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Review

# Agnihotra in the Kali Yuga: A Study of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa's Kāṇva Recension and Its Ritual Adaptation

## Running Title: Academic Agnihotra Preference in the Kali Yuga

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### Abstract

This study integrates Vedic philology, ritual history, and philosophical hermeneutics in a multi-layered analysis of Agnihotra. Particularly in the Yajurveda, where its exterior performance is linked to varṇa and āśrama, it elucidates Agnihotra's technical structure and śākhā-specific methods by drawing on Śruti sources. The conceptual extension of ritual eligibility when dharma declines is explained by an analysis of Purāṇic and Smṛti depictions of Yuga decline. Then, passages from the Upaniṣadic and Bhagavadgītā are considered to demonstrate how Agnihotra is internalized as niṣkāma-karma and jñāna-yajña, creating a continuum between philosophical insight and ritual practice leading to mokṣa. Lastly, the Mādhyandina and Kāṇva recensions of the Śukla Yajurveda are compared to see whether they are appropriate for Agnihotra during the Kali Yuga. The latter maintains earlier, more intricate ritual levels, while the former provides systematic clarity. This study concludes that the Kāṇva recension offers greater scope for academic analysis śākhā for Agnihotra practice in Kali Yuga.

**Keywords:** agnihotra; kāṇva recension; varṇa and āśrama; bhagavadgītā; yajurveda; mokṣa

## 1. Introduction

Agnihotra is a major Vedic rite, although its textual roots, social eligibility, and philosophical reinterpretations vary significantly among Śruti, Smṛti, and epic texts. The Yajurveda defines Agnihotra as a precise fire-offering with śākhā-specific mantras, procedural procedures, and conventional varṇa-āśrama requirements (Gonda 1975; Staal 1983). Purāṇic and epic sources suggest a widening of ritual eligibility throughout the Yugas, attributed to a decline in dharma and ritual competence (Viṣṇu Purāṇa 6.1.17; Mahābhārata, Śānti Parva 109.10–12; Kane 1962–1975). These doctrinal narratives highlight a conflict between traditional Śrauta authority and later reinterpretive traditions.

A complementing internalization of yajña is introduced simultaneously by the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavadgītā, recasting Agnihotra as a discipline of niṣkāma-karma and a tool of preparation for self knowledge and liberation (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.4.22–23; Bhagavadgītā 3.9, 4.30–38; Olivelle 1998). Ritual and intellectual levels within the Yajurvedic tradition constitute interwoven strata rather than isolated trajectories, according to contemporary study, especially the work of Gonda, Staal, Heesterman, Witzel, Bronkhorst, and Olivelle with methodological notes.

This study examines the development of Agnihotra in various ceremonial and philosophical arenas by combining textual philology, hermeneutics, and historical analysis. In order to ascertain which śākhā offers the most logical basis for niṣkāma Agnihotra in the Kali Yuga, it also assesses the

structural differences between the Śukla and Kṛṣṇa Yajurvedas and conducts a thorough comparison of the Kāṇva and Mādhyandina recensions. The study argues that Agnihotra's significance today rests on the Kāṇva sources offer considerable academic advantages due to their better textual traditional perseverance and interpretive complexity analysing how they are adapted for Kali Yuga communities.

## 2. Agnihotra and Śrutis

### 2.1. Śrutis

Śruti, which is considered to be apauruṣeya knowledge "heard" by the ṛṣis rather than written by humans, is the fundamental layer of Vedic revelation (Mahābhārata, Śānti Parva, 302.20; Manusmṛti 1.23; Mīmāṃsā Sūtra 1.1.5; Śābara Bhāṣya ad Mīmāṃsā Sūtra 1.1.5; cf. Sukthankar 1933-1966; Gonda 1975; Bronkhorst 2007; Staal 2008; Kane 1962- 1975; Jha 1916). The corpus is traditionally separated into four complementary branches: Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, and Atharvaveda each of these branches associated with distinct ritual-functional emphasis: invocation mantra (Ṛgveda), chant/intonation (Sāmaveda), ritual procedure (Yajurveda), and esoteric/ cosmic meaning (Atharvaveda) (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7.1.2; Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.10; Atharvaveda 10.7.14; cf. Renou 1955; Gonda 1975; Staal 1983; Bodewitz 1976; Witzel 1997). While noting that praxis is mediated through Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, and Śrauta Sūtras that are particular to the śākhā, this study treats Śruti as the operative canonical basis for Agnihotra.

### 2.2. Agnihotra in the Context with Śrutis

Agnihotra, although is recorded in all of the major Vedic branches, each tradition uses different textual contexts for its formation. The Ṛgvedic, Yajurvedic, Sāmavedic, and Atharvavedic surveys that follow identify representative passages in the Saṃhitā, Brāhmaṇa, and Śrauta Sūtra layers. When combined, these loci demonstrate that although Agnihotra is pan-Vedic in scope, its mantras and procedural details differ greatly depending on the ritual systems of the śākhā.

#### 2.2.1. Ṛgveda (Brāhmaṇa/ Śrauta)

- Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 7.13; Keith 1920- mentions Agnihotra oblations.
- Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra 2.1- 2.2; Caland 1928a - offers a procedural outline (offerings, timing).

#### 2.2.2. Yajurveda (Saṃhitā / Brāhmaṇa / Śrauta)

- Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā (Śukla Yajurveda, Mādhyandina) 11.77, has core Agnihotra mantras (Griffith 1899).
- Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra 4.1- 4.4, provides about Śukla Yajurveda (Mādhyandina) Śukla Śrauta technical exposition (Caland 1928- 1929).
- Taittirīya Saṃhitā 2.1- 2.3, details Kṛṣṇa tradition's Saṃhitā treatment (Keith 1914–1916).
- In Śāstrī's 1959 edition, the Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra 7.1–7.8 outlines Kṛṣṇa Śrauta instructions; cf. Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra 1.1.1, emphasizes śākhā fidelity (Caland 1904).

#### 2.2.3. Sāmaveda (Brāhmaṇa / Chant tradition)

- Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa (1.15- 1.20; BORI 1984) deals Sāman melodies used for Agnihotra.

#### 2.2.4. Atharvaveda (Gopatha Brāhmaṇa)

- Gopatha Brāhmaṇa (Pūrva 3- 4) in the edition of BORI (1978) contains Atharvavedic Śrauta account with cosmological and esoteric notes.

This variation is mandated within Śrauta itself, where the Śrauta Sūtras require a sacrificer to utilize the mantras and rites of its own Vedic branch (svāśākhā): "kalpaḥ svaśākhā-vidhānena" (Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra 1.1.1- 2; cf. Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra 1.1.1). Such Regional evidence has

epigraphic documents that confirm śākhā distribution and surviving lineages (e.g., Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum 1877/ 1883; Epigraphia Indica (Archaeological Survey of India 1888-present); South Indian Inscriptions (Archaeological Survey of India 1890- present); Regmi 1971). These attestations show the regional presence of diverse śākhā lineages, indirectly supporting variation in ritual transmission and show the pan- Vedic dissemination of Agnihotra.

### 3. Agnihotra as an External Ritual

In the Yajurvedic tradition, Agnihotra is primarily preserved as a Śrauta (external) yajña: canonical Saṃhitā texts that frame it as a formal offering are found in the Taittirīya Saṃhitā (Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda 2.1- 2.3; Keith 1914- 1916) and the Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā (Śukla Yajurveda Mādhyandina 11.77; Griffith 1899). Through lineage- specific Śrauta Sūtras that specify mantras, intonation, sequencing, materials, and priestly responsibilities, each Yajurveda śākhā performs the rite. Modern scholarship confirms that only a limited number of Yajurveda śākhās survive today. Witzel (1982, 1997) shows that the originally numerous branches of the Yajurveda have largely disappeared, with the Mādhyandina and Kāṇva recensions representing the extant Śukla Yajurveda, while the Taittirīya, Maitrāyaṇīya, and remnants of the Kāthaka tradition constitute the surviving Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda śākhās. Gonda (1975) notes that these surviving lineages are regionally distributed: While Staal (1983, 1996) shows that extant Śrauta traditions, particularly those of the Taittirīya Yajurveda, are preserved within geographically limited ritual communities in South India, Witzel (1982, 1997) records the sharp decline of Yajurveda Śākhās. When combined, these investigations show that current Yajurvedic lineages do not exist as a pan-Indian ceremonial system, but rather through transmission networks that are concentrated in certain regions.

#### 3.1. Agnihotra and Mokṣa (Upaniṣadic and Bhagavadgītā Perspectives)

Agnihotra is regarded, in subsequent philosophical and exegetical analysis, as a preparatory discipline (pūrvasaṃskāra) for vidyā, in addition to its exterior procedural form. The Taittirīya Upaniṣad 3.1.1- 3, associates sacrifice with mental cleansing, while the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad of Mādhyandina recension 4.4.22- 23, emphasizes ritual activity as a necessary discipline for attaining self knowledge (ātma- vidyā) (cf. Olivelle 1998; Radhakrishnan 1953; Gonda 1975a; Nakamura 1950; Deussen 1906; Samuel 2008). The Bhagavadgītā (Gambhīrānanda 1959) does not provide ritual prescriptions, but its teaching of yajña and Śaṅkara's gloss equating yajñārthaṃ karma with agnihotrādi (on Bhagavadgītā 3.9) conceptually subsumes Agnihotra inside the Bhagavadgītā's soteriological framework. Agnihotra is referred to as "the root of all yajñas" in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Mādhyandina recension 2.3.1.1, further solidifies its canonical centrality (Eggeling, 1882-1900). The Bhagavadgītā (Gambhīrānanda, 1959) is conceptually subsumed that describes Agnihotra as a ritual that leads to niṣkāma- karma and jñāna- yajña, with yajña serving as a purifier (4.30), enabling jñāna (4.38), and culminating in knowledge (4.33) towards liberation. The Upaniṣads of both Śukla and Kṛṣṇa branches recast ritual meanings internally (e.g., Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.4.22- 23; Taittirīya Upaniṣad 1.11.4; Maitrī Upaniṣad 6.34; cf. Olivelle 1998; Gonda 1975a; Bronkhorst 2007; Staal 1983; Staal 2008; Deussen 1906; Nakamura 1950; Flood 1996; Heesterman 1985), indicating a structural shift from exterior rites to inner discipline in Yajurvedic literature.

### 4. Agnihotra and Yugas in the Lens of Varṇas

#### *Methodological Note*

*In this portion, Purāṇic and Smṛti elements are used not as direct Śrauta commands directing Agnihotra practice, but as reception-historical and normative discourses reflecting changing ideas of dharma and ritual accessibility throughout the Yugas. Therefore, references to increased eligibility in the Kali Yuga are not seen as explicit ritual prescriptions, but rather as interpretive extrapolations based on Yuga philosophy.*

According to Purāṇic and Dharmasāstra texts, eligibility for Agnihotra gradually increases across the four Yugas. In Satya Yuga, Agnihotra is related with Brāhmaṇas, who are portrayed as the

protectors of yajña (Brahma Purāṇa 72.24; Gita Press 1958; Liṅga Purāṇa 40.50; Gita Press 1951). In Viṣṇu Purāṇa (4.24), it is mentioned that Kṣatriyas begin to engage throughout the Treta Yuga (Gita Press 2022). In Dvāpara Yuga, the rite is available to the three twice-born varṇas Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, and Vaiśya as stated in Manusmṛti (1.86); Olivelle (2005). Later exegetical traditions have interpreted Purāṇic narratives as a spreading of ritual accessibility in the Kali Yuga, including Agnihotra, extending symbolically to all four varṇas, including Śūdras, instead of providing explicit ritual instructions (Viṣṇu Purāṇa 6.2.17; Gita Press 2022; Bhāgavata Purāṇa 12.3.51; Gita Press 2020).

Despite being part of the Smṛti- Purāṇa tradition, texts like Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, Śukla Yajurveda, Mādhyandina (4.4.22) and Taittirīya Saṃhitā (1.5.1.1), authorize ācāra- the established practice and transmitted understanding of the learned as a legitimate expression of dharma when it is in line with Vedic teaching. The hermeneutic foundation for integrating Purāṇic Yuga models into debates of Agnihotra eligibility is provided by this Śruti-based acknowledgment of tradition (cf. Kane 1962- 1975; Lingat 1973; Olivelle 1999; Olivelle 2005; Derrett 1977; Jha 1916).

The widening of access is similar to the Purāṇic notion that as the Yugas advance, dharma becomes weaker and less pure (Viṣṇu Purāṇa 6.1.17; Gita Press 2022). The skills necessary to uphold Agnihotra purity of thought, Śruti based learning, and disciplined observance also deteriorate when human spiritual ability declines. As a result, what starts out as a solely Brāhmaṇical duty in Satya Yuga expands into a wider socio- religious duty across subsequent Yugas. As Agnihotra is a type of yajña (see section: Agnihotra as an External Ritual & Agnihotra and Mokṣa (Upaniṣadic & Bhagavadgītā perspectives)), which the Taittirīya Saṃhitā equates with dharma (Taittirīya Saṃhitā 1.5.9.4; cf. Staal 1983; Gonda 1975; Keith 1914- 1916; Heesterman 1985; Renou 1955) and which the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa places as the basis of ritual order, Agnihotra is categorized as dharma in the Śruti tradition. In contrast, Purāṇic narratives show Agnihotra as one sign of changing ritual accessibility across the Yugas, employing its expanding eligibility to highlight more general changes in religious practice as dharma wanes.

This collapse is explained philosophically in the Bhagavadgītā. Arjuna notes in the first chapter that varṇa-saṅkara, a disintegration of functional varṇa distinctions, results from the advent of adharma (Bhagavadgītā 1.40- 41; Gambhīrananda 1959). The corruption of dharma inevitably destabilizes both varṇa and āśrama because they are interdependent elements of the Vedic social order. Therefore, ritual competencies associated with varṇa, like Agnihotra eligibility, also lose their normative rigidity if varṇa- dharma deteriorates. This perspective aligns with traditional scholarship. In his historical synthesis (Kane, 1962- 1975), Kane notes that as dharma diminishes across the Yugas, ceremonial obligations gradually expand and become more widely available. Dharma adapts to the circumstances of each age, according to the Mahābhārata, Śānti Parva (109.10- 12); Sukthankar (1933- 1966).

When considered collectively, these viewpoints show that the weakening of varṇa and āśrama based hierarchies inevitably results in a wider, more inclusive notion of ritual participation, increasing access to rites like Agnihotra as part of the adaptive continuity of dharma.

## 5. Internalizing Agnihotra: The Bhagavadgītā- Śukla Yajurveda Link

### *Methodological Note*

*This study evaluates śākhā status and ritual suitability using three criteria: (1) evidence of continuous oral transmission or community practice, (2) manuscript attestation and textual integrity, and (3) internal textual richness for reconstructing ritual-philosophical development (manuscript critical apparatus, Brāhmaṇa layers, and Śrauta Sūtra elaboration). When requirements are in conflict, textual depth is prioritized for historical reconstruction and living transmission for present praxis.*

Vedic and epic studies have long debated the relationship between the Bhagavadgītā and the Yajurvedic traditions (Brockington 1998; Hiltebeitel 2001; Fitzgerald 2003). There are two main interpretive paths that modern scholarship typically takes. The first is a philosophical- hermeneutic approach that highlights the Bhagavadgītā's continuity with late Vedic doctrinal advances, metaphysics, and Upaniṣadic interiorization (Gonda 1975; Bronkhorst 2007; Olivelle 1998). In the

second, the Bhagavadgītā's terminology, cultural lexicon, and conceptual borrowings from the Vedic sacrificial context are examined through a ritual- linguistic and philological lens (Staal 1983; Heesterman 1985; Witzel 1997).

Linguistically and culturally, a number of scholars observe that the Bhagavadgītā's idiom is similar to the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, whose ritual terminology and prose-mantra style seem to be represented in the text (Brockington 1998; Hildebeitel 2001). However, philosophically, the Bhagavadgītā's conception of yajña is more in line with the Śukla Yajurveda, especially the internalizing inclinations of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa- and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad-Mādhyandina (Gonda 1975a; Olivelle 1998). Some scholars contend that the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, particularly its theoretical Brāhmaṇa levels, contains symbolic and introspective reinterpretations like to those found in the Bhagavadgītā (Bodewitz 1976; Bronkhorst 2007).

The spiritual and philosophical aspects of both branches of Yajurveda are present in different ways. While the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda attempts to incorporate such insights into practical ritual instructions, the Śukla Yajurveda uses prolonged symbolic exposition to explain inner meanings more freely and methodically (Gonda 1975; Witzel 1997). The idea that the Bhagavadgītā's internalized concept of Agnihotra framed through jñāna- yajña and niṣkāma- karma is more organically connected with the interpretive approach of the Śukla Yajurveda is strengthened by this structural difference. In order to assess Agnihotra's role in Kali Yuga, especially in the context of Mokṣa oriented practice, the subsequent section concentrates on the Śukla Yajurveda as the more appropriate framework.

## 6. Choosing the Best Śākha of the Śukla Yajurveda for Niṣkāma Agnihotra in the Kali Yuga

The Mādhyandina and Kāṇva recensions of the Śukla Yajurveda serve as the doctrinal foundation for understanding the Bhagavadgītā's interpretation of Agnihotra (see to section: Internalizing Agnihotra: The Bhagavadgītā- Śukla Yajurveda Link). Scholars observe that the Śukla Yajurveda's ritual (karma) and philosophical (jñāna) elements operate within a cohesive Vedic framework, referred to as Dharma- Jñāna- Adhikāra. Despite differences in mantra construction, ritual sequencing, and historical pedigree, śākhās have a coherent sacrificial architecture (Gonda 1975; Bodewitz 1976).

Within a shared framework, Mādhyandina and Kāṇva traditions has a framework for performing and interpreting Agnihotra rituals, but differ in textual preservation, procedural detail, and regional transmission (Heesterman 1985; Witzel 1997). These changes do not undermine the ritual's legitimacy, but rather provide a relevant basis for selecting which recension is best suited for the Kali Yuga, especially when Agnihotra is viewed as both an exterior yajña and an inward discipline leading to liberation.

In order to assess each recension's strengths textual, ceremonial, philosophical, and pedagogical in directing a practitioner toward niṣkāma Agnihotra and the quest of Mokṣa in the modern era, a comparative analysis of the two Śukla Yajurveda recensions is required.

The following table below compares the textual, procedural, and pedagogical distinctions between the Kāṇva and Mādhyandina recensions, which directly impact Agnihotra's scholarly study and practical deployment in Kali Yuga.

Category	(Śukla Yajurveda) Kāṇva Recension	(Śukla Yajurveda) Mādhyandina Recension
<b>Mantras and Textual Preservation</b>	Preserves more archaic phonology, fewer editorial modifications, and older, more conventional mantra forms (Renou 1955; Witzel 1997; Gonda 1975b; Bodewitz 1976).	Demonstrates later editorial structuring with a more methodical prose and mantra arrangement (Gonda 1975; Witzel 1997).
<b>Ritual Variants and Procedural Detail</b>	Other ritual variations, more thorough descriptions, and older procedural forms not found in Mādhyandina are preserved in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (Kāṇva recension) (Bodewitz 1976; Renou 1955).	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (Mādhyandina recension) frequently show a more consistent ritual structure and simplify procedural aspects (Gonda 1975; Witzel 1997).
<b>Sequencing and Technical Instructions</b>	Offers detailed procedural recommendations; Kāṇva Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa gives more technical explanations of ritual sequencing, time of offerings, and utensil placement (Gonda 1975b; Renou 1955; Witzel 1997).	Prioritizes structural consistency and clarity over procedural complexity, offering more generic and methodical sequencing (Renou 1955; Bodewitz 1976).
<b>Śrauta and Gṛhya Sūtra Traditions</b>	Kāṇva Śrauta and Gṛhya Sūtras are typically more elaborate, with extra ritual detail (Caland 1928; Keith 1908).	According to Witzel (1997) and Bronkhorst (2007), Mādhyandina Śrauta/ Gṛhya traditions generally exhibit a more succinct ritual style with fewer elaborations.
<b>Agnihotra Description in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa</b>	Includes detailed explanations of fuel placement, timing, and offering sequence, among other greater ritual exposition (Gonda 1975b; Witzel 1997).	Gives a simplified, standardized description of Agnihotra with fewer variances and clearer prescriptions (Gonda 1975; Witzel 1997; Renou 1955).
<b>Regional Preservation and Lineages</b>	Fewer lineages, mostly in Central and South India, have preserved it; it is still authoritative but has not spread as much (Witzel 1982).	More extensively preserved, particularly in North and West India, it has emerged as the predominant recension of the Yajurveda known as Śukla (Witzel 1997; Bronkhorst 2007).
<b>Availability of Teachers and Transmission</b>	Outside of areas where the Kāṇva lineage persisted, transmission is less common and it is more difficult to identify appropriate teachers (Witzel 1982; Eggeling 1882).	Because there are more teachers available, the Mādhyandina approach is more widely employed in contemporary Berauta training and is easier to learn (Olivelle 1998; Hildebeitel 2001).
<b>Academic Utility</b>	Excellent for studies needing textual depth; useful for examining historical ritual variation, technical elaboration, and previous ritual levels (Renou 1955; Bodewitz 1976).	Helpful for comprehending the later redacted structure of Śukla Yajurvedic ritualism and for systematic, approachable analysis (Witzel 1997; Bronkhorst 2007).

#### Methodological Note

The above discussion acknowledges the Bhagavadgītā's involvement with Kṛṣṇa Yajurvedic ritual idioms, but takes a functionally separate approach that isolates ritual-linguistic inheritance from soteriological

reconfiguration. The study investigates how the *Gītā* turns sacrificial logic into an internalized, liberation-oriented paradigm through *niškāma karma* and *jñāna-yajña*, without assuming direct textual dependency or ritual continuity. The *Śukla Yajurveda* is used as a comparative framework due to its wide symbolic exposition, which helps analyze ritual interiorization processes. This does not contradict intellectual continuity within the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda*, nor does it presuppose a fundamental doctrinal distinction between the two traditions. Rather, the distinction is methodological, unaffected by discussions about historical discontinuity or redactional complexity, because the analysis is based on identifiable exegetical patterns retained in the textual record.

### 6.1. Sources

Claims about textual preservation and archaic phonology are based on Renou (1955) and Witzel (1997). The *Kāṇva Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* makes claims regarding ritual variations and technical elaboration that are consistent with Bodewitz (1976), Renou (1955), and Gonda (1975). Gonda (1975b) and Witzel (1997) are cited in observations regarding the *Mādhyandina* recension's organized redaction. The critical editions of Caland (1928) and Keith (1908) provide information on the evolution of *Śrauta* and *Gṛhya Sūtras* in *Kāṇva* recensions. Witzel (1982, 1997) and Bronkhorst (2007) are reflected in statements about regional preservation and transmission patterns. Following Olivelle (1998), Hildebeitel (2001), and Witzel (1982), remarks are made regarding pedagogical continuity and accessibility.

### 6.2. Synthesis and Implications

The comparison shows that while both recensions maintain genuine *Śukla Yajurvedic* ritual structures, they serve distinct academic and practical purposes. While *Kāṇva* maintains older ritual levels, prolonged *Brāhmaṇa* exegesis, and procedurally rich variants, *Mādhyandina* provides standardized transmission and pedagogical accessibility. The *Kāṇva* materials offer considerable advantages for practitioners pursuing a liberation-oriented, historically based practice in *Kali Yuga*, as well as superior textual depth and interpretive nuance for a study focused on tracing *Agnihotra's* developmental continuum from "karma" to "jñāna".

## 7. Conclusions

*Agnihotra* serves as both an exterior *yajña* and an interior preparation for *vidyā* to all *varnas* in *Kali yuga*. This transition is supported by the *Yajurvedic Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* stating textual importance remains the same while inclusivity increases as per the ages, in addition reinterpret sacrifice as *niškāma- karma* and *jñāna- yajña*. The internalizing tendencies significantly coincide with the interpretive framework of the *Śukla Yajurveda*. Comparing the two surviving recensions of the *Śukla* tradition- *Mādhyandina* and *Kāṇva* shows that the *Kāṇva* recension preserves older textual layers, greater procedural detail, and preserves earlier ritual layers, providing a more nuanced understanding of *Agnihotra's* developmental continuum from *karma* to *jñāna*. The *Mādhyandina* ritual system is extensively transmitted, whereas the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (*Kāṇva* recension) preserves older symbolic frameworks and technical instructions for understanding *Agnihotra* within a *Mokṣa* oriented framework. From the standpoint of academic reconstruction, textual depth, and ritual-philosophical study, the *Kāṇva* recension gives the most ideal framework for examining *Agnihotra* practice in the *Kali Yuga*, offering the intellectual coherence, depth, and accuracy needed to pursue *niškāma Agnihotra* as a route to Liberation.

**Declaration section:** I declare that this paper has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree; the work presented is entirely my own.

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