to PourNami, the performance of PavithrOthsavam on any one of the Nakshathrams are recommended. It is Utthamam (most auspicious) to initiate this uthsavam on such days.

This PavithrOthsavam can have a duration of 5 or 7 or 9 days. At minimum, it must be performed for 5 days. On the day of completion of this Uthsavam, TheerthavAri (like avabhrutha SnAnam at the end of conclusion of a Yaj~nam) in the temple tank or the river is to be done.

WHY THE WORD PAVITHRAM IS LINKED TO THIS UTHSAVAM?

Pavithram means Suddham and auspiciousness. Silk threads are used to create the necklaces for the Lord. There are 5 different colored threads. In the middle of the threads, there are knots (granthis). Prathishtai (Consecration) is done to these colored silk necklaces (garlands) thru invocation of the power of the dhivya aabharaNams and Jewelry of the Lord (SrI Vasthram/PeethAmbharam, Kireetam/Crown, Kousthubham, Vana Maalai, Sudarsanam et al). PrANa prathishtai is next performed to make them fit for the Lord to wear these Pavithra Maalais.

As an integral part of the PavithrOthsavam, the traditional observances such as Bhagavath PrArTanai, Sankalpam, PuNyAhavAchanam, Mrudh SangarahaNam, Vaasthu Saanthi karmAs should be done. The special Yaaga Saalai should be constructed. DhvAra PoojA is performed for the Yaaga SaalA and PerumAL should be requested to take His place in the Yaaga SaalA through Chathus-SthAnArchanam for performing worship during the Uthsavam days.





THE FOUR STHANA ARCHANAM

1. Kumbham,
2. MaNDalam,
3. Bhimbham and
4. Agni are the four SthAnams (Focus sites) for the archanai (worship) of the Lord.

KUMBHAM

In the YaagasAlai Vedhikai, nine Kumbhams (Copper vessels adorned with threads) are established to invoke VaasudEvan, SankarshNan, Pradhyumnan, Aniruddhan, Purushan, Sathyan, Ananthan, Achyuthan and Sudarsanan for AarAdhanam. In the Kumbham, sacred waters from Ganga, Cauvery et al. are requested to be present and these theertha Svaroopas DevathAs are invoked for dhana dhAnyas abhivrutthi.

MANDALAM

MaNDalam is BhagavAn's Chakra Aayudham that is drawn as Yanthram (Bhimbham) and Lord Sudarsana is invoked there. (In the MaNDalam, Sudarsana MahA Purushan has Sudarsana JwAla, Nemi, Aram, Naabhi and aksham). There are also six adhvas in the MaNDalam (Shadadhvan NyAsam):

1. TathvAdhvA (JeevAdhi Tatthvams),
2. BhuvanAdhvA (the 14 universes starting from PaataLa),
3. VarNAdhvA (BheejAkAksharams of Manthrams),
4. KalAdhvA (64 Kalais),
5. ManthrAdhvA (Moola Manthram, Moorthy Manthram, Phala manthram,





Nrusimha Manthram) and

6. PadhAdhvA (KesavAdhi upavyUha Moorthys).



BhagavAn's Chakra Aayudham
(Courtesy: www.ranganatha.org)

In the petals and also in the angles (kONams like AgnEyam), SrIvathsam, Sankham, ChaNDAdhi DevAs (dhwaara PaakakAs), VisvaksEnar, VynathEyar (Garudan) are to be invoked and worshipped. This MaNDala AarAdhana rules (Vithi) are found especially in PaancharAthra Aagamam. When Sudarsanar is invoked in MaNDalam directly, He removes all fears (Bheethi) and confers auspiciousness. He burns away all blemishes. MaNDala aaraadhanam is done to grace the BhakthAs and make dhushtAs powerless.

BHIMBHARADHANAM

PerumAl is brought to Yaaga SaalA and invoked for worship there. The misfortunes in the land and that of the rulers are removed through this



Chathus-sTAna AarAdhanam.



Bimbaaraadanam - Sri Lakshminarasimha PerumAL
Sri Ranganatha Temple, New York

AGNI AARADHANAM

The YaagAgni Kuntams are constructed in the Yaaga Saalai as instructed by the Aagmams. BhagavAn is invoked there in the middle of Agni in the Kuntam. Homam is performed with PradhAna Manthrams. For consecration of the Agni used in the Yaaga Saalaa, GarbhAdhAna and Jaathakarma ceremonies have to be done for the Agni, In AagamAs, Agni Prathishtai is classified under three Categories:

1. BaalAgni,
2. VruddhAgni and
3. YouvanAgni.



For SamprOkshaNam, Dheekshai and other Saanthi KarmAs, BaalAgni is used. For Uthsavams such as PavithrOthsavam, BrahmOthsavam, VruddhAgni is to be used. BaalAgni is created by rubbing a special kind of wood (araNikkattai) against a holder and Agni is churned out (maTanam). VruddhAgni is the Agni present with AgnihOthris or it is brought from the Madapalli (Kitchen of the Lord).



agni aaraadanam

Agni has seven tongues (Saptha JihvA) :

1. KaaLI,
2. KarALI,
3. SumanA,
4. IOhitha,
5. DhUmrA,
6. Sphulingini and
7. VisvaroopA.





Each of them have a specific location in the Agni Kuntam. KaaLI is in the middle, KarALee is in Poorva dhig and the others are in the AagnEya dhig, VaaruNa dhig, West, North, Vaayu Dhig, and North East (IsAnyam). For dhOsha Nivrutthi, only offerings thru Agni or water has to be made to other DevathAs that ultimately reaches their antharyAmi, SrIman NaarAyaNan. VedAs declare that the Lord is in the form of Agni (Yaj~nO vai VishNu:). Even the Yaj~nam is VishNu Mayam.

In Yaj~na Kuntam, PerumAL is invoked and homam is performed with Moola Manthram, PanchOpanishad Manthram, Pancha VaaruNika manthrams. At the end PoorNahUthi is done for the day. These homams are done thrice, five times or 7 times during the day and on the last day ShOdasa Tathva NyAsa Homam and Saanthi hOmam are performed to conclude the PavithrOthsavam.

SHODASA TATHVA NYASA HOMAM

The first Tathva Homam involves:

1. PrANAdhi Dasa Vaayu NyAsam,
2. PrANa PrathishtA Homam,
3. Moola Manthra Homam,
4. Aayudha NyAsa Homam and
5. BhUshaNa NyAsa Homam (All the Aayudhams and AabharaNams represent different MahA Tatthvams).

THE 16 (SHODASA) NYASAMS ARE :

1. PraNava NyAsam
2. VyAhrudhi NyAsam
3. Akshara NyAsam





4. Nakshathra NyAsam
5. Gruha NyAsam
6. Kaala NyAsam
7. BrAhmaNAdhi VarNa NyAsam
8. ThOya NyAsam
9. Nigama NyAsam
10. DevathA NyAsam
11. VairAjan NyAsam
12. Krathu NyAsam
13. GuNa NyAsam
14. Moorthy NyAsam
15. Sakthi NyAsam and
16. Shad GuNa NyAsam.

Each of these homams are done and the residue (samphAdham) from the Agni Kuntam is collected and applied to the Lord's limbs from the sacred feet up to Siras (head).

SAANTHI HOMAM

Chathur VyAhruthi Manthra (BhU SvAhA, Bhuva: Sva: BhUrbuhva: SvAhA) homam are performed 108 times with honey, milk, Curd and ghee. The SampAdham from this Saanthi Homam is applied from the sacred feet, Stomach, Face and the Siras of the Lord. Thereafter, Jaggery, Honey, Ghee are used to the accompaniment of VishNU Gaayathri (108 times) and oblations





are offered; at the end the SamphAdham from this Homam is applied to all the limbs of the Lord.

PrANAhUthi follows; PrAyascchittha Homam is done with PanchOpanishad manthrams. The Sakthi from the Kuntam is transferred to the Kumbam and the Kuntam is returned to yathA sTAnam. DhvAra Devathais are sent back to their homes (yathA sTAnam) with reverential prayers. Then, the Sakthi in the ManDalam is transferred to Kumbham. It is followed by Kumbha YaadhrA dhAnam and the Kumbham is taken in procession to Moolavar sannidhi with all upachArams. Kumbha Sakthi is now transferred to Moolavar (Dhruva bhEram). All saanidhis are sprinkled (prOkshaNam) with the water from Kumbham. TheerthavAri is carried out and ChakratthAzhwAr is immersed in the waters by the archakAs. At the Moolavar Sannidhi, JithanTE sthOthram is recited and is followed by the grand SaaRRumuRai with Vedam, Upanishads, IthihAsams and Dhivya Prabhandhams. PrasAdam is presented. Theertham, SatAri, Ghoshti ViniyOgam of Bhagavad PrasAdham conclude this annual PavithrOthsavam Festival at VishNu Temples.

ArchakA's Manthra Bhalam keeps the Sannidhyam of the consecrated Images of the Lord at the Temples. ArchakA has to serve the Lord without anticipating any gains (Aathmartha AarAdhanam). Such an AarAdhanam will grant soubhAgyams to the devotees. When the Archaka is not performing such aarAdhanam, he is called an amanthraka archakan and the Lord runs away from him like a human being confronting a Cobra and the animals of the forest, when they see a lion. Archaka and the devotees have to recognize the consecrated ArchA images of the Lord as SaakshAth BhagavAn and not as some image made of stone, metal or wood. Those who consider that way will surely suffer in narakam.

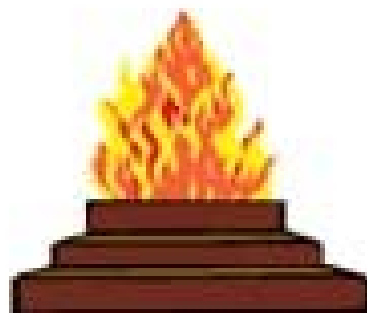
The Archakan, who uses the prescribed AarAdhana Manthrams daily causes the Saannidhyam of the Lord to grow in the Consecrated Bhimbhams of Him. When Archaka is blessed to perform such AarAdhanam without expecting any returns, he reaches VishNu Padham at the end of his life on this earth. This is





what PaancharAthra Aagamam texts state. The Manthra Veeryam (potency) of the archaka results in Saanidhyam (presence) of the Lord at His sannidhis and PavithrOthsavam banishes any dimmution in the Lord's presence in His consecrated images at the VishNu Aalayams due to lapses in AarAdhanams according to the prescribed aagamic rules.

Let us enjoy the upcoming PavithrOthsavams at the Temples during this season and appreciate the significance of these ancient rites.



namO vEda purushAya

dAsan

Oppiliappan kOil Sri.VaradAchAri SaThakOpan

