

Religion, Rituals and Practices: The Athirathram of Panjal

Project submitted to the University of Calicut

in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree

of

Bachelor of Arts in English & History

By

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Certificate

This is to certify that the project entitled **Religion, Rituals and Practices: The Athirathram of Panjal** is a bonafide research work carried out by Ms. **Delna K Sunny** under my supervision and guidance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Bachelor of Arts in English & History** submitted to the University of Calicut.

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Declaration

I, Delna K Sunny, hereby declare that the project entitled **Religion, Rituals and Practices: The Athirathram of Panjal**, submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the **Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English & History**, is a bonafide record of original research work carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. George Alex, Coordinator, Department of B.A. English & History (Double Main) Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda.

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Delna K Sunny

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Introduction

Local history is the study of history which mainly concentrates on the local community mainly on the geographical context. And other than geographical context it incorporates economic, social and cultural aspects of history. It became more popular in the 20th century.

An individual who is attempting to write local history is not necessary to be a trained historian. But he should have a genuine interest in the history of a particular locality, an inquiring mind and an ability to keep the notes in an order, which will help others to get the information quickly.

Local history is not a limited field with geographical focus; it is a broad field of inquiry. It consists of social, religious, cultural, economic, political and intellectual history of a community. It is also a place to hear women's voice very clearly. And the study of local history is necessary. It will help everyone to know about the society and also about the other factors of a particular locality.

Rituals can be defined as a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, actions or objects which performed in a particular place and according to a set of sequence. Peoples usually conduct various rituals with an intention of achieving a wide set of desires by reducing their anxiety and to boost their confidence for various purposes. There are various genres in the rituals such as rites of passage, calendrical and commemorative rites, rites of communion and exchange, rites of affliction and political rituals. And these rituals are an important among religion because it helps the believers to express their belief system. Communication is the primary purpose of rituals and this communication

is to communicate with others, self or with deities. But nowadays the recent research suggests that rituals are more rational than they appear.

Athirathram Yagam is one among the various Vedic rituals which performed by Kerala Namboodiries. This is considered as practical application of Vedas, in the ancient text of India. The message of this Yagam is peace and prosperity for the entire humanity, with the total protection of the environment. The main aim of Athirathram Yagam is to spread a positive energy waves by purifying the atmosphere to maintain the pollution free environment. And it also cleanses the body and mind of all the participants by driving away all evil thoughts. This Yagam is conducted in twelve days and the first three days are known as Deekshass and next six days are known as Upasaddinagal and the last three days are called Soothyam.

Review of Literature

There is no any authentic works about the history of Brahmanical rituals and as well as about Athirathram Yagam. And the available literature or source of this is *Brahman Settlements in Kerala* by Kesavan Veluthat and some other newspaper reports.

Objectives of the study

To understand about various Brahman settlements and rituals in Kerala.

To understand about Athirathram yajna.

To understand the historical background of Athirathram.

To study the importance of Athirathram in the present times.

Scope

The study of Brahmanical rituals includes all its aspects. The historical background of various rituals is discussed in this topic. And the study of Athirathram Yagam helps to understand more about such various customs and rituals which practiced in our locality.

Sources

The primary and secondary sources are used to complete this study. The literature reviews are the main evidence of this study. And other than literature reviews, the various newspaper reports such as reports from The Hindu are also used for this study. And the information's are also collected from various websites.

Methodology

Historical methodology is used in this study. This work is based on primary sources and secondary sources. The methodology and technique used in this study is local history.

Chapterisation

The project is presented in five chapters, introduction followed by first chapter and it will introduce Brahman rituals in Kerala. The second chapter will explain the Athirathram Yagam and its importance. The third chapter discuss about the purpose of Athirathram Yagam, followed by conclusion.

CHAPTER 1

Brahmanical Rituals in Kerala

Brahman Settlement

Brahman settlements were founded in Kerala even before the establishment of the Cera kingdom with their capital at Mahodayapuram. And this Brahmins in Kerala have been settled in thirty two villages. By the beginning of ninth century the latest of traditional Brahman settlements of Kerala was well established and prosperous. Before establishing in Kerala these settlements were occupied in the Karnataka region.

And during the Post Cera period several changes took place in the character of Brahman settlements. During this period temple developed as the hub where the activity of production and distribution revolves. And the temples even developed as a centre of political activity. In a short period the temples, nucleus of Brahman settlement functioned as the agency which transformed the way of life in Kerala.

Brahmanical Rituals

Rituals can be defined as a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, actions or objects which performed in a particular place and according to a set of sequence. Peoples usually conducts various rituals with an intention of achieving a wide set of desires. The primary purpose of rituals is communication, that is the communication with others, self or with deities. And there are various genres in these rituals.

The various yagas are explained in various Brahman texts. All the Vedas are having their own Brahmins. The Brahmanical communities were given the highest ritual status. The yagas are coming under the karmakanda portion of Brahmins. And different types of sacrifices and the method of performance of these sacrifices are explained in this portion. The participants of these yagas are representing three Vedas Rig-Veda, Samaveda and Yajurveda. The performances of participants of sacrifices are explained in these three Vedas.

The answers for the questions like what is yajna and what are the objectives of sacrifice is given by the Mimamsa system of Indian philosophy. Yaga or yajna is performed as a symbol of sacrifice. In yagas the man offers a lot of things into divine fire and these offerings are only for a particular deity and the offerings are not only for him. The ultimate happiness of entire world is the motivation behind the rituals. “Lokah Samastha Sukino Bhavantu” was the sincere prayer of ancient sages. And this mantra proves a secular harmony of those periods.

Historical Background of Kerala Ritual Tradition

There are various references on the historical background of Kerala ritual tradition. According to tradition, one reference is that the ritual sacrifices began in Kerala in the time of Melatole Agnihotri. And it is believed Agnihotri had performed ninety nine yagas, but the period of Agnihotri is not actually determined therefore the authenticity of this tradition cannot be accepted. According to the story of *Parayi Petta Pantirukulam* the father of Agnihotri is Vararuci who was considered as a contemporary of the great poet Kalidasa. But this story cannot be accepted authentically due to the lack of clear

historical evidence. And according to another story Vararuci, the father of Agnihotri and Kalidas's contemporary poet Vararuci are two different personalities.

And while reading Sangha works we used to get more information based on the ritual sacrifices performed in Kerala. In a song of Akananuru, there is a reference of yagas performed in Kerala. According to this song a yaga was performed by sage Parasurama at cellur Talipparambu. In the third dasaka of Akananuru it mentioned that Palyani Chelkkezhu Kuttavan performed nine yagas.

Salas the centers of Vedas and ritual studies was very prominent in educational history of Kerala. The detailed information about the regulations laid for admission to the sala is presented in the copper plate issued by king Karunantakkan in the 9th year of his rule. This sala is an institution where the Vedas and ritual topics are being taught.

We can found a brief description of Putumana Comatiri and Kelallur Nilakantha Somayaji in the history of Kerala Sanskrit literature. Putumana Comatiri performed somayaga and became a Somayaji and was also an astrologer. But there was no any reference about his sacrificial performance in Kerala Samskrta Sahitya Caritam. Nilakantha Somayaji was a person who had performed several somayaga. And it is assumed that ritual tradition in Kerala reached in a remarkable position in the period of 15th century AD.

Features of Kerala Ritual Tradition

Dr. Frits Stall states "The Namboodiri performances are not artificial or scholarly reconstruction nor are the result of recent revivals. The tradition is authentic and alive.

They perform rituals as they have learned from their preceptors it is their tradition”¹. And they follow an oral method of teaching and learning process in the sacrificial performances. The Namboodiries of Kerala uses Malayalam in learning and teaching process. They also use Malayalam sentences while performing yagas.

During the Somakarya ceremony yajamana uses both Sanskrit and Malayalam. The soma seller will be a Tamil Brahmin who is believed to be a representative of Gandharvas looking the soma plants flourishing in the Mount Mujawat. And during the time of Diksha yajamana is not allowed to speak Malayalam. He should speak in Sanskrit and not allowed to expose teeth while laughing. And another feature is that on the 5th day of Agni stoma, there is a custom among Namboodiries to place money offerings for the tutelary deity (paradevata). And another feature is the distribution of rice gruel to all those who attend the sacrifice. The expenditure of this is taken by yajamana or by his relatives. Indra and other gods are believed to be present in the sacrificial hall till the end of sacrifice and according to the tradition this feast is for them.

Animal sacrifice or pasvalambhana was common in Kerala ritual tradition. But during the Atiratna performance at Pannal on 1975 the public led a protest against this animal sacrifice. And as a result of this protest Vedaratnam Erkara Raman Namboodiri, Cerumukku Vallabhan Somayaji, Taikkad Vaidikanand and others led a discussion on this matter. And after analyzing various theories and rules of sacrifice they decided to conduct pistapasu (artificial meat which is made by rice powder, hot water and ghee) instead of pasvalambhana. And in the Atiratram yajna at Pannal in 1975 follows the method of pistapasu.

¹ Dr. Frits Stall, 2010 Agni Vol 1, p.4

Srauta Rituals Performed By Namboodiri Brahmins

The srauta rituals can be divided in to two portions, Haviryajna and Somayaga. And these two portions have seven subdivisions. Agnyadheya, Agnihotra, Darsapurnamasa, Agrayanesti, Caturmasya, Nirudhapasubandha and Sautramani are known as Haviryajna. Agnistoma, Atyagnistoma, Ukthya, Sodasi, Vajapeya, Atiratra and Aptoryama are known as Somayaga.

Among these the Namboodiri Brahmins of Kerala mainly performs only three types of sacrifices. They are Agnyadhana or Adhana, Agnistoma or Somayaga and Atiratra or Agni. And the Namboodiri couple who is married from same caste is only eligible to perform Agnyadhana and its duration is one day. After this performance the Namboodiri is known as Aditiri. And only the Aditiri who performs Agnyadhana is able to perform Somayaga. There are only five Rtviks in this as participants. And they are Adhvaryu, Hotr, Agnit, Brahma and Udgatr. At present the only two Aditiri in Kerala, are Perumbatappu Vaidikan Sankaranarayanan Aditiri and Naduvil Pazhayitam Aditiri.

Agnistoma is also known as Somayaga or simply yaga, and its duration is six days. Aditiri is the only one who is able to perform Somayaga and after the performance Somayaga Aditiri gains the title of Somayaji. And there are seventeen Rtviks in a Somayaga. And from these Adhvaryu, Brahma, Hotr, Udgatr and Sadasya are more important than other Rtviks. The names of other twelve Rtviks are Pratiprasthatr, Brahmanacchamsi, Maitravaruna, Prastotr, Nestr, Agnidhra or Agnit, Acchavaka, Pratihari, Unnetr, Potr, Gravastotr and Subrahmanya. Vedaratnam Erkara Raman Namboodiri gives a detailed description of Somayaga in his work *Ekahahinasatrannal*.

Atiratra which is popularly known as Agni is another prominent ritual performed by Kerala Namboodiries. The duration of this sacrifice is twelve days and the number of Rtviks in Atiratra is same as that of Somayaga. And the ritual activities of Atiratra are the expansion of those in Somayaga. The most important feature of Atiratra is the construction of citi or vedi. This is constructed with bricks in the shape of an eagle with wings spread ready to fly. The method of construction of citi is based on Karika of Yogiyar known as *Yogiyarute Karika*, it is a work written in Sanskrit which deals with different units of measurements. The method of construction of different types of citis or vedis is explained in Baudhyanasulbasutra. But in Kerala tradition the Karikas of Yogiyar is the most authentic one.

Other than these three sacrifices there are ten types of Istis which being practiced in Kerala. They are Darsapurnamasa, Naksatra, Ayusmati, Anvarambhini, Mrgara, Pathikrt, Surabhimati, Vibhrasta, Vaisvanari and Traidhatavi. And Soma sacrifice is of two types; Agnistoma and Atiratra with Agnicayana. Then there may arise a question, why Namboodiries are performing only two types of rituals. And an answer for this question is given by Dr. Frits Stall in his work *Agni*; “Namboodiries preserve a very early stage of ritual development”. And Agnistoma is the representation of original Indo Iranian Soma ritual. This will be a product of Indo Iranian fire cult which developed into a celebration of Soma, when Vedic nomads entered into plain.

Srauta Scholars of Kerala

There are some prominent scholars who played a great role in the development of Kerala ritual tradition. Vedaratnam Erkara Raman Namboodiri is one among them who

was born at Erkara family at Mukkutala village in Malappuram district. As being a reputed Sruta scholar, he practiced more than hundred yagas. He had also conducted more than sixty sacrifices throughout Kerala. Amnayamathanam is a collection of his famous articles based on Vedic literature had obtained Kerala Sahitya Academy award. He was a main advisor of world famous Pannal Atiratra on 1975. He was the only malayali who had won award for Sanskrit scholars from Indian government in 1977.

Taikkad Vaidikan Nelakandhan Namboodiri was another scholar who was born at Vattamkulam village in Malappuram district. He had studied Rig-Veda through system and practiced different types of recitation, but his field of specialization was the ritual sacrifices. And he studied all the manuals of sacrifices and was very close to Erkara Raman Namboodiri. He had prominent roles in various Somayaga and Atiratras. And he was in charge of Atiratra performed at Kuntur in 1990.

Puttilat Ravi Akkittarippad was another prominent scholar in Veda who was born in the village of Chembara in Palakkad district. He was a well versed scholar in Rig-Veda and he performed Atiratra in 1990 at Kuntur. And he was a popular instructor of various Grhya ceremonies and also a renowned purohita. He participated in various sacrifices such as Hotr, Adhvaryu and also performed Somayaga in 1965.

Cerumukku Vallabhan Somayajippad was another scholar in Sruta sacrifices who was born in Cerumukku Mana in Palakkad district. He was known as CV Somayaji among the scholars. He was well fluent in English and therefore when Dr. Frits Stall came to Kerala, he was the only one Sruta who was able to communicate with Stall in English. And he carried a key role in Pannal Atiratra which held in 1975.

There are many other scholars who had contributed a lot to the ritual sacrifice tradition such as Taikkad Kesavan Namboodiri, Naras Narayanan Namboodiri, and Pantal Damodaran Namboodiri etc.

CHAPTER 2

Athirathram Yagam

The word Yagam or Yajna means sacrifice, devotion, worship, offering and according to Hinduism Yajna is any ritual which done in front of sacred fire, along with mantras. The details of Yajna have been described in a layer of Vedic literature called Brahmins as well as Yajurveda. Yajna related text is known as Karma – Kanda portion in Vedic literature. Yajna played a central role in a Hindu's rites of passage, such as weddings. These various Yajna cures our whole body and soul is cleansed everyday by Yajna. Yajna are of mainly five types: Brahma Yajna, Deva Yajna, Matha – Pitha Yajna, Boodh Yajna and Adhiti Yajna.

Athirathram

Athirathram or Agnicayana is a category of advanced sruta rituals. And in the ancient text of India, this Yagam is considered as the practical application of Vedas. According to belief, the Yagams are always performed for the well being of the mankind and nature. The Yagams are the most important and significant Vedic rituals which practiced by the Brahmin community of India from ancient times.

Among the different kinds of Yagams – Agnistoma and Athirathram are the two types of Yagams practiced by the Namboodiries, the Brahmin community of Kerala. The Vedic tradition of Kerala has been noticed in worldwide for its oral tradition with systematic way of chanting mantras and the strict format of ritual performances.

Athirathram is popularly known as Agni which is one of the prominent sacrificial performances of Kerala. The duration of this sacrifice is up to twelve days. And in these twelve days the first three days are known as Deekshass and the next six days are known as Upasaddinagal and the last three days are known as Soothyam. The number of participants in Athirathram is same as that of Somayaga. Somayaga is the other name of Agnistoma. And most of the ritual activities of Athirathram are the expansion of those in Somayaga.

The person who conducts controls and guides the Yagam is called Yajamanan. He should be married and his wife should also take part in rituals. And she is addressed as Yajamana pathni. Only a person who had conducted Agnistoma earlier can be a Yajamanan for the Athirathram. According to Namboodiri custom the one who conducts Agnistoma is honored with the title Somayajippad and after the completion of Athirathram he is given the title Akkithirippadu. And the Yajamanan dedicates the Yagam to mankind without selfishness and is elevated to a higher spiritual level during and after Yagam. This Yagam is performed in specially constructed shed called Yaga sala. And the measurements of Yaga sala are calculated in relation to height of the Yajamanan. The holy fire place Citi, work area the rest rooms and others are all in the Yaga sala.

One of the most important distinguishing factors in Athirathram is the construction of vedi or citi. This citi main fire place is constructed with bricks in the shape of an eagle with wings spread ready to fly. According to the shape, the citis differentiated and the one used in Kerala is called Garuda citi, which is quite large and shaped like an eagle. The method of construction of citi or vedi is based on *Karika of Yogyar* known as *Yogyarute*

Karika, it is a work written in Sanskrit deals with different units of measurements which used for the layout of Mahavedi, citi. And the method of construction of different types of citis or vedi is explained in *Baudhayanasulbasutra*. But in the Kerala tradition the most authentic one is the *Karikas of Yogyar*.

Athirathram is one of the seven categories of Somayaga. And it gets its name from the fact that is performed for one day and one night as opposed to other Yagas which are just performed in the daytime. This Athirathram is the oldest Vedic ritual in the world. And the Athirathram is held for universal harmony, peace and spiritual enlightenment. This entire Athirathram Yagam takes twelve days to perform, in the course of which a great bird – shaped altar, the Uttaravedi “northern altar” is built out of one thousand hundred and five bricks. The information of this is presented from the chapter 20 to chapter 25 of the Krishna Yajurveda. The immediate purpose of Agnicayana is to build up for sacrifices on immortal body that is permanently beyond the reach of the transitory nature of life, suffering and death that, according to this rite, characterizes man’s mortal existence.

The most important offering to the fire is somarasam, the juice from somalatha, a creeper plant. Even after the Yagam is over the Yajamanan with his wife have to maintain the holy fire with great sanctity. This fire is kept alive at their housing rice husk and coconut shell and every day the Yajamanan has to offer some homam to fire. And this wants to continue till the death of either of them. Later this fire is taken for the cremation of deceased. Thus the whole life of Yajamanan is dedicated to the well being of the world and through this he achieves moksha, assimilation with eternity.

This ritual emerged from predecessor rituals, were incorporated as building blocks, during the 10th century BCE. Then it was practiced until the late Vedic period or the 6th century BCE. During the post Vedic times there were several revivals of the practice, under the Gupta Empire in North and by Chola Empire South. But by 11th century this practice was discontinued with exception of the Namboodiries of Kerala.

Procedure of Athirathram Yagam

The Athirathram is one of the seven categories of Somayaga. It refers to “building up of the fire place and performed at overnight”. And it requires seventeen priests to perform ‘Agni’. The duration of Athirathram is twelve days. This Athirathram is also the world’s oldest surviving rituals. The mantras and theological explanations of this Athirathram are mentioned in the *Yajurveda Samhitas* of the Brahman texts. But the practice of this ritual was discontinued from late Vedic period.

In the first day of Athirathram it begins with Yajamana and his priests entering the ritual enclosure carrying three sacred fires in pots. And the main ritual vessel is prepared from clay. A symbolic animal sacrifice would be performed for vayu. Then after the selection of five chief priests the fire is produced by friction. It is followed by tying a turban around the head of Yajamana. He is protected by a golden breast plate, is given a staff and closes his fists and deprived of speaking. And then the Yajamana picks up the main ritual vessel filled with fire and takes three steps with it.

Panjal Athirathram

Athirathram one of the oldest ritual in the world which was held in a tiny village, Panjal in Thrissur district of Kerala after a gap of over three and half decades. The Athirathram Yagam of 2011 which held in Panjal begins on April 4 and it concludes on the April 15. This was held near the Panjal Lakshmi Narayana Temple and it was organized by Varthathe Trust based in Ottapalam, which has taken the initiative in reviving the ritual that emerged around the 10th century BC and which was practiced until the 6th century BC. Panjal hosted Athirathram also in 1975. And in post Vedic times there were several revivals of practice under Gupta and Chola Empire and by 11th century this ritual were kept alive by the Namboodiries of Kerala.

Panjal was chosen as the sacred venue for Athirathram by considering the geographic and vaasthu principles as the main bird shaped altar of the first shihana chiti, and it was positioned to absorb the sun's energy and constructed in line with the measurements prescribed in the ancient texts. Puthillathu Ramanujan Somayajipadu was the Yajamanan and Dhanyapathanadi was the Yajamana pathni for this Panjal Athirathram. This ritual is held for universal harmony, peace and spiritual enlightenment. And this sacred ritual that dates back to 4000 years is a massive ritual which brings some of the most eminent Vedic scholars of country together.

Yajurveda and Samaveda practices that precede the Athirathram were held at the Panjal Thottathil Mana and Kavupra Maarath Mana and the ritual began after obtaining the customary consent from Shukapuram temple. During this Athirathram, the rituals used to begin every day with the Vedic chanting and homas and in the last four days, the

rituals will be held non – stop throughout day and night. And this sacred ritual has attracted over two lakh visitors even from outside India and this small village, Panjal became a part of this divine ritual and to imbibe the positive energy.

A large number of eminent persons like US based Indologist Frits Staal has attended this rituals and he also monitored the effects of this ritual on the climatic conditions. Athirathram at Panjal was done in the same way as it was practiced over the centuries at an estimated cost of Rs one crore. Actually this was a proud moment for Kerala, for being a part of this spiritual ritual, which is the manifestation of the Vedic knowledge that was passed down the generations and kept alive for many centuries.

History of Panjal Athirathram

The first Athirathram was performed at Panjal in 1975. It was of twelve days and was performed by Namboodiri Brahmins of Kerala. This ceremony requires the participation of seventeen priests who undergone several months of preparation and rehearsals. And this last Athirathram was instigated by the Indologist Dr. Fritz Staal of the University of California and by Mr. Robert Gardener, with support from several international agencies.

Importance of Panjal Athirathram

Panjal Athirathram is the oldest surviving Vedic rituals on earth. This was organized from April 4 to April 15, 2011 at Panjal. It is the most ancient and well known among Vedic rituals. This is designed for the welfare of people, animals and nature. There are many scientific importance to this mahayaga. In this ritual, the negative energy is converted to positive energy. A fireball with the temperature of around 1,200dc is

generated by this Yagam. And this will purify the air and the aim of this ritual is the welfare of the whole earth, its plants and animals.

Scientific Importance of Panjal Athirathram

The scientific study of Panjal Athirathram 2011 was headed by V P N Nampoori, Professor Emeritus at Cochin University of Science and Technology. These studies were conducted from the surrounding area where the Athirathram takes place. And the researchers found accelerated growth in seed germination and low microbial presence in water and soil. He said that Bengal gram seeds were sown on the four sides of yaga sala and also at a distance of one and a half kilometers. The three types of seeds (cowpea, green gram and Bengal gram) which were sown on the western side of the yaga sala germinated several times faster than those on the other sides. This effect was very evident in the case of Bengal gram with a growth about 2,000 times faster than on the other sides. The presence of some bioamplifier generated in atmosphere because of ritual may have selective effects in the case. This ritual had a positive impact on the atmosphere and microbial studies conducted at three locations in and around the yaga sala yielded empirical results which showed that ritual could help to reduce the presence of microbes. This microbial analysis was also made before the commencement of the Yaga as well as during the ritual and studies continued till four days after the ritual.

It was also observed that the air in the vicinity of yaga sala was pure and had very low count of microbe colonies. The study also found that the microbial activities in soil and water around yaga sala were very less compared to normal conditions. And he said that analysis was conducted on the dimensions of temperature from the flames of pravagyam

by professor Saxena of Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore. The other members of the study team included Rajalakshmy Subramanian (cusat), Parvathi Menon (MG College, Thiruvananthapuram), Maya R Nair (Pattambi Government College), Professor Saxena (IIA Bangalore) and Professor Rao (Andhra University).

Schedule of Panjal Athirathram 2011

Athirathram was observed for twelve days. The events start with Naandeemukham to Saalaapravesham and ends with Yajnapuchham. In everyday Annadanam was performed in the afternoon.

- Day 1 -Naandeemukham to Saalaapravesham, Deekshaahassu
- Day 2 - Pravargya Sambhaaram (collection of Pravargyam items)
- Day 3 - Yoopam kollal
- Day 4 to 8 -Agnichayanam (construction of altar)
- Day 4 to 9 -Pravargyam and Upaasath (Upasaddinangal or Upaasath days)
- 10th and 11 days till the dawn of 12th day – Suthy Suthyam days and finally Yajnapuchham.

Annadanam time was from 12:30 to 2.00 pm every day.

Athirathram 2012 at Kaimukkumana, Kodakara

The legendary Kaimukku Mana at Mattathurkunnu in the Irinjalakuda Gramam was a set for historic Athirathram in Aaswalayana – Boudhayana tradition. It was conducted in 2012 from March 23rd to April 3rd. The message of this Yagam was peace and prosperity for the entire humanity, with total protection of the environment.

Kaimukku Raman Somayajipapadu was the Yajamanan and his wife Aryadevi Pathanadi was the Yajamana pathni of this Athirathram which was conducted under the supervision of Veda scholar Kaimukku Vaidikan Sreedharan Namboodiri at the yaga sala set up on the paddy field near the Kaimukku Mana. This over 4,000 year old traditional Kaimukku Mana is one of the six Vaidika families which was authorized to perform a yaga on its own and also to guide others in performing a Yagam. This Yagam was conducted under the auspices of the Threthagni Foundation; a Kodakara based charitable Trust, which has been formed for reviving and rejuvenating the culture of Veda.

CHAPTER 3

Purpose of Athirathram

Athirathram or Agnicayana which is popularly known as Agni is one of the prominent sacrificial performance of Kerala. The duration of this sacrifice is twelve days. And the first three days are known as Deekshass and the next six days are known as Upasaddinagal and the last three days are known as Soothyam. The number of participants in Athirathram is seventeen and that is same to the number of participants in Somayaga.

Aims of Athirathram

The main aim of Athirathram Yagam is to spread a positive energy waves by purifying the atmosphere to maintain the pollution free environment. And it also cleanses the body and mind of all the participants by driving away all the evil thoughts and destructive tendencies. Through this Yagam they also spread the message of peace and prosperity for the entire humanity, with total protection of the environment. This ritual also invokes the Vedic mantras to usher Universal harmony, the welfare and well being of all the living beings on Earth and elsewhere in the Universe.

Universal peace, prosperity, environmental harmony and love are the objectives of Athirathram. A large number of participants of people are marked for Athirathram and they belongs to all gender, class, caste or religion. The Vedic rituals like Athirathram help to evoke immense sense of history among Hindus, the battered ones of this wretched and ungrateful country. In the present world our tradition is slowly eroding in the waves of

modernized ion, and the events like Athirathram give some hope that future generations may know that ancient Hindus were not barbaric lot as pictured in some History books, but were the masters of various sciences.

All the Athirathram Yagams were conducted to spread almost the same message but it was conducted in different period of times. And the Panjal Athirathram is one of the famous one among them.

Purpose of Panjal Athirathram

The Athirathram's objective is universal peace, prosperity, environmental harmony and love. Panjal is a tiny village, in Thrissur District of Kerala where the Athirathram was conducted after a gap of over three and half decades. And it was conducted in 2011 from April 4 to April 15. It was held near Panjal Lakshmi Narayana Temple.

The Athirathram was conducted to spread the message of 'one with nature'. This is a massive ritual that brings together some of the most eminent Vedic scholars of the country. It also spread spiritual enlightenment.

Purpose of Sagnikam Athirathram

Shukapuram gramam, an ancient village in Kerala which is famous for its Vedic practioners, and this Sagnikam Athirathram was conducted there in March 2015 from 20 to 31. This was conducted near Shukapuram Dakshinamoorthy Temple, Edappal in Malappuram district of Kerala.

This Yagam is considered as the practical application of Vedas, the ancient text of India. And according to belief this Yagam is also performed for the well being of mankind and nature.

Purpose of Athirathram at Kaimukku Mana

An Athirathram was conducted at Kaimukku Mana, Mattathurkundu, Kodakara, Thrissur district, Kerala from March 23rd to April 3rd 2012. This was a Vedic performance of highest echelon, a rare Aaswalayana – Boudhayana combination. The last Athirathram of this type performed 112 years ago.

The message of this Yagam was peace and prosperity for the entire humanity, with total protection of environment. It cleanses the body and mind of all participants by driving away all the evil thoughts. It also spread positive energy waves by purifying the atmosphere to maintain the pollution free environment.

Conclusion

This is the study that about the history and relevance of Brahmanical rituals in Kerala based on the study on Athirathram Yagam. This Athirathram is one of the prominent sacrificial performances of Kerala, which is one of the 7 categories of somayaga. It refers to “building up of the fire place and performed at overnight”. This is also the world’s oldest surviving rituals. A large number of news paper reports and several historical books helped to complete this study.

The various chapters of this study will help to understand more details about the various Brahmanical rituals which practiced in Kerala. Among the different kinds of Yagams – Agnistoma and Athirathram are the two types of Yagams practiced by Namboodiries, the Brahmin community of Kerala. And through this study it also helps to understand about Athirathram Yagam and also about its purpose. This Athirathram is one of the seven categories of Somayaga which is conducted in twelve days the first three days are known as Deekshass and the next six days are known as Upasaddinagal and the last three days are known as Soothyam. It was conducted in various places in Kerala in different times. Among them the most famous one is Panjal Athirathram. The first Panjal Athirathram was conducted in 1975 and later in 2011. Similarly this was also conducted in Kaimukku Mana, Mattathurkunnu, Kodakara in 2012.

In this study it also analyses about the purpose of Athirathram. All these various Athirathram Yagams were conducted to spread almost the same message. The main aim of this Athirathram is to spread a positive energy waves by purifying the atmosphere to

maintain the pollution free environment. And it also cleanses the body and mind of all participants by driving away all the evil thoughts.

This is the study of local history of Athirathram Yagam which was performed in different places of Kerala. This study of various Brahmanical rituals may help the others to understand more about the relevance of various rituals in this present world, were all such events are slowly eroding in the waves of modernization.

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