

Between *saṃnyāsa*, *yoga* and *tantra*:



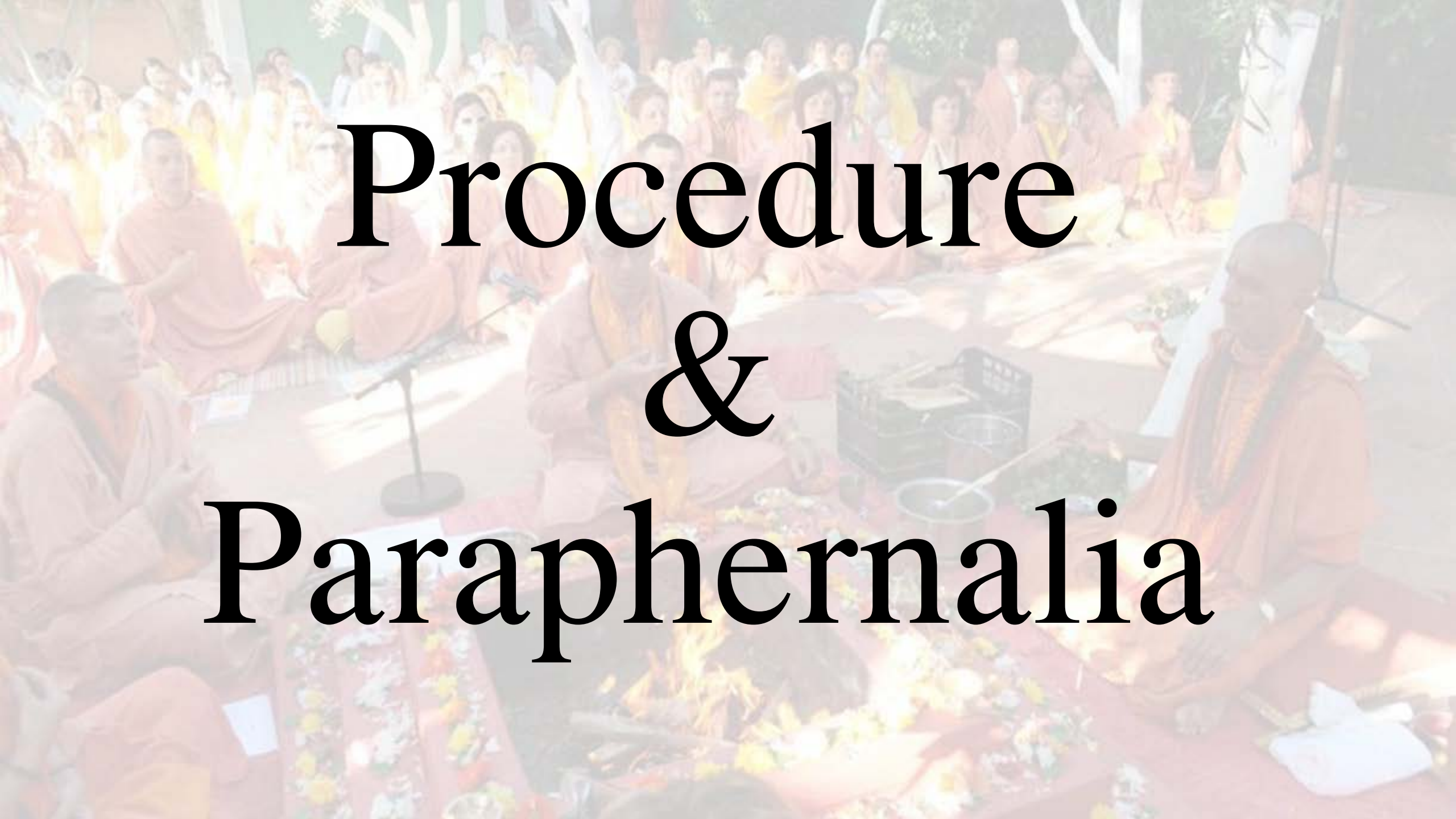
A field report on the contemporary practice of fire
ritual (“*havan*”) as interpreted and taught by
the Bihar School of Yoga

BSY (बिहर् योग भरति)

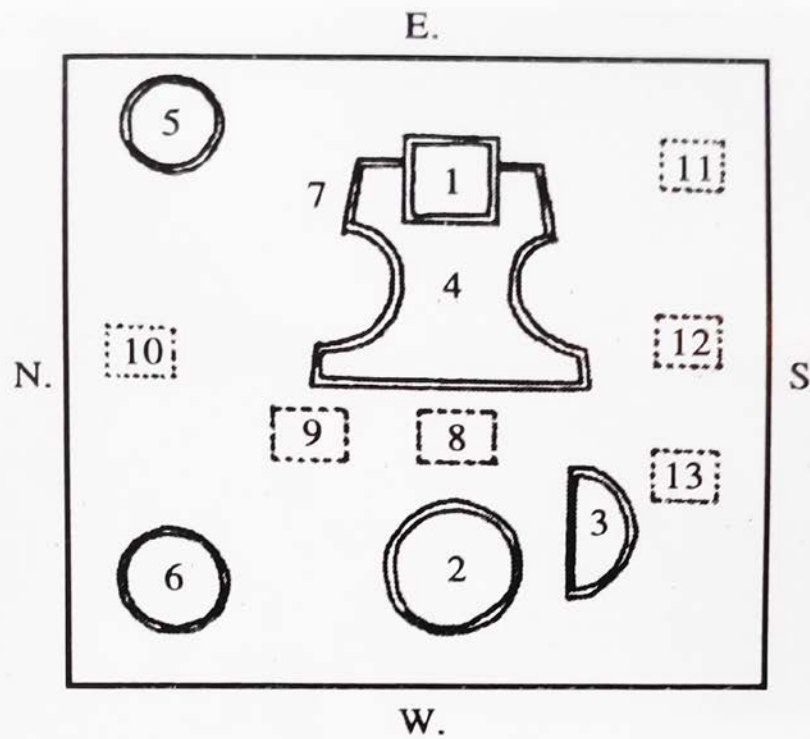


Circumstances

- Termed “Havan, Mantra and Swara yoga retreat”
- Took place in 2016 in Rikhiapeeth, before *guru pūrṇimā* (bright lunar fortnight full moon, 12th-16th of July that year).
- Lasted for 5 days
- Paralelly, a *mahāmṛtyuñjāya homa* was performed by 5 brahmins from Kashi for 7 days.
- Practices included *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *mantra* recitation, *kīrtan*, attendance of *satsang*, theory and practice of *havan*.

A large group of Buddhist monks, dressed in traditional orange robes, are seated in a circle on the ground outdoors. They are gathered around a central fire pit where a fire is burning. Several microphones on stands are positioned around the circle, suggesting a formal ceremony or a recorded event. The monks are looking towards the center or each other, and some are holding small objects. The background shows trees and a clear sky, indicating an outdoor setting. The overall atmosphere is solemn and focused.

Procedure & Paraphernalia



Traditional *śrauta* arrangement for a *pavitreṣṭi* rite

The sacrificial place

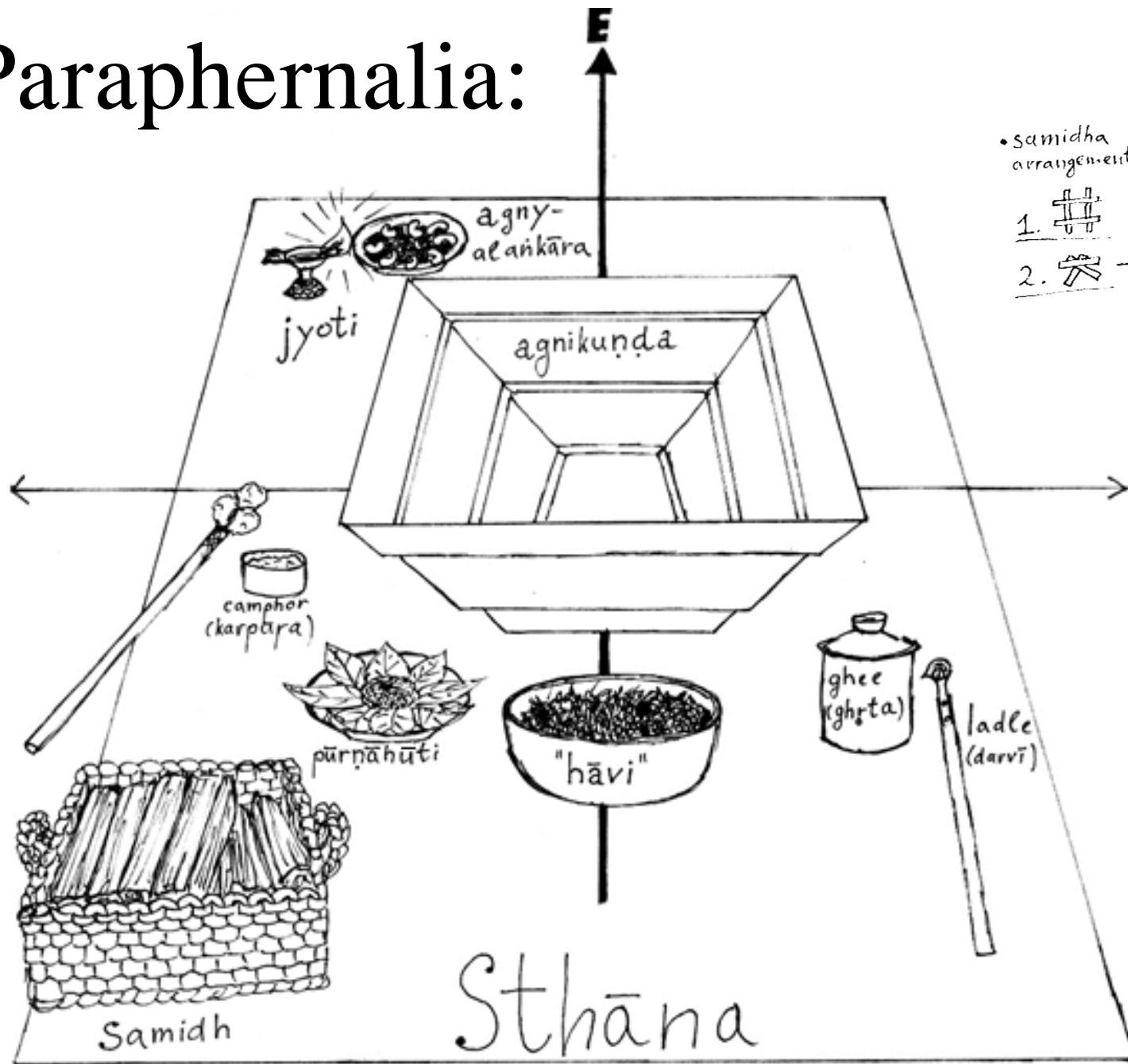
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|--|--------------------|
| 1. Āhavanīya fire | 2. Gārhapatya fire |
| 3. Dakṣiṇa fire | 4. Vēdi (altar) |
| 5. Sabhya fire | 6. Āvasathya fire |
| 7. Praṇītā waters | |
| 8. The basic position of Adhvaryu priest | |
| 9. The basic position of Āgnīdhra priest | |
| 10. The basic position of Hotṛ priest | |
| 11. The basic position of Brahman priest | |
| 12. The basic position of the sacrificer | |
| 13. The basic position of the wife of the sacrificer | |

(Tachikawa & Kolkhatar 2001:39)





Paraphernalia:



• samidha arrangements:

- 1.
- 2.



Above:

Arrangement of the sacrificial altar;

Left:

arrangement of the *samidh* in the *agnikuṇḍa*;





Ingredients for havi

Ingredients:	Parts
<i>tila</i> (black sesame - <i>Sesamum indicum</i>)	5
unpounded rice	3
herbs (see below)	1
<i>yava</i> (or unshelled barley if unavailable)	2
dry fruit (unspecified)	(unspecified)
<i>ghṛta</i> (ghee; clarified butter)	1/16
<i>karpūra</i> (camphor)	1/16

Ingredients for havi (herbs):

Herbs can include (as given):

- *candana* (sandalwood)
- *guggulu* (resin from either *Commiphora wightii* or *Amyris agallochum*)
- *bhūrja* (bhojpatra; bark of the Himalayan birch – *Betula utilis*)
- lotus seeds
- *jaṭāmāṃsī*
- *haridrā* (two species of turmeric: “amba haldi” - *Curcuma longa* or *C. caesia* and “jal haldi” *Curcuma zedoaria*)
- *śīlajīṭ* (“rock resin”; bitumen; mumijo)
- *karpūra* (camphor)
- and others; a mixture of local medicinal herbs may be used, but consistently.

Recommended times:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Śiva	Gaṇeśa Hanuman	Viṣṇu Rāma Kṛṣṇa	Guru	Devī	Śiva Hanumān	Sūrya Gāyatrī

Procedure:

1. *pavitra* (Purification) (pre-ritual: through water or *prāṇāyāma*)
2. *saṅkalpa* (declaration of resolve/purpose)
3. *nyāsa* (application of (parts of) mantras onto parts of the body)
4. *dhyāna* (*devatāvāhana*) (Invocation of the Tutelary Deity)
5. *pañcopacara mānasa pūjā* (symbolic worship with the five elements)
6. *agnyāvāhana* (Invocation of Agni (Fire))
7. *agnyalankāra* (“Ornamenting” of the *agni*)
8. *vaidika śāntimantra* (Invocation of the Lineage)
9. *gaṇeśāhūti* (first offering, which is given to Gaṇeśa)
10. *hāvana* (Worship with Oblation (~108 times))
11. *pūrṇāhūti* (Final offering / Compensation for deficiencies)
12. *agnimokṣa* (Releasing of Agni)

Philosophy

Yogic Havan: Origins

“The first contact with Fire caused an explosion of consciousness in the people who began using it [...]. The dormant consciousness emerged.

Yajña is a celebration of this discovery. This process was fine-tuned during the ages that passed. The goal is transformation.

This is an esoteric science, practice, experiment with the micro- and macrocosmos. It is for harnessing energies for personal or cosmic benefit, otherwise, if it for causing harm, it will bring harm.”

Vedic roots:

1. The Vedic Cosmos has a perfect primordial Order (*ṛta*) which has its own “Circulation” (*yajña*).
2. Vedic ritual (irrespective whether *śrauta* or *smarta*), like the ancient Greek religion is performative, not belief- or attitude-based.
3. “The Devas are subject to the mantras, the Brahmins are masters of the mantras, therefore the Brahmins are our gods.”
4. The rituals conducted by man are an imitative magic emulation of the *parokṣayajña* – the process of Nature, of which the devas themselves are a functional element.

Philosophy

1. Since the ritual observances are less strict and that has to be compensated for. This role is taken over by a cultivated attitudes. Now *saṃskāras* have turned from proper ritual actions into “impressions in the mind” which can be “imbibed” in the right atmosphere.
2. Not following the instructions correctly reduces the effect of the *havan* and, in some cases, can even make it detrimental.
3. Explicit instructions were given that *sakāma havan* will have negative repercussions and is also intrinsically more complex and particular in its performance due to the exactness of the desired result.

Yogic Havan: Syncretism

1. *“Unless the system is perfect, you cannot harness the energy.”*
2. *“You are not pouring just the ahūti: you are pouring in emotion.”*
3. *“To manipulate your own energies, idā, piṅgalā, your internal energies – that is yogic yajña. All is an expression of Brahman. You contribute love, emotion and surrender.”*

Yogic Havan: Purpose

1. *“It is to remove the darkness. Darkness is avidyā. Yogic yajña is prāṇāyāma, to stop the motion of apāna and prāṇa. We speak of inner fire. Outer fire is the means. It is what gives the push. The prāṇas are the inner fire.”*
2. *“Wherever yajña is being done you will be affected. If you enter an AC room can you escape the cold? No. It is not a thing of intellect.”*

Yogic Havan: “Yoga in action”

1. *“All these processes require puraskaraṇa – repetition for the achievement of perfection. Karmas bind you; except those having to do with yajña. Life comes through food, the elements: water, rains, which need to be timely, appropriate and adequate.”*
2. *“When all the ecological factors are working well, rains come on time. When not – not. This is where yajña comes in. Kṛṣṇa has said: “The rains come through yajña, so it is the basis of all good actions.”*

Yogic Havan: “Yoga in action”

1. *“Vedic science says you have multiple goals. You need to be aware of those. When you take it you need to take into account the time-space locution and the cosmic rhythms, like checking the svara before conducting a havan. This is essential if you want to use havan as a spiritual practice. These small, seemingly insignificant activities can and do add up like small waves into a large wave to a great augmentative effect. Aim of havan is spiritual, but you need to follow the proper order.”*

Things to remember:

- “Havan” in this simplified form is a syncretic practice.
- The practices and philosophies of BSY are a mixture of Vedic, yogic and tantric practices with influences from both Vedānta and the Bhakti traditions.
- While vedic yajñas are imitative magical micro-emulations of the macrocosmos in order to rectify the cosmic order, yogic havan is a reversal of that – by internalizing the yajna one aims to rectify the inner order – as such it is an expression of yoga. (Think back to *yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ*)

Thank you for the attention!

धन्यवादः

(Further) References:

- Kolhatkar, Madhavi; Tachikawa, Musashi. 2012. *Indian Fire Ritual. Delhi: Motolal Banarsidass.*
- Wuyastyk, Dominik. 2003. *The Roots of Ayurveda: Selection from Sanskrit Medical Writings.* London: Penguin.
- Kane, K. P., et al. 2013. *Yajna: A Comprehensive Survey.* Munger: Yoga Publications Trust.

Yogic Havan

1. What is yogic havan?
2. “alchemy”
3. exoteric (ritual) that has an esoteric effect of harnessing the gnosis potential within. The focus is different.
4. *havan* = *yoga*
5. *havan* is an act of gratitude – you give back what you have received. What you give comes back.

